

# PEARLS IN WORDS

by H.H.  
POPE SHENOUDA III  
(1923-2012)



**Introduction by His Eminence  
Metropolitan Bishoy of Damietta & Kafr El Sheikh  
and  
His Grace Bishop Youssef of Southern States of America**

**Prepared by  
Father Bishoy Helmy of Saint Anthony Church  
Shubra - Egypt**





**Jesus the Eternal Lord of Glory**



**St George the Prince of Martyrs**



# **His Holiness Pope Shenouda III**

**117<sup>th</sup> Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria**

**(1923-2012)**



## **His Holiness Pope Tawadros II**

**118<sup>th</sup> Pope and Patriarch of the See of Alexandria**



## **His Grace Bishop Daniel**

**Bishop of Sydney, Australia and Affiliated Regions**



## Foreword By Very Reverend Fr Marcos Tawfik

Our generation as well as subsequent generations will not stop thinking about the Thrice Blessed Pope Shenouda III, the 117<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark. This extraordinary personality attracted every person that met him and dealt with him both in Egypt and across the whole world. His Holiness attracted people by his life, example coupled with his profound wisdom and golden words. This book contains only some of his outstanding teachings under the title ***"Pearls in Words"***. Thus, every word in it is a true pearl; it is knowledge to those who are seeking knowledge. It is advice to those who are confused, it is comfort to the soul, peace to the afflicted and encouragement to those who are in need. There was no subject nor a particular need that His Holiness has not talked or written about it in order to comfort numerous thirsty souls. That is why His Holiness was called ***"Chrysostom of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century"***.

A group of dedicated servants from Saint George Church, Kensington, Sydney, Australia, whose hearts were inspired by the words of HH Pope Shenouda III, with one accord, felt the need to present these pearls to successive generations in the English language. The servants embarked upon the translation of this book on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 and through the help of God and the guidance of His Holy Spirit, the work was completed on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

On this occasion we cannot forget the efforts and the enthusiasm of our precious daughter ***"Christine Attia"***, who contributed to this work by her ideas and artistic feelings, even during her sickness and sufferings, up to a few days before her departure in body. We remember her active personality, and her passion for every task that was entrusted to her.

Therefore, we present this work, ***"after completion"***, which was completed a few days before her departure from our world. ***"From our perishable world, as it was said by HH Pope Shenouda III"***. As she was in her prime years and of 21 years of age. We present it to her righteous soul, in memory of her work and efforts, her spirit, encouragement, contribution and her ideas. She is now praying for us, she also sees this work coming to light, to fulfil every thought, to water every heart, to be a cause of blessing, and a source of salvation for every soul to enjoy.



Those who took the blessing of contributing to this work, inclusive of translation, editing, proofreading, preparation, photo collection, front and back cover design are the following:

Fr Matthew Attia (Parish Priest of Saint George Church)

Tasony Mervat Attia

Mr Nabil Kolta - Miss Carol Kolta

Shirley Assaad

Mrs Evellen Tawdros

Mrs Miranda Andrews - Mr Magdi Andrews

The late Miss Christine Attia

Miss Anastasia Attia (Christine's Sister)

Mrs Mervette Attia (Christine's Mum)

**In loving memory of  
Our daughter Christine Attia  
For whom we present this spiritual  
and beautiful work.**

May our loving Lord God reward everyone who has contributed to this work and every other good work for the sake of serving the precious souls which the Lord Jesus has shed His honoured blood as price for their salvation and redemption.

***Very Reverend Fr Marcos Tawfik***

**Parish Priest of Saint George Coptic Orthodox Church Sydney Australia**



## Foreword His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy

### Secretary of the Holy Synod

How wonderful it is that the talented researcher, Reverend Father Bishoy Helmy, was able to collect many of the writings of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the outstanding teacher of generations.

This collection provides enjoyment to the readers and answers to the many questions asked by students. The words of His Holiness are precious pearls.

This extensive collection was gathered from several sources far and wide, which may have been difficult for the reader to locate.

We thank Reverend Father Bishoy Helmy for his impressive work. May our Lord be a source of many blessings through the prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, of blessed and cherished memory.

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy of Damietta  
and Kafr El-Sheikh and Berary  
Secretary of the Holy Synod and  
Head of Saint Demiana's Convent  
5<sup>th</sup> April 2012





## **Foreword** **His Grace Bishop Youssef**

### **Bishop of Southern States of America**

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III had a great and distinguished personality. We thank the Lord that He allowed us to live in his time, to be disciplined by his blessed hand and to learn from his fountain of knowledge. We have been blessed with his fatherhood for over 40 years as the Pope and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark.

His Holiness was distinguished in everything. If we speak of his spirituality, he was the ascetic, the hermit who escaped the noise, lived in the desert, then in the cave, in order to separate from the whole and bind with the One. The Holy Spirit dwelt in him, he carried the fruits in his life, he was a role model for the spiritual person, he was full of the Holy Spirit, "Because all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God".

He was distinguished in his relationships with others, extending love to all and loved by all. Truly the funeral of this great father bore witness to his place in the hearts of his people. There were millions who went out to farewell him, with pure love. He left a mark on the lives of people.

He was loved by young and old, by rich and poor, by the educated and by the simple, by Christians and by non-Christians, by men and by women, by Egyptians and non-Egyptians. It is rare to find an individual loved by so many. Even those who disliked him, subsequently drew closer to him and loved him because of his attractive character.

He was unique in his leadership. He was like Nehemiah in our generation, who led the Church as a wise, bright master to the world and became, as we say in the Liturgy about the Church, "That which exists throughout the world, from one end to the other."

The leader was a servant, who was meek and calm, strong without aggression, humble without weakness, encouraging with long bearing, teaching with accuracy,



training with examples and experiences, educating with love and firmness, disciple with wisdom and faithfulness, correcting with discipline and kindness, until he formed leaders for future generations, who followed his steps. Thus, he is alive amongst us, even after his departure, hence death has not conquered him.

As for his teachings, he was like St. John Chrysostom of our generation. He was filled with knowledge, literature in his language, poetry with soft feeling in his words, highly knowledgeable in the way to God in his faith, holding the truth firmly. His words are filled with the Holy Spirit, similar to titanic arrows, like roses and flowers in their appearance, like music and musical sounds in their composition and like a river flowing along its course.

This book in your hands, my beloved reader, is a collection of several books and sermons of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, designed and structured in a way to offer us a great treasure of what His Holiness said on various topics in order for us to be filled from his teachings and the fullness of his knowledge so we grow "similar to the image of His Son".

With all my heart, I thank the beloved and blessed father, Reverend Father Bishoy Helmy, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, to compile and index the teachings of His Holiness, to give us this treasure of teachings in a structured way, knowing that it will benefit many servants, youth, clergy and laity, to build their spiritual life.

I pray that this book bears fruit some thirty, sixty and one hundred fold. May our Lord reward the blessed Father Bishoy Helmy for his great efforts in collecting and editing this book, with heavenly reward. May our Lord repose the soul of our beloved teacher, the Thrice Blessed Holiness Pope Shenouda III, through the intercessions of our Mother Saint Mary the Mother of God, Saint Mark Preacher of the land of Egypt, Saint Anthony the Great, the Father of all monks. May all glory, honour and majesty be given to God in His Church forever, Amen.

***Bishop Youssef***

**Servant of the Diocese of Southern States of America**

**Abbot of Saint Mary and Saint Moses Monastery in Texas**



## Foreword By Reverend Father Bishoy Helmy

It is my pleasure to present this book, from St. Anthony's Church in Shubra. This is the Church which His Holiness Pope Shenouda III served in between 1946-1954, before he entered the monastery.

This book is a simple gesture of loyalty from my weakness, as one of the servants which he served in the Church. We thank him for implanting the roots of the spiritual path, with its authentic and distinct character in the service of the Church. This path produced many Metropolitans and Bishops, who are members of the Holy Synod, and numerous priests and monks.

The story of this book was started many years ago, through my long discipleship and continuous attendance at the lectures and sermons of His Holiness. I was attracted by his many wonderful sayings and brilliant words, which included spiritual principles, social morals and useful practical advice. Because I was so impressed by them, I underlined them and returned to them time and again. I meditated on them and memorised them. I reiterated their meaning to myself and found them useful on a daily basis.

Then, I began to collect the many expressions in exercise books. I still cherish them and found in them companionship, support and guidance.

One day, by heavenly and wondrous design, I visited the Papal Residence and suddenly found myself in front of His Holiness. After asking for his blessings and kissing his hand, I told His Holiness what I had been doing with his words. He smiled at me as a father and said, "God bless you." I was very happy with these words. I began to revise, put in order and index these books with care and enthusiasm and his words of encouragement never left me.

When I had completed this collection, I gave it to His Holiness on the Anniversary of the birth of the Bishopric of Education on 30th September 2005. He acknowledged this work before all who were present and on this day I requested, and I still request, that a new subject be introduced to the Theological College called "Contemporary Fatherhood", which would offer the writings and teachings of His Holiness together with other contemporary fathers.



I later met His Holiness on 21st May 2007, in the Papal Residence, a year after my ordination to the priesthood, to receive His Holiness' blessings and dedicate my humble books to him. He advised me to place the writings in order of topic. Finally, I achieved this work, which took some time, and I offered him a sample of the work, which is what you have in your hands my beloved reader.

Now it is complete, by the grace of God and His guidance and help, on the loving 40th day commemoration of the release of the spirit of our father and master of us all to eternity.

I would have liked to release this book while His Holiness was still with us, but circumstances did not allow this to happen. I trust that he is with us always in the spirit, and I see him now in heaven, watching over me, and saying with love and with his hands on me, "God bless you". These were his final words on Wednesday, 15th February 2012 during his meeting with representatives of the Middle East Churches. This was the day of prayer for Christian Unity. I was among them and I asked him to pray for me. He lay his gentle hand on my head and said these beautiful words which brought joy to my heart and they will echo in my ears forever.

My dearest reader, these words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda, without exaggeration, are a collection of several buildings, each representing an aspect of knowledge, wisdom and discipline, as the words of His Holiness are fruitful and useful.

## **His words are:**

- Everlasting, illuminating throughout the centuries and throughout the generations.
- Like pearls, each a precious treasure for whoever searches for truth and perfection.
- Concise and abbreviated sermons, benefiting all ages and all races.
- Expressive and impressive sayings, each word carefully selected with a rare ability.
- Practical, taking us to heaven without leaving our earthly reality.



I invite every person searching for truth and virtues to enjoy the taste and nectar of his fruits and flowers. My beloved I trust that you will never get bored from walking through this orchard, I have done this already and am still doing it.

From the depth of my heart I thank His Grace Bishop Bishoy, Metropolitan of Damietta, Kafr Elsheikh and Barary Belkass, Secretary of the Holy Synod, for his kindness and for his editing and presenting this work, in spite of the many responsibilities and work on his shoulder.

I also offer sincere thanks and gratitude to His Grace Bishop Youssef, Bishop of Southern USA, who is one of the blessed graduates of Saint Anthony's Church in Shubra, Egypt, for the words recorded in the foreword of this book.

I ask for your prayers always, my father and master the blessed Pope Shenouda III, the Great Patriarch and for our Lord, the Glory be His name, forever and ever, Amen.

***Father Bishoy Helmy***  
**Saint Anthony's Church Shubra**





## Biographical Outline of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III 117<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark

- ❖ He was born on 3rd August, 1923, in Salam village in the city of Assiut, Upper Egypt and was called Nazeer Gayed Rofaeel.
- ❖ He was baptised in Saint Shenouda's Monastery in Sohag, Upper Egypt.
- ❖ He spent his first few years of school (kindergarten and primary school) in Damanhour, Alexandria, Assiut and Banha; moving around with his older brother Rofaeel due to his type of work.
- ❖ He finished his secondary schooling in the Iman Secondary School in Shubra (Gazeret Badran), Egypt, Cairo.
- ❖ In 1939, he began his Sunday School service in Saint Mary's Church, Bahmasha, Cairo.
- ❖ In 1946, he served in Saint Anthony's Church, Shikolany, Shubra, Egypt. This is considered to be his main place of service before entering the monastery.
- ❖ He entered the Coptic Theological College in 1946 and graduated in 1949. He was ranked first place and was chosen to teach there the following year.
- ❖ In 1947, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, Majoring in History from Cairo University and worked as a teacher.
- ❖ In the same year he also graduated from the Faculty of Officers and ranked first among all the graduates.
- ❖ In 1949, he was consecrated for the service and taught in the Theological College.
- ❖ He became the editor of the Sunday School magazine in October, 1949 until his monasticism in July, 1954.
- ❖ In 1953, he began teaching in the school for monks in Helwan, Egypt.
- ❖ On 18th July, 1954, he joined the monastic life in St. Mary's Syrian Monastery, Sheheet, Wadi El Natroun and was given the name of Father Antonios El Syriani (Anthony the Syrian).
- ❖ In February 1956, he lived as a hermit in a cave about 3.5 km west of the Syrian monastery. In 1960, he moved to another cave about 12km south of the Monastery.
- ❖ He was ordained a priest on Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1958 by Bishop Theophilus, the Abbot of the Monastery at that time.



- ❖ On 30th September 1962, he was appointed Bishop of Christian Education and as Dean of the Coptic Orthodox Theological Seminary. He was named Shenouda and was the first Bishop of Education.
- ❖ On Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1971, he was chosen by divine ballot as the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark.
- ❖ On Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1971, he was enthroned as Pope Shenouda, the 117<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria. The ceremony took place in the presence of many Fathers and leaders of many Churches and Church representatives.
- ❖ In February 1991, he was chosen as One of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches and served in this role for 7 years.
- ❖ He was granted 8 honorary doctorate degrees in United State and German Universities.
- ❖ He was instrumental in establishing the Middle East Council of Churches in 1974 and was elected President for three consecutive terms.
- ❖ He obtained awards “Sing for Forgiveness” organised by the United Nations for teaching, culture and science (UNESCO) in 2000.
- ❖ He received the Browning Award for best preacher and teacher of the Christian faith in the year 1978.
- ❖ The Coptic Theological College flourished during his time and has 17 branches all over the world.
- ❖ He made 104 pastoral visits around Egypt and the world.
- ❖ He ordained 117 Metropolitans and Bishops, as well as ordaining the first Patriarch of Eretria (Patriarch Phillips, then Patriarch Yacopos, then Patriarch Antonious). He also ordained over 1000 priests for Cairo, Alexandria and the lands of immigration.
- ❖ He increased the number of Diocese inside Egypt from 23 to 50.
- ❖ He increased the number of Diocese outside Egypt from 3 to 25.
- ❖ He increased number of monasteries from 9 to 28 and convents from 5 to 7.
- ❖ He increased number of Coptic Churches outside Egypt to more than 450.
- ❖ He restored the Lay Council to its functions and roles ensuring its harmony with the Church leadership.
- ❖ He made the Holy Mayroun 7 times, 6 times for Coptic Churches and once for the Church of Eretria in September, 2004 and this is the first time in history.
- ❖ He wrote over 140 books.



**His soul rested peacefully on the afternoon of Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and the funeral was on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in the Cathedral of Saint Rewess, Cairo, Egypt. May his prayers and intercessions be with us all, Amen.**

## **Dedication**

**To my father, my teacher and my master, the great among the Patriarchs**

### **Pope Shenouda III**

Allow me your Holiness to dedicate for your pure spirit this work which contains around 3000 sayings of your Holiness, which are on various subjects, which I collected from your books. I took great care and precision to put this book together in order to enlighten anyone who seeks the truth and longs for virtues.

This book, my master, is the fruit of the continuous work of your books and sermons for over 40 years.

Asking your prayers and intercessions always

Your son

***Father Bishoy Helmy Ibrahim***

**Saint Anthony Church, Shubra**





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# CHAPTER 1

## God

- ❖ *Religion*
- ❖ *Christianity*
- ❖ *God*
- ❖ *Characteristics of God*
- ❖ *God and Mankind*
- ❖ *Jesus Christ*
- ❖ *Jesus Christ and Mankind*
- ❖ *You and Jesus Christ*





## Religion

- ❖ Religion is a journey of love towards God's heart, which passes through a person's heart. Love is the holy bond which binds people to God. It is the principle of religion and of being religious.
- ❖ Religion, my brother is not just a list of things which are acceptable or not, rules, laws or prohibitions as much as it is grace and love toward God and people. From that love flows all good things.
- ❖ Religion is not just information given to us, but it is a way of life.
- ❖ We accept all forms of progress and modernisation as long as it is subject to the principles of religion and not that religion is subjected to modernism.
- ❖ Religion is leadership.
- ❖ Religion is love; love for God; love for doing good deeds and love for others.

## Christianity

- ❖ Christianity teaches many principles, values, virtues and profound spiritual dogmas, but the greatest thing in Christianity is Jesus Christ Himself.
- ❖ Christianity does not focus on the multitudes but cares for every soul.
- ❖ Christianity is not a religion of weakness, it is a religion of strength. It gives the human being unexpected strength and eliminates the word "impossible".
- ❖ In Christianity nothing is too difficult, there is no despair, no failure but instead we say, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me".
- ❖ The gentleness and humility that Christianity calls for are no indication whatsoever that it is a religion of weakness, instead it is a religion of strength. This power comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in the faithful.
- ❖ Strength in Christianity is a power of a spiritual nature. It is power without faults, violence or aggression.
- ❖ Christianity does not seek to conquer others but instead, it seeks to gain others and bear them. Whoever bears others is the strong one, but the one who attacks is weak. Thus, the Bible says: "I ask you strong people to bear the weakness of the weak".
- ❖ Christianity cares for each human being as an individual. It does not want them to become part of the huge machine, which is society. Christianity requires each person to have their own entity and have their own personality. It cares very much for the person as a human being, not just for their materialistic needs but first and foremost their spiritual and personal needs.



- ❖ Many economic doctrines care for matters which concern the physical needs of the human being such as food, drink, general living and materialistic needs, but do not care for the spiritual needs of the human being, including their eternity. However, Christianity cares for the human spirit and, while caring for this spirit, will look after all other needs too.
- ❖ Christianity cannot be separated from suffering. It cannot be separated from bitterness or the Cross. If you want to be myrrh and reach God as aromatic incense, you must have bitterness and be aromatised with myrrh and bitterness.

## God

- ❖ God is the tree of life by which we are nourished. He is the hidden manna. He is the bread of life, and He is the water of life of which is said 'whoever drinks from it will never thirst again.' He is life and whoever abides in Him, abides in life. He is the truth; whoever knows Him knows truth and the truth will set him free. He is the true light which enlightens every person, He is wisdom, He is true joy.
- ❖ God is the beloved, "His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me." (Song of Solomon 2:6).
  - He is the companion whom I can never leave because this companionship causes me to exist, live and move.
  - He is not an idea but He is an entity, flowing in my spirit, in my blood and into my thoughts. He is everything to me.
  - Yes Lord, You are working in me and I am not. You are the engine which moves me and You direct me. You work with me, and in me. You Lord are not outside me but inside me.
- ❖ Separating history from God is not a spiritual work, but the spiritual people meditate on God's hand in history.
- ❖ **The name of God:** If we remember that God's name is holy we will never mention it except with all holiness and reverence, saying every moment, "Hallowed be Thy name".
  - It is not right to use the name of the Lord in trivial matters because it is not in harmony with His glory. Instead, we should use His name in praise and prayer.



## Characteristics of God

- ❖ God's attributes are not separated from each other, where one stands out independently from another. At times we mention God's attributes separately from each other for the purpose of describing the details but not to distinguish them from each other. In so doing we can understand them more but they are divinely united. God is just in His mercy and merciful in His justice. His justice is merciful, and His mercy is just. His justice is filled with mercy and His mercy is filled with justice. Therefore we cannot separate His mercy from His justice.
- ❖ God's characteristics are countless, but we may contemplate on some of His many attributes. These are merely examples and are by no means exclusive.

## God Exists

- ❖ Lord, You do exist. The weak feel Your presence and are comforted. The strong feel Your presence and tremble. So the words "God exists" give joy and terror, comfort and disturbance.
- ❖ The pure heart desires the presence of God.
- ❖ Anyone who is in the presence of God feels a profound sense of peace.
- ❖ The feeling of being in the presence of God fills the heart with joy and causes it to forget suffering.
- ❖ The presence of God is not in a place but it is in the heart, emotions and actions, and it leaves its mark.
- ❖ Whoever believes in God's presence, never feels alone, but trusts that there is a power close by.
- ❖ If you truly believe that the Lord is present everywhere, wherever you are, seeing you, hearing you, watching over you, you would definitely feel ashamed or embarrassed to do the wrong thing in the presence of God.
- ❖ This belief of God's presence always before us grants humility to the heart. It makes our actions humble and fills us with awe and reverence as we stand before God.
- ❖ The feeling of God's presence with us fills us with strength and trust. The feeling of being in the presence of God overpowers us with shame in the face of sin.



## ***God, maker of all good things***

- ❖ Indeed, God is the maker of all good things. He creates good from all things. Anything in God's hands results in good.
- ❖ When God created the earth He placed enough good things in it for all mankind without exception.

## ***The Beauty of God***

- ❖ God is perfect in everything; beauty is a part of His perfection. He is beautiful in His perfection and complete in His beauty.
- ❖ No one resembles God. His beauty is greater than humans. His beauty is of a type, which we cannot express but He has revealed some of His beauty in our relationship with Him.
- ❖ Our loving God, whom we worship, has all the characteristics of beauty. As David the Prophet says, "Among the gods there is none like you Lord." (Psalm 86:8).

## ***Love of God***

- ❖ God's love for mankind is wonderful. He loves all of us, saved the sinners and crowned the righteous.
- ❖ Our Lord, who loves all people, loves you much more than you love yourself. He works for your benefit more than you work for yourself.

## ***God is Patience***

- ❖ There is no doubt that God is patient in winning the sinner. He does not give up on anyone, even if they are in the depth of wickedness. He regards that whoever does not repent today will repent tomorrow, and whoever does not repent now will repent later.

## ***God : Caring for Everyone***

- ❖ The beauty of God's character is that He cares for everyone, looks after everyone and satisfies every living creature by His goodness. He gives rain to the righteous and to the sinner and provides food for the birds.



He is the Almighty who cares for all His creation. He said, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Matthew 10:30).

- ✦ Even the lost coin, which does not care for itself, is looked after by our loving Lord.

### ***The Lord who cares for everyone***

- ✦ Our Lord cares for us all the time regardless of what we do and even if we offend Him. He does not deal with us according to our sin but rather according to His mercy.
  - God's care is unlimited. He created beautiful things for us; the plants with sweet fruits, flowers with beautiful smell and plants for shade, for wood etc. He made all for the benefit of mankind.
  - God likens His care for mankind to the care of a mother for her child. He says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands." (Isaiah 49:15-16).
  - He likens Himself to a hen which gathers her chicks under her wings and He also likens Himself to the vine. He said "I am the vine and you are the branches, whoever abides in Me and I in him brings with abundance fruits". And the greatest of all these is His assimilation of Himself to the Shepherd.

### ***God Gives to everyone***

- ✦ He gives all. There is no one who has not received a gift from God. God gives to all but He uses wisdom in His distribution. God divides a portion to each person according to their needs and their role and the plans He has for them.
- ✦ God, in His love, gives without measure. He opens the heavens to bring down the blessings until we say, "Enough! Enough!"
- ✦ Truly, God's blessings are countless and we receive them without merit.
- ✦ God doesn't give because we ask or because we are worthy, but He gives because of His goodness and generosity and according to our needs.



## ***The relationship between God and man is one of giving. God gave and He continues to give:***

1. God's first gift to us is the grace of existence.
2. The wonder of God's gift is that He gave us His image and likeness.
3. He prepared the way of comfort for mankind before creating them.
4. God gave mankind health, strength and beauty.
5. God gave them power over everything.
6. Also, God grants us the gift of blessings.
7. He gave the grace of friendship.
8. He gave those who love Him are able to taste Him.
9. God gave humanity the grace of sonship.
10. God also gave His chosen ones, glory and dignity.
11. God gave us the glory of resurrection, as we are raised in a glorified body.
12. God gave humanity the grace of existence, through the path of marriage.
13. He gave humanity the grace of eternal life.
14. Because of God's love to mankind, He granted them talents and gifts.
15. He gave humanity the honour of working with Him.
16. Amongst God's gifts to humanity is giving them angels to minister to their needs.
17. Also He gave humanity sanctification.
18. Amongst God's gifts for our salvation is repentance.
19. 19. He gave us the gift of looking after us and protecting us.
20. The greatest gift that God gave us is the gift of salvation by redemption.

**Practically, we cannot count the gifts, which God has given us.**

## **God and Mankind**

- ✚ Throughout history, God has been the one to begin a relationship with mankind.
- ✚ This relationship between God and man is a story of love which God Himself started. God loved humans even before they existed and because of this love He created them. He loved mankind even when they were still an idea in His mind and happiness in His heart. Because He loved us, He created us in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27).



- ❖ God wants to reconcile with us and correct us in all possible ways.
- ❖ Yes, God demands perfection, but He doesn't ask for more than you are able to give. He takes into consideration your abilities and circumstances.
- ❖ With love and tenderness God returned us to this earth.
  - The alternative way would have been to return us by violence and punishment, or with trials and tribulations.
  - By education and guidance, with patience and long suffering with us.
  - He uses any way which is suitable for our soul. But the important thing is to save us in any condition. "He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Timothy 2:4).
- ❖ God's kindness leads us to repent, but if we misuse and exploit this love by leading a careless and reckless life we may be hit with tribulation or rejection to wake us up.
- ❖ God works for our sake but we must accept Him and be in communion with Him.
- ❖ You may reach a point of despair during a period of low self-esteem but our Lord never despairs in wanting to bring you back to Him.
  - The Lord works for us even though we don't ask Him. It is because of our weak faith that we forget the works of God for the sake of the human race.
- ❖ Every person who remains close to God becomes flooded by the Lord's light and will be enlightened to see His light.
- ❖ As for our deeds; if they are bad, we say He covered us, if they are good we say He helped us, because unless He helps us we are unable to do anything good.
- ❖ The Lord never upsets or hurts the feelings of His beloved people unless it is vital, as a kind doctor who is gentle with his patients and does not use violence of anger.
- ❖ The Lord is always merciful to the weak, but the powerful, violent, strong, rougher, harsh person is far from God's mercy.
- ❖ Don't view God as though He is the powerful being, who obstructs your purposes and goals, who always says, "No, No, No." But rather, God is the one who provides you with strength, who grants you existence and gives you talents.
- ❖ God is ready to listen to our prayers and He works for our sake, but we have to unite with Him to work for our salvation.



- ❖ God admonishes His loved one, but He punishes His enemies.
- ❖ God is the one who owns us and He owns what we have and we are just stewards.
- ❖ We are all strangers and guests to God. He accepts us in His house and in His land and He will take us in His kingdom into eternity.
  - Have no doubt that the Lord richly rewards the person who sincerely wishes to be delivered from sin.
  - God’s discipline is not cruel but is mixed with mercy. As long as you are under God’s protection there is no power in the world which is able to destroy you. Our life is in God’s hands, which protects us and not in the hands of our enemies.
- ❖ The Lord does not leave a person in his state of slumber, because, “He wants all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4). Do not think that if a person is asleep regarding his own salvation that God will leave him in this state. On the contrary, He does all He can do to wake him up, using all kinds of methods.
- ❖ The Lord who gave us free will allows us to choose good or evil; otherwise we have no free will. There is a difference between the will of God and His permission. His will is only ever for what is good, but His permission is in accordance with the free will which He gave all His creation.
- ❖ The Lord is the only being who we cannot do without, either in this life or the next.
- ❖ Do not think that you have to ascend to a high spiritual level in order to meet with God. Instead, whenever you feel that you are nothing, that you are not worthy of anything, that your heart drops, it is then that you can meet with God. So whenever you go down, you will be raised up.
- ❖ Adam tried to cover his body with fig leaves, but it didn’t help him, even the branches couldn’t hide him. He remained naked in front of God, uncovered, and he himself said: “Because I was naked I hid”. Adam, you didn’t know how to cover yourself and neither did Eve, know then that God is the one who covers us.
- ❖ Indeed, God gives more than He takes, without measure. He takes a small wheat seed to give you branches full of wheat; He takes a date seed to give you a huge palm tree that carries thousands of dates.



## **Jesus Christ**

### **The annunciation of the Birth of Jesus:**

- ❖ The Annunciation of the birth of Jesus was the beginning of the reconciliation between heaven and earth, between God and man, after a long separation since the sin of Adam and Eve.

### ***The Birth of Jesus Christ:***

- ❖ The Lord came to the world quietly, without noise and entered without anyone feeling Him.
- ❖ People's sins were like winter nights, cold, dark and long. God's face was hidden from them. The separation between people and God was represented in the divided temple, where no one could enter the Holy of Holies. The sins of man increased and so did God's wrath. The separation continued and people could not reconcile with God ... until Jesus Christ came and brought reconciliation between heaven and earth and restored the bond between them.
- ❖ Every time we see the picture of the birth of Jesus, we remember the love of God towards humanity.
- ❖ The blessings of Christmas Day are that we feel that Jesus is God with us; God is in the middle, dwells with us and dwells inside us.
- ❖ Jesus is born in a manger in order to raise us to the throne in eternity.

### ***The life of Jesus Christ:***

- ❖ Jesus Christ lived without a title, without an official role in society, and without any special value in the eyes of the people.
  - He was not from the rank of priesthood in the eyes of the people because He was not from the tribe of Levi or from the sons of Aaron.
  - Jesus Christ lived with no high status in society and He had no specific description, even in His position as a teacher. He wasn't of the Pharisees or the scribes who were responsible for teaching during this time.



- ❖ Before Jesus, they considered greatness as the greatness of kings in their outstanding appearance. The Lord Jesus presented a different picture of greatness. The Owner of the heavens and the earth, had no place to put His head. The greatness of a person who has no place to stay, no job or position in society, although He can shake the whole of society with His finger. The Lord Jesus came with a different form of greatness which no one had seen before.

### ***Jesus' baptism:***

- ❖ Jesus Christ was not a sinner that He should come forward to receive the Baptism of Repentance, but He carried the sins of the whole world.
- ❖ Jesus was so strong when He sent Satan away. So make him flee, with the power of Jesus that works inside you.
- ❖ Meditate on the calmness of Jesus Christ during the period of His incarnation on earth. In His serenity He answered all His opponents, from the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the priests and the elders.
- ❖ How strange was our Lord's serenity during His arrest; all His actions during this time were extremely peaceful and calm; during His trial, at the time of His burial and His Resurrection from the death.
- ❖ Jesus Christ performs miracles with His own power, but the faithful can do miracles with His power.
- ❖ The Lord defeated the devil in two ways: (i) By His death on the Cross and (ii) By His Incarnation on earth.
- ❖ He was successful the whole way. He did not give the Devil any chance and He showed him that human nature, which He blessed, could defeat him.

### ***Jesus Christ denies Himself:***

- ❖ Jesus Christ entered the world in a very quiet way, away from praise and acknowledgements. He entered the world by denying Himself to a great extent. The only ones who met Him were a group of poor shepherds and then the Magi.



- He was born from a poor orphan woman. She did not have anyone to look after her, and she was given by the priests to Joseph. She was engaged to Joseph so that he could look after her.
- He was born in a village, which is “the least among the rulers of Judah.” (Matthew 2:6).
- He lived in Nazareth. It was strange that anything good could come out of it, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) and He was called a Nazarene.
- He lived in a simple carpenter’s house, where people teased Him saying: “Isn’t He the Son of the carpenter?” (Matthew 13:5).
- He was unknown for 30 years. It is a wasted time from history, even the Apostles did not write about it. He lived without anyone noticing Him, hidden away. He lived as an ordinary person.
- He made Himself of no reputation and lived in normal conditions like any other person. He spent time as a new born baby, as a poor child, with no one to care for Him, and He is the carer of all. He had no money or comfort. He did not own anything although He is the source of all wealth.
- He bore the weakness of human nature and He is devoid of any weakness. He allowed Himself to be hungry, thirsty and sleep like all humans.
- ✦ Not only did our Lord deny Himself the glory due to His divinity, He did not even give Himself human glory. “He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” (Isaiah 53:2-3).
- ✦ “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11). “A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:5), “but men loved darkness rather than light.” (John 3:19) and having any association with Him became a source of guilt, and discipleship with Him was shameful.

### ***The Humility of the Son:***

1. Firstly, we remember His humility in His incarnation.
2. Also, He was born in a manger.
3. In His humility, He stayed away from titles and appearances.
4. He lived subject to the law and recited it.



5. In His humility, He came to John the Baptist to be baptised by him.
6. In His humility He allowed the devil to tempt Him.
7. And from the humility of the only Son, the Logos, He lived the life of obedience.
8. In His humility, He sat with tax collectors and sinners.
9. In His humility, He was simple with all.
10. In His humility, He refused the work of miracles because He didn't want to show off.
11. In His humility, He glorified His disciples.
12. In His humility, His grace worked secretly in people.
13. In His humility, He bore the injustice of the wicked and accepted insults in silence.
14. In His humility, He carried the sins of the whole world.
15. In His humility, His crucifixion was witnessed by all people while His glorified Resurrection was only revealed to a few.
16. And He has called us to learn humility from Him.

### ***The Teaching of Jesus Christ:***

- ✦ The Lord Jesus Christ gave us a new way of thinking, which is not present in any other philosophy, whether Buddhist, Brahma or any other teachings. The philosophers of the whole world knelt down in reverence and in respect in front of Christian teachings. Christianity triumphed over all the philosophies of the whole world and defeated global thoughts.
- ✦ Trust me, if Christianity had no thoughts other than, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5: 44), this verse would have been enough. In all philosophical teachings, there is nothing that compares to this verse in its greatness, depth and highness.

### ***The Suffering of Jesus Christ:***

- ✦ The suffering of Jesus Christ was throughout His whole life not just the suffering of Passion Week. He suffered throughout His service, before His service and since His birth. The following verse describes our Lord's suffering, "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3).



- ❖ Usually the person who is suffering becomes a focal point for people's care, but Jesus, in His suffering, cared for others.
- ❖ Christ was strong in His suffering and this is an indication of His great and powerful love.
- ❖ Love is so strong when you offer sacrifice and giving, especially when you reach the point of sacrificing yourself for the one you love. Love was able to reach the Cross to save and redeem.
- ❖ The world's concept of power is violence, aggression, defending oneself and subjecting others. But our Lord set an example of the power of love, which sacrifices, endures and gives without limits.

### ***You and the suffering of Jesus:***

- ❖ Many feel sad for Jesus' sufferings, but by their wrong actions they add to His pain.
- ❖ Many see the picture of Jesus on the Cross and they cry, feeling pain in their heart, but actually they crucify Jesus each day by not following His commandments.
- ❖ My brethren, take away the rod from Christ's mouth and spare His lips from the sponge which was filled with vinegar. Have remorse for hurting the feelings of the One who loves you dearly and do good deeds with repentance.

### ***The Cross:***

- ❖ We notice that the element in the words of Christ on the Cross is giving. We wonder that while He was on the cross, He appeared to be weak and defeated, but was a giver. He gave forgiveness to His persecutors, gave Paradise to the right thief, gave His blessed mother a spiritual son and provided her with care and attention and gave John the Beloved the blessings of accommodating the Virgin Mary in his house. He gave to the Father the price of the Divine Justice as ordained, and gave atonement and salvation to humanity and He gave us security that the act of salvation was accomplished.
- ❖ He gave everyone and no one gave Him anything. He offered all this to humanity and humanity offered Him nothing in return except bitterness and vinegar.



- ❖ Jesus, our gentle God, in His deepest agony on the Cross, was concerned for others and not Himself.
- ❖ The verse, "Father, forgive them" which Jesus Christ said on the Cross carries the deepest love and the deepest forgiveness. Many have been converted to Christianity because of this one verse.
- ❖ The picture of the crucified Jesus Christ is a beautiful scene for all humanity. It is the deepest portrayal of sacrificial love.
- ❖ On Good Friday, we see Jesus in His deep love and immense sacrifice.
- ❖ The Cross became a symbol of love and consequently for redemption and provider of all our needs. On the Cross Jesus Christ was given to the whole world as a substitute for freedom. He gave complete redemption and atonement of sins.
- ❖ The Church carried the Cross during the period of martyrdom and in all the eras of persecution which followed. Because of the Church's love for the beauty of the Cross, she made the Cross her symbol.

### ***The Resurrection of Jesus Christ:***

- ❖ By His Resurrection and His silence during His trials, Christ confirmed that He was not weak and proved that His death was self-sacrifice and not imposed.
- ❖ In His crucifixion, He was above the earth and in His Resurrection, He was above burial. In His ascension to heaven and sitting on the right hand of the Father, He was above the level of the whole world even above heaven.
  - The Cross of Jesus Christ preceded His resurrection and He made Himself of no reputation which preceded His glory.

### ***The Ascension of Jesus Christ:***

- The Ascension of the Lord to heaven was a phase of weaning for the disciples.
- The 40 days from the Resurrection to the Ascension was a period of preparation for the service which was to come. It was the end of the period of faith by the senses.
- The Ascension was a declaration for the end of the period of training and announced the start of the service.
- The Ascension of the Lord is like a deposit for our ascension.
- ❖ In the glory of the Ascension, the words "Made Himself of no reputation" as was said in Philippians 2:7, ended. He is now in His glory.



## Jesus Christ and Mankind

- ❖ When we observe the way Jesus Christ dealt with people we find Him very gentle, compassionate with the weak and the poor, but He was also firm with those who were rough or violent.
- ❖ Our humble teacher wanted people's hearts, not their submission. He wanted their love, not their fear. He didn't appoint Himself as a leader of people but as their friend.
- ❖ Jesus does not want to take away a person's free will, but rather, to have a pure heart, by which he does good deeds spontaneously through love.
- ❖ Jesus refused to reign on Jerusalem, but He was happy to reign over your heart.
- ❖ He came down from heaven to earth in order to move us from earth to heaven.
- ❖ He became the Son of man in order to make us children of God.
- ❖ He carried our sins so that we may carry His righteousness and holiness.
- ❖ He took what is ours and gave us what is His.
- ❖ He took our punishment to grant us His crown and His glory.
- ❖ He went outside the city to pay the ransom so that we may enter.
- ❖ He accepted to die to give us life.
- ❖ He took our weakness to grant us strength.
- ❖ He took our shame to give us His glory.
- ❖ Jesus Christ does not want us to follow Him just for the sake of supplying our bread, but for the love of His kingdom.

## You and Jesus Christ

- ❖ Our relationship with Jesus Christ is like the relationship between the branches and the vine and the relationship between the whole body and the head and the relationship between the bride and the groom.
- ❖ If you think only of yourself and how you can entertain your needs you will become weary of Jesus. You will feel that Christ destroyed the idols inside you or He will destroy this pride and ego inside you. You will think how to kill Jesus like Herod did, or how to get rid of Him.
- ❖ The foundation with which you build your spiritual house is that you become united with Christ and He with you, like the branches unite with the vine. Every foundation without Christ is sand.
- ❖ Many are not happy with the coming of Christ because they are not ready to meet Him.

## CHAPTER 2

### Man

- ❖ *Man*
- ❖ *The Heart of Man*
- ❖ *The Mind of Man*
- ❖ *The Intelligence of Man*
- ❖ *The Spirit of Man*
- ❖ *The Body of Man*
- ❖ *The Spirit and the Body*
- ❖ *The Conscience of Man*
- ❖ *The Will of Man*
- ❖ *The Senses*
- ❖ *The Talents*
- ❖ *Death*
- ❖ *Why were you born, why do you live and why do you die?*

**“If you want your words to have their full effect,  
choose the appropriate time to say them”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## **Man**

### ***Who is Man?***

- He is body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- He is a desirable soul and a spirit that connects with God through prayer, meditation and worship, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another." (Galatians 5:17).
- Man is a group of instincts and energies. At times man controls and directs the instincts and at other times his instincts control him and direct his energies.
- Man has a conscience which prescribes, watches, condemns and judges.
- Man is that powerful mind who made spaceships to soar to the moon.
- Man has a heart which pulsates with feelings and sensations: Sometimes kind and makes him cry, and sometimes cruel and changes him to a wild monster.
- Man has thoughts which do not keep quiet and he has different kinds of thinking which work on different levels.
- Man is all of these things put together, but they are not used in the same measure all the time. Often one of these elements or part of it will dominate. Then it becomes a personality trait which distinguishes him from others. These elements wrestle inside him and could keep him restless or could calm him down and keep him quiet and settled, and so one person can differ from another.
- Some have said about man that he is a small world: in him is the high mountain, the deep sea, the mud and the swamp, the gold and the pearls, the sand and the gravel, the bright light and the fog that obscures the light. Many things gather in him, at times in harmony and at times contradicting themselves.

### ***Man has Free Will***

- The presence of the commandments is proof that man has free will.
- The presence of sin is proof that man has free will.
- The presence of judgement is proof that man has free will.



- If man was infallible this would cancel his free will. God does not eliminate the grace of freedom, He grants him immunity.
- If the spirit is the legislative authority in the life of the human, so the body is the authority of performance, and the conscience is the authority of judging.
- The yearning for God is part of human nature and is innate.
- The practical person lives in reality, never ignoring all that is happening in this world with its problems and obstacles.
- The practical person treats people as they are, and not as they should be.
- The practical person does not solve his problems by crying, mourning or complaining about the current generation. But instead faces his problems with correct thinking, using wisdom and practical solutions and always asking the Lord to bless his work and give him success.
- **The ideal person:** is the one who brings the two together: i.e., he is socially successful, loved by all and at the same time, has the right level of spirituality.
- **The moderate person:** balances his feelings, emotions and behaviour. He creates a balance between action and passion and balance between his ego and others.
- **The good person:** is the one who deals well with all people, even those who are different than him in race, nationality, language, doctrine or religion.
- **The wise person:** is the one who grows day by day in spiritual knowledge. With this growth his conscience becomes enlightened so he will know what he did not know, and realise the depth of goodness which he did not realise before.
- **The fair person:** has a liberal mind and sees truth as truth, even if it is spoken by his enemy, and likewise says that a falsehood is a falsehood even if it is spoken by his father or his brother.

## The heart of man

- ✦ The heart of man is greater than the world and more superior than matter, because he has been created in God's image and likeness.
- ✦ The heart is the centre of feelings, the centre of emotions and the centre of love. The Lord wants these feelings and heartfelt emotions as He said in Proverbs 23:26, "My son, give Me your heart."



- ❖ If the heart of man changes from the inside accordingly his outer behaviour will change and there will be no conflict between his inner self and his outer self.
- ❖ The heart and the mind work together. Everything you say comes from the heart just as the Bible says, "For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34).
- ❖ Start your life with God from your heart. Start by faith and faith is the work of the heart.
- ❖ God's commandments become difficult if we leave them outside the heart.
- ❖ Do not think that the heart is a closed safe which conceals its secrets. Most of the time the heart is openly revealed in our expressions, and the eyes of a person are like mirrors into his inner self.
- ❖ Sin hardens the heart, and prolonged sin continues to harden it further.
- ❖ One cannot live in a passionate emptiness. He either fills his heart with the love of God or fills his heart with the love of the world and the flesh.
- ❖ The mind is like a screen in which the emotions of the heart are exposed.
- ❖ Often, ones features reveal the status of the heart whether the person wants it to be revealed or not. His features are unwillingly confessions that reveal what is inside him

### ***Types of hearts***

- ❖ **The ascetic heart:** in the present worldly state is a fort, which cannot be entered. The devil cannot find an entrance in which he can get through.
- ❖ **The heart elevated over worldly desires:** in which God and God alone is his destiny. The devil cannot tempt him as he can't find in him a desire that he can use to make him fall.
- ❖ **The strong heart:** is the steadfast heart, over which external factors cannot prevail. He does not get affected by outside forces.
  - The strong heart finds hundreds of ways to do what he wants.
  - The strong heart in faith is not shaken by external doubts.
  - The strong heart which abides in the Lord, is honest in its love, can repel all the arrows of the devil.



### ***The pure heart:***

- ❖ The pure heart is not just pure from sin but has love for God.
  - The pure heart starts with the life of repentance.
  - Does not love the world or anything in it.
  - The pure heart has pure words and language.
  - It is also is a big heart for all, does not get annoyed by a word or a problem or by anyone.
  - The pure heart, no doubt has the fruits of the Spirit.

### ***The kind and compassionate heart:***

- ❖ The kind and compassionate heart gives without being asked. It always thinks of the needs of others without being told.
- ❖ The kind hearted can change their life after hearing just a simple word.
- ❖ The kind and compassionate heart accepts rebuke, but the cruel heart erupts.
- ❖ The kind and compassionate heart can win people, but the cruel heart alienates them.
- ❖ The kind and compassionate heart covers the sins of others, does not talk about them or judge them.
- ❖ **The calm heart:** Have quiet and peaceful features. One likes to sit with him and meditate on his features. But the restless heart has uncomfortable features.
- ❖ **The big heart:** is not a trader: he gives love to whoever offers him love, or does good to whoever thanks him. He does good to all without wanting anything in return. He does good because this is his nature. The big hearted does not treat people as they treat him, but he treats them according to his manners and his nobility.

### **The mind of man**

- ❖ The mind is constantly working. It does not slow down or stop. If it does not think of good it may think of evil, or at the very least it dwells on trivial things, which do not build. So instead of facing emptiness of time, it will face emptiness in life and in thoughts.



- ❖ How easy is it for the mind to be an obedient servant to the soul's desires.
- ❖ The hardest kind of mind is the one that announces its independence from God.
- ❖ Emotion without mind is not enough and mind without emotion is not enough. They both complete each other.
- ❖ The strong, truthful mind is the one that checks and verifies everything it hears. It examines, analyses and accepts what it is convinced by, and rejects the rest.
- ❖ Your mind is like a computer, which has specific power in gathering information. Therefore, do not be preoccupied with too many trivial things, which may hinder your mind from registering effective, useful things.
- ❖ Lust always blinds the mind from pure, sound vision.
- ❖ Our thinking is according to the food which we offer the mind.
- ❖ Reading grants the mind a kind of growth and maturity.
- ❖ God created the mind as a grace to man, but most of the time that mind stands in between the person and the life of submission.

## The intelligence of man

- ❖ The intelligence of man is a great gift from God, but we are deceived if that intelligence goes against the will of God and His guidance.
- ❖ **Intelligence comes with some problems.** How is this? If the intelligent or very intelligent person demands that others deal with him at the same level, when they may be below that level, then this may cause clashes between himself and others leading to problems.

## The spirit of man

- ❖ The spirit is the source of the relationship between man and God. This is where the person's love for God is, his yearning for Him and his bond with Him. From it, spiritual prayer and meditation will come, which leads the mind and the body to the way of God and it manages the sentiments of the heart in a spiritual manner. This allows the person to act by the spirit, in companionship with the Spirit of God.



- ❖ **The spirit is the image of God:** His image of holiness, righteousness, knowledge, freedom and authority.
- ❖ There are great spirits above the body, soul and materialistic levels; these can lead themselves and others, and have a strong influence on the society in which they live.
- ❖ They are great spirits in their abilities, talents and transparency, as well as in their knowledge, wisdom and relationship with God. They have reached a superior level in work, interactions and influence on others.
- ❖ Nobody can hurt your spirit, except yourself.

## The body of man

- ❖ The body is the physical expression of the intentions of the spirit.
- ❖ The body is the executive system of the spirit, the soul or the mind.
- ❖ The body is the outer appearance of man and is the physical component.
- ❖ The body is not evil. The evil is when the body becomes attached to the materialistic world and desires this world which is vanishing. It is evil when it resists the spirit and works against it.
- ❖ Unfortunately, many people care about the outer beauty of the body and not the inner purity and holiness of the body.
- ❖ The body is not sin or evil, otherwise God would not have created it.
  - The body descended into the waters of baptism, was consecrated and became holy. It gained a new nature; it was anointed with the Holy Myron and became an altar to the Lord.
  - The body becomes holy when it is subject to the leadership of the spirit and does not allow the spirit to be subject to it.
  - The body itself is not sinful, but rather the desires of the flesh are sinful.
- ❖ The body that sins defiles an altar of God, and it rebels against, not only its own spirit, but also against the Spirit of God that dwells in it.
- ❖ The body which lives in lust is considered dead, even if it pulsates with life.
- ❖ To rest the body is not a sin but it is a commandment from the Lord. Man should be wise and not exhaust his body beyond its capacity, nor give it more rest than it needs, which leads to laziness or sluggishness.
- ❖ Man does not eliminate his instincts but instead improves its direction, because what makes man weary is not the instinct but its deviation.



## The spirit and the body

- ❖ As long as man consists of both spirit and body united together, then either one will follow the other in a negative way or in a positive way. Hence, if there is neglect of the body then this will affect the spirit as well. And where care is taken of the body it will reflect on the spirit.
- ❖ A healthy spirit benefits both the spirit and the body. If the spirit becomes sick, the body may also become sick. Some of the body's diseases are a result of the diseases of the spirit.
- ❖ The rational spirit thinks, but the body is the one that executes. Without the flesh, the work of the spirit would have been just a theory and no more.
- ❖ The body is the vessel which holds the spirit.
- ❖ The spirit may start sin and the body shares with it. Or the lust of the body controls it so the spirit shares with it, including the mind and the thoughts. The contrary is also true: the spirit is ignited by feelings of righteousness and the love of God, and it draws the body with it and shares with its spirituality. For example, reverence of the spirit leads to reverence of the body.
- ❖ The weak spirit becomes subject to the body but the strong spirit conquers it. The mediocre spirit wrestles with the body; sometimes rising above it and at other times being drawn by it.
- ❖ If the spirit loses the fight it draws the body with it.
- ❖ If the spirit is boosted, the body will be boosted.
- ❖ Do not be too kind to your body, while your spirit is being destroyed.
- ❖ You feed the body every day so you must feed your spirit too. If the body gets sick, it needs a doctor and likewise, so does the spirit. The spirit's doctors are the confession fathers and the spiritual counsellors.
- ❖ Just as the body is decorated in clothes, so the spirit should be decorated in virtues.

## The Conscience of Man

- ❖ The conscience is a voice which God put inside man, calling him to do good and rebuking him when he does wrong, but it is not the voice of God. At the same time, God put a mind in man, calling him for good and gave him a spirit that wrestles against the body.



- ❖ The conscience is not the voice of God, as it often makes mistakes, while God's voice never makes a mistake.
- ❖ The conscience is an inner voice, directing our will towards good, and moves it away from evil, but it does not have the power to force it.
- ❖ The conscience inside man is just like the mind and the spirit. The mind can make mistakes just as the spirit and the conscience.
- ❖ The conscience is like traffic lights on the road. It can show red, warning the driver to stop, but it does not force the driver to stop.
- ❖ The conscience is a judge that loves good, but it is not infallible. The conscience is a fair judge, but it is weak, and its weakness stops us from fulfilling its judgements.

### ***The factors that influence the conscience:***

- Dogmas and Traditions
- Desires
- Knowledge, whether good or wrong.
- Peers
- Those in authority
- ❖ The conscience may be formed according to the principles and ideals of man and changes according to changes in these ideals. Therefore, the conscience's judgement will not always be right, and thus the consciences of people are varied and different. So, what one person may view as right another may view as wrong and vice versa.
- ❖ A weak conscience may be strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the sayings of the Fathers, the sermons, education and a spiritual life. It may also be weakened and left to slumber and be dominated by its own interests and pushed around by the will.
- ❖ The conscience grows by listening to sermons and spiritual talks, by sound knowledge and the influence of good examples.
- ❖ The good conscience is the one which is enlightened by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ A conscience which is not rebuked after sin indicates a defect in it, while its happiness with sin indicates a complete rebellion at all levels.
- ❖ How easy it is for a broad conscience to find excuses to conceal any sin that it falls into.



## The Will of Man

- ✦ The will is a double edged sword. It is used for good and for evil.

### *How to strengthen the will:*

- 1- The means of grace.
- 2- Always surround yourself with a spiritual environment.
- 3- Force yourself.
- 4- Awaken the conscience.
- 5- Fear God and love Him.
- 6- The human being must have values to live by and be committed to them.

### *Causes of a weak will:*

- Lust.
- Surrounded by sinful material.
- Prolonged periods of time in a sinful environment.
- Gradually getting closer to the sinful environment.
- ✦ On earth we have a will which can lean towards good or evil, but in heaven the will leans only towards good. This is because our will becomes holy when we wear the crown of righteousness.

## The senses

- Our senses are the doors of thought, so guard these doors. Know that these senses do not only bring thoughts, but can precipitate in your internal mind and become dreams and doubts.
- ✦ Pure senses bring pure thoughts, bad senses bring evil thoughts and reckless senses bring foolish thoughts.

## The talents

- ✦ It is important for each person to discover his or her own talent and use it.
- The responsibilities of a person increase as his or her talents increase.
- The number of talents is not important but rather how this talent is used for God.



- ❖ Our problem is that we criticise those who do not have talents that please or interest us.
- ❖ As you are honest with your talent, do not despise another's talents.
- ❖ A dangerous practice is that we forget the talents we have and search for those we do not have, and then say we have no talents.
- ❖ God, because of His love for mankind, does not give His talents to everyone, because not all can bear talents. A heart may become proud causing it to become lukewarm.
- ❖ Love does not boast about talents, but, in humility, uses them for the benefit and service of others.
- ❖ God gives talents to be used for the good of people, not to boost a person's pride.

## Death

- ❖ When people die they leave behind their belongings, their property, their money, their family and friends. The only thing they do not leave is their deeds because their works follow them.
- ❖ Death is actually not a punishment, it is a golden bridge to a better life. Also, death is a means of taking off our materialistic, corrupted body.
- ❖ Death of the body is a separation of the spirit from the body, and the death of the spirit is a separation of the spirit from God.
- ❖ No doubt the remembrance of death is beneficial, and hence, the Church reminds us of it.
- ❖ It is not easy for hearts, which have been bound by love, to be separated, especially if the separation is without returning, at least on earth. Sorrow and weeping are natural things, which man cannot hide but they must be within reasonable constraints. This sorrow should not be transmitted into continuous screaming that disrupts prayers in the Church.
- ❖ Death is the way towards a better life and a higher level, to which humanity is destined.
- ❖ You learn from life and also from death. It is a big professor for us all. Many fathers have learnt from death the lesson of withdrawing from the world and learning how vain it is. This has led many to the life of monasticism.



## **Why were you born, why do you live and why do you die?**

### ***Why were you born?***

It is due to the goodness of God and His generosity that He gave you the grace of existence and to enjoy life here on earth, and also a chance to enjoy eternal life, if you desire it and are deserving of receiving eternal life.

### ***Why do you live?***

You live to fulfil a mission in this world and a mission for others around you, to enjoy God here on earth, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8). Also, to test your will in your life and how much you are attracted to good or evil. So your life is a period of testing to prove that you merit the kingdom of heaven, and it determines your place in eternity. So you must find your mission and fulfil it and become a cause of blessing for the generation in which you live. So, according to your mission, if it is strong and useful, your life will be glorified on earth and in heaven.

### ***Why do you die?***

We die to be transmitted to a better life. To what "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9). We are transmitted to a better life with God and His Angels and Saints. Therefore, death is not a termination but rather a transmission. So, if your life stayed on earth and you would remain united to material matters and the material body and this is not good for you. It is good for you to be transmitted from the material life and body to the spiritual and eternal life and, "To be with Christ which is far better." (Philippians 1:23). Thus, the Saints desired to be released from this body. But those who fear death are not prepared for it and they do not trust that they are being transmitted to a better life. Or, perhaps they have lusts here on earth which they do not want to leave!!

Man dies because death is good for the universe. It is not logical that all people live and do not die. If generation after generation lived the earth would not accommodate them. The elderly will tire of ageing and they need people to serve them and care for them. Therefore, a generation dies to give the next generation a chance to live on earth and take its place.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Spiritual Life and the Spiritual Path

- ✦ *The Spiritual Life*
- ✦ *Grace*
- ✦ *The Spiritual Path*
- ✦ *The Spiritual Person*
- ✦ *Children of God*
- ✦ *The Truly faithful person*
- ✦ *The Spiritual Fervour*
- ✦ *The Spiritual vigilance*
- ✦ *The Spiritual Slumber*
- ✦ *Practical advice on the Spiritual Life*
- ✦ *Remember*

**“Always remember that you are a stranger on earth and you are return to your heavenly (homeland)”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## The Spiritual Life

- ❖ The spiritual life is not just a specific virtue, but it is a way of life which encompasses everything.
- ❖ The spiritual life is a constant walk towards God. It is continual progress towards eternity. It is striving towards perfection. Perfection has no limits, thus, the spiritual life does not benefit the one who stops, or sits, or sleeps, but it requires a person who is always seeking with all their might.
- ❖ The spiritual life is not a passive life, for the spiritual life is a positive power in which all virtues integrate without conflict or contradiction.
- ❖ The true spiritual life is a journey towards perfection which has no limits. Therefore, it is a continuous striving and perpetual longing for eternity, for the absolute, without ceasing.
- ❖ The rock on which we build our spiritual life is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.
- ❖ The spiritual life is not just the practise of worship nor is it the visible virtues, but it is a lively heart. It is the life of a heart united with God in a relationship of love. All virtues and worship come from the heart, decorated in love.
- ❖ The spiritual life is a transfer from the tangible and seen to the intangible and unseen.
- ❖ The most dangerous thing which may threaten the spiritual life is a person's independence from God.
- ❖ The spiritual life is not just an outer, physical practise of the flesh, but the true measure of spirituality is a person's inner motives, perseverance, the feelings of the heart and the thoughts.
- ❖ A spiritual person must not walk with their eyes closed, not seeing or noticing the tricks and snares of wolves.
- ❖ It is difficult and often sad that a person's life can be a continuous struggle, rise and fall, repentance and return, life with God and life with the world.
- ❖ By walking in the spiritual path, the person resembles the Angels, having friendship and companionship with the Lord, the angels and with the whole spiritual world, but also becomes an angel to God.
- ❖ Many are concerned about the way not the goal: praying, fasting, praising and reading. But the Lord is not in their hearts and He is not their aim. Seek the Lord only and you will find Him.
- ❖ Look after your life and how to build it up from the inside before building it from the outside. Build it in depth before you build it in length, build it with correction being the aim, before you build it in appearance.
- ❖ Don't let your spiritual life be just a life of occasions.



## Grace

- ❖ Grace is divine help, it is a free gift. God gives grace to help when a person has a weak will, a lenient nature and continuous needs.
- Everything God gave to humans is the work of grace.
- God's grace gives abundantly. He blessed the little and it multiplied.
- ❖ There is no person, without exception, with which the grace of God does not work for their salvation.
- ❖ Grace never leaves the person without working in them, but the matter depends on how the person responds.
- ❖ The work of grace is not spoiling but it is correction and discipline, leading the soul to the love of God.
- ❖ The work of grace in the person doesn't force them to do good, but they should accept of the work of grace and continue to respond.
- ❖ During the period the grace visits a person, there is a feeling of the presence of God with them. There is a deeper feeling of energy and their heart draws closer to the Lord. There is a great love for the Lord and His Kingdom and a need to pray and contemplate deeply. A feeling of being in control of the thoughts directing them in the spiritual direction.

## The Spiritual Path

- ❖ The beginning of the spiritual path is the narrow gate and its end is eternity and the Kingdom of heaven.
- ❖ The beginning can be hard and wearisome nevertheless the end will be abundantly great.
- ❖ Turning away from sin and wrong doing is the start of a good relationship with God.
- ❖ With God the first step is enough, don't ask about the rest of the steps.
- ❖ The student works hard and toils at their studies to attain a high academic level and the business owner works hard for the success of the business, so it is with the spiritual path, we must work hard to receive the Kingdom.
- ❖ Whoever seeks the path of perfection, will never reach its end, and whoever grows and succeeds in perfection has no limits.



## ***Advice for the Spiritual Path***

- ❖ Make God your goal. Go forward towards Him, step by step.
  - Train yourself to always put God first before those that you love for His sake.
  - Be like a seed, which becomes a tree then continues to grow and grow.
  - Be alert to any stunt in growth or decline in growth.
  - Be watchful that you don't just have a relationship with the Holy Spirit but that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - Always walk forward along the path, step by step. With each passing day you become closer than the day before.
  - Everyday which passes will draw you closer to God.
- ❖ If you walk in the spiritual path and fall, do not despair and think that you cannot walk in it anymore. Instead rise up and continue in the path.

## **The Spiritual Person**

- ❖ The spiritual person sees God as their shepherd, their protector and their carer.
- ❖ The spiritual person walks according to the Spirit. They walk wherever the Spirit directs them and guides them and they do not walk according to the flesh and its desires and materialism.
- ❖ The spiritual person is an upright person; upright in their thoughts, their conscience, and their behaviour before God and others.
- ❖ The spiritual person's first priority is their eternal life and they grow in this longing for eternity, until it occupies all their concerns. Their thoughts become concentrated on their eternal fate. Eternity becomes the most valuable thing in their life, work and aim and anything against this eternity will be rejected completely and without discussion. Their present life becomes a preparation for the path to eternity.
- ❖ The spiritual person has only one goal, that is, the Lord. Thus, they do not care about the world or anything in it.
- ❖ An ordinary person may concentrate on their own salvation, however, a spiritual person will care for the salvation of everyone who comes along their path.
- ❖ The spiritual person is holy through the work of the divine sacraments. They are holy because they are a member of the Body of Christ.
- ❖ The spiritual person does not just put the Lord first, but their relationship with the Lord is everything to them.



- ❖ The spiritual person has a character of depth: depth in prayer, preaching, services, worship, repentance, faithfulness, friendship, love and personality.
- ❖ The spiritual person gives their heart to God, because the heart is the place where feelings and spirituality reside.
- ❖ The spiritual person finds their rest in giving others rest.
- ❖ The spiritual person does not flee from struggle and seek rest, but rather finds joy in struggling for the sake of God.
- ❖ The spiritual person does not live for themselves alone.
- ❖ The spiritual person's nature is one of service. They serve others in all areas, not because they are obliged to do so but because the service is a part of their nature and their make-up.
- ❖ The humble servant wins those people who have limited understanding, and those who are most stubborn. He does this by his goodness, diplomacy and humility. Not by scolding people but being careful not to hurt their feelings.
- ❖ The strong person is the one who trains himself to be a servant.
- ❖ Whoever does the work of God must be honest until death, as honesty is a prerequisite for service.
- ❖ When we love those we serve in the same way God loves them, and when we love them as God loves us, we reach perfection in the service.
- ❖ You cannot have spiritual influence on a person unless there is love between both of you.
- ❖ The majority of servants search for the easy, prepared service. They enter into the work of others and build on the foundation laid by others. However, the big fighters are those who labour hard in establishing a service that did not exist before. However, there is no objection that other servants enter into their labours, as that was what Christ the Lord did and left an example for us to work.
- ❖ Yes, those who have the power of spirit in service are few. That is, those who work with the Spirit of God in them, in which the service is deeply influential, bearing multiple fruits. No doubt those are few.
- ❖ The servant should not forget that he is a servant. His job is to serve, not to control or to be proud, because pride is not a characteristic of a servant.
- ❖ Believe me, what is currently affecting our Church is the lack of humility in teaching. Each time a servant gets a new idea, through their reading, they try to make it a doctrine and teach it to others.
- ❖ Perhaps, in eternal life, we will see servants of whom we have never heard, and perhaps servants who we know here now, we will not see there.
- ❖ Joyful is the person who works with God, and sees how God arranges everything.



- ❖ There are servants who waste their life in conflict. They become preoccupied with problems of service and forget the service itself. They see the negatives rather than the positives in the work. Their life is full of struggles and defending their viewpoint and the viewpoints of others toward them, and they enter into spiritual mistakes. Therefore, the service is lost because it is not conducted in a spiritually suitable atmosphere. When they concentrate on the spiritual side of the work, the problems will gradually disappear or at least will be put to the side.
- ❖ They may attribute the importance of the servant to the importance and the greatness of the place in which he serves, as if the service draws its greatness from the place and not from the person or the depth and kind of service, but reality is different.
- ❖ Spiritual people are hungry and thirsty for God, because He is the tree of life, the true vine, the fruit of life. They are thirsty to be bound to Him like the branches in the vine with His juice running inside them to give them life.
- ❖ The spiritual person is like a light, their life beams through the generations. Their story does not end with their death, but is kept alive and is a light to all people.
- ❖ The spiritual person realises that their life on earth is a responsibility, their life is a mission. The Lord will one day ask them how their life was fruitful or beneficial to those who came into contact with them. The Lord will ask, "What were you able to do but didn't?"
- ❖ Each person searches for happiness and this happiness may have many different sources, but the spiritual person's source of happiness is the Lord alone.

### ***The elements of strength in the spiritual person:***

1. The Power of love and sacrifice.
2. The Power of faith.
3. The Power of prayer.
4. The Power of repentance.
5. The Power of victory over spiritual warfare.
6. The Power of admitting mistakes (Confession).
7. The Power of controlling the soul.
8. The Power of long suffering.
9. The Power of character.
10. The Power of works.
11. The Power of impact.
12. The Power of words, service and mission.





## Children of God

- ❖ Children of God have freedom from within. The love of God in their heart freed them and brought them purity and impartiality, gave them strength and courage, freed their hearts from all attachments of desire, and hence, set them free. All became freer than a beam of light or a breath of air.
- ❖ Children of God can own money, but it does not own them.
- ❖ Our affiliation with God does not exempt us from being submissive to Him.
- ❖ We are obliged to be good role models for others, setting the standard before them so that they may see the life of faith and purity in practice.
- ❖ It is expected that whoever sees us should benefit from our appearance, even without a word being exchanged. They should also benefit from our words and acts without any need to preach.
- ❖ When you select good, others will love to follow your faith, but when we reject good then they will blaspheme against God because of us.
- ❖ The eye is affected by spirituality more than the ear, therefore others will be influenced more by what they see you do rather than by any sermon they may hear you say.

## The truly faithful person

- ❖ The faithful person is characterised by a heart full of peace and calmness which does not become troubled or anxious, nor fearful, because they believe that God protects them. They keep their inner peace irrespective of what is happening externally.

### *You, the faithful person:*

- You are a holy breath which came from the mouth of the Lord.
- You are the child of the Lord made in His image and likeness.
- You are God's dwelling place and the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- You are a brother of Christ, co-partner to Christ and you are an inheritor with Him.
- ❖ For the faithful person, it is not enough for them to know the Lord but they must witness to Him, introducing Him to others.



## The Spiritual Fervour

- ❖ **The two stages where spiritual fervour is present:**
- ❖ **Firstly**, when one is a new convert through repentance, humility and a contrite heart, where tears are close to their eyes.
- ❖ **Secondly**, the person who has reached the divine love and this love is a flaming fire in their heart.
- ❖ As long as the spiritual person keeps progressing, they preserve their spiritual warmth, because motion has warmth. However, if one reaches a certain level and stays there, they become stagnant or sluggish.
- ❖ Spiritual warmth removes laziness and enables tears to flow from the eyes.

## The Spiritual Vigilance

- ❖ It is a stage of a righteous person who is vigilant for their own salvation. They are always in a state of spiritual readiness.
- ❖ The hour of prayer at night sanctifies our sleep and sanctifies our internal mind.
- ❖ The spiritual account which the heart takes in at night, prepares it for the following day's temptations.
- Spiritual alertness during the day helps for a holy night and in turn a holy night helps for alertness in the morning.
- ❖ Those who accustom themselves to staying up at night with the Lord, will have their hearts still with Him if they sleep.
- ❖ No doubt vigilance with God indicates a love for Him and a love in the heart for prayer.
- ❖ Vigilance itself reveals that the spirit dominates and not the flesh. It indicates that the demands of the day do not impact the spirit.
- ❖ The difference between the holiest of saints and the most sinful of persons is that the vigilant saint is prepared and ready but the sinner is not alert and is negligent.
- ❖ The vigilance of the spirit is more important without a doubt than the flesh. And with the same measure, the sleep of the spirit is far more dangerous than the sleep of the flesh.
- ❖ As the Lord commands us, the vigilance of the spirit is a lifelong, continuous process.



- ❖ How easy it is to change your goal in life if you do not have spiritual vigilance.
- ❖ Just as the person who has a goal in life looks for various ways to achieve this goal, they must also watch the ways they are using to reach their goal, making sure that they are spiritual and appropriate.
- ❖ Beware of desires which could distract you from your goal whilst you are not alert or not vigilant.
- ❖ Be vigilant for your growth because the road ahead is very long and beware of stopping in your vigilance as you may revert and slip backwards.
- ❖ Watch every sin from the beginning otherwise it will grow and take root.
- ❖ It's very easy for one to feel a sudden fall, but the gradual fall is more dangerous as you do not realise it is happening and it spans a long period of time. Vigilance will keep you alert.
- ❖ The vigilant person who watches over their own salvation is alert for every sin that seeks them. So it is important to be careful and alert the heart to the internal and external wars, which attack the spiritual life. The vigilant person should not only be alert but awake and fight, in order to defeat the devil.
- ❖ The vigilant person is wise to the devils tricks. Sin does not fool them, but they recognise the sin which is dressed in lambs clothing and comes to them in the form of a virtue.
- ❖ The vigilant person does not accept advice from the devil, even if it appears honest or seems beneficial.

## **The Spiritual Slumber**

- ❖ To be lukewarm is falling from love into routine, or a fall of the spirit to the mind, or a fall from spiritual virtues to bodily virtues, or a fall from preoccupation with God to preoccupation with people.
- ❖ Being occupied is a cunning plan of the devil to destroy the spiritual life. The main element in this cunning plan is that it doesn't fight against spiritualities, but rather doesn't give them a chance to work, and hence, we tend to forget them.

### ***Causes of spiritual slumber:***

- A busy life
- Dominant emotions.
- A wicked environment.
- The mind
- Lusts



### ***Hindrances to spiritual growth:***

1. Wars from the devils
2. Environments full of obstacles
3. Spiritual dissatisfaction
4. Wrong advice
5. Wrong examples
6. Pride
7. Abandoning the means of grace
8. Focusing on administrative matters
9. Focusing on the outer rather than the inner virtues
10. Incorrect understanding of the spiritual path



- ❖ **Grieving the Spirit:** When a person sins and falls, they grieve the Spirit of God who dwells in them.
- ❖ **Resisting the Spirit:** When a person rejects the work of the Spirit, they resist the Spirit.
- ❖ **Quenching the Spirit:** When a person is idle and sluggish, they quench the fire of the Spirit inside their heart.

### **Practical advice in the Spiritual Life**

- ❖ Be steadfast from within, firm in the faith, so external conditions do not trouble you, like the house built on the rock, when the wind blew and beat on it and the rains came down, the house did not fall down because it was founded on the rock.
- ❖ Do not waste your time, your nerves or your spirituality in trying to remove evil from the world. Instead, be positive in doing good deeds.
- ❖ Do not move slowly in your spiritual life and do not come to a stop. Do not be distracted by the things around you. Do not let enemies or even your friends hinder you.



- ❖ Accept advice from others so as not to be wise in your own eyes. Remember your sins so you do not become righteous in your own eyes.
- ❖ Regret is of benefit while here on earth, but turns to torment in eternity. Therefore, struggle while you are on earth, before it is too late and regret is of no benefit to you.
- ❖ We must reconcile our way of life within the Church to our way of life outside it in order to proceed along the same path without any contradictions. It is not right to have two personalities, one in the house of the Lord and another in the world.
- ❖ The longest road begins with a first step, start then with this step.
- ❖ Do not try and reform yourself with just external appearances, but work from within the heart. Correct the real causes from which sin comes.
- ❖ Go into your depth, then clean and correct everything from within. Each time you start a new page, keep it always white and clean.
- ❖ Ignite the holy flame, which the Lord put within your heart by prayer, contemplation, meditation, spiritual reading, hymns, praises, tasbeha, spiritual meetings, memorisation and good thoughts.
- ❖ Throw the seed on the soil, but do not stand there watching and waiting for when it will produce fruit, as this is not good for your thoughts or your nerves.
- ❖ Be honest and do not deceive yourself.
- ❖ Do not serve your ego.
- ❖ Your work is not to pluck out the weeds as you may also pluck out the good plants. Your work is to grow like a seed of wheat.
- ❖ Whenever you feel proud of your virtues or knowledge, remember that you are nothing compared to those who have reached much higher standings. Compare yourself with those who are higher than you in order to be humble. Beware of comparing yourself to those who are not as advanced as you, so as not to feel proud.
- ❖ Do not blindly follow those who do not know the will of God for you.
- ❖ If you are suffering from a past failure which continues to follow you, return to yourself and search your inner self carefully. Pluck out the evil from within and reconcile with God in order to regain the blessing. You will then live and succeed.



- ❖ If you have grieved God in the past due to your sins, try now to make Him happy through your repentance and by striving to bring others to salvation.
- ❖ The love of instruction is very dangerous; keep away from it my beloved wherever it exists. Flee from it as much as you can.
- ❖ Before leaving home, just as you prepare your clothes and belongings, prepare your spiritual weapons. Say to Him, "As long as the arrows of the strong are slender, then my Lord I must gird myself with Your spiritual weapons before leaving home". Gird yourself with the strength of God's word, with faith, with wrestling with God and with humility that defeats the devil.
- ❖ Reconcile with yourself so that you will be reconciled with heaven and earth.
- ❖ If you are weak and want God's mercy, then have mercy on the weak.
- ❖ Meditate within yourself and demolish all your idols, which are in the temple of your "ego".
- ❖ Do not say God's commandments are too hard, because if they are too hard the Lord would not have given us these commandments. How would He order us to do something which we could not fulfil?
- ❖ I want you to get out of the scope of "haram and halal", good and evil, laws and commandments and enter into the circle of divine love.
- ❖ If you want God to shield you, make sure to shield the mistakes and sins of your brother and sister.
- ❖ Watch yourself, instead of others watching over you.
- ❖ Enough time has been wasted , so as not to increase the number of your sins, repent now.
- ❖ If you have found all doors closed in front of you, then return to God who opens doors, which no one can close. (Revelation 3:7).
- ❖ Limit yourself from talking to people too much, so that you can talk more to God.
- ❖ If you cannot withdraw completely from sinners, then at least separate yourself from their ways. If you physically cannot separate yourself from sinners then at least separate your mind and your thoughts.
- ❖ Be happy regardless of what happens to you. Say, "It is all for good." In this way, the people of God will be free from all mental illness, from sadness, from trouble, from depression and from despair. And peace always reigns in their heart. The peace, which is based on faith and belief in God and His work.



- ❖ Don't allow your body to rest at the expense of your spirit.
- ❖ You must sacrifice something for the sake of God in order to be steadfast in your love for Him. Your love will be great whenever you make great sacrifices for His sake.
- ❖ Don't waste all your energy on negatives, because the devil is ready to offer you negatives every day in order to keep you distracted and occupied.
- ❖ Let everyone lower their strength, greatness and power, "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty." (Isaiah 2:12).
- ❖ Fill your spirit with spiritual food so that your spirit may be filled with the fruits of the Spirit.
- ❖ It is always good to put your sins before you, but not the details of the particular sins and its lusts.

## Remember

- ❖ Remember your weakness, for when you do you will be more alert and will not be subject to pride and vain glory when they attack you.
- ❖ Remember God's blessings to you. Live a life of thanksgiving and grow in faith. Trust in God's love and in His works. Your previous experiences with God will encourage you to live the life of faith.
- ❖ Remember the love of people towards you and their past loving interactions with you. Whenever you doubt their sincerity or whenever you see their mistakes towards you, remember their past love for you and your anger will disappear.
- ❖ Remember death, so that all the desires of the world will vanish. You will clearly see all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
- ❖ Remember that God is standing in front of you seeing you, so you can't sin in His presence.
- ❖ Remember God's beautiful promises and you will be comforted in all your problems. If you forget them say, like David the Prophet, "Remember the word to your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life." (Psalm 119:49-50).



- ❖ Remember the Blood of Jesus, which was shed for your sake. If you do, you will precisely know the value of your life, and it becomes more precious in your sight. Then you will not destroy it with a lavish life, "For you were bought at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20).
- ❖ Remember your baptismal vows, which your parents promised on your behalf, to deny the devil with all his evil works, his thoughts and cunning ways, with all his hosts and powers.
- ❖ Remember always that you are a stranger on this earth, and one day you will be returning to your heavenly home. So do not put all your efforts on worldly affairs and all they offer.
- ❖ Remember the narrow gate, which leads to the Kingdom. And if you see the wide, open door, flee from it because all who enter from it are destroyed.
- ❖ Remember your eternity and work towards it at all times.
- ❖ Remember that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and don't grieve the Spirit of God inside you. Always remain a holy temple.
- ❖ Remember you are a child of God and you must keep His image and walk as a child of God, as God's children are pure.
- ❖ Remember all that is written for you here on these pages.



## CHAPTER 4

### The Spiritual Means

- ✦ *The Holy Bible*
- ✦ *Prayer*
- ✦ *Fasting*
- ✦ *Confession*
- ✦ *Holy Communion*
- ✦ *Almsgiving*
- ✦ *Reading the Lives of the Saints*
- ✦ *Contemplation*
- ✦ *Spiritual Training*

**“ Prayer is a key to Heaven, it is the language and job of Angels and it is the life of the spirituals”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## The Holy Bible

- ❖ The Holy Bible is the Book of books, or, it is “The Book”. When we say “the Book” we mean the “Book of God”.
- ❖ It is the message of God presented to you and who doesn’t rejoice with a message from God?
- ❖ It is the food for our spirit, which nourishes us and gives us life.
- ❖ It is not only a source of meditation but also a source of consolation.
- ❖ It is not just a message of comfort but also a weapon.
- ❖ Each of us must differentiate between reading the Holy Bible and reading other books. The Holy Bible should not be read while you are in bed preparing to sleep, or while you are relaxing on the couch, or while you are drinking a cup of tea. All these conditions expel the fear of God from our hearts.
- ❖ The word of God works in us even after a long period of time. If it doesn’t work now it may later, but it never returns empty.
- ❖ I know that the Holy Bible has a place in your private room but are you using it in your social relationships?
- ❖ The word of God needs a living conscience to understand it and a pure heart to appreciate it. It is dangerous to limit the word of God by our own understanding. It is also dangerous to have pride in our understanding and think that it is the only proper and true understanding.
- ❖ Do not have the Bible on your desk or in your home just as decoration. It must be read always, taken with you everywhere you go, in your pocket, in your handbag, so that it is available to read at any time.
- ❖ Memorising verses, reciting them, repeating them and meditating on them, is a virtue, and practicing them is a greater virtue.
- ❖ The words of God spoken on our lips are evidence of our spirituality and our religious belonging.
- ❖ Read the Holy Bible and trust that each time you read it you will find something new. God’s words are rich and full of goodness. They are an everlasting source of contemplation.
- ❖ I fear that the Holy Bible becomes like a foreign book in our homes and in our lives. He doesn’t have a place to lay His head.
- ❖ When you read the Holy Bible, you listen to God, He is talking to you. Listen to Him with reverence, and as you read with respect, God’s words will have an effect on you.



- ❖ The Psalms give us great consolation in all our problems, both spiritual and social.
- ❖ The Psalms have their great spiritual power, blessings, impressions and consequences.
- ❖ The Book of Song of Songs: The spiritual person may read this book and be filled with the love of God, but a less spiritual person requires guidance in understanding the true meaning behind it. This Book is the Book of Love. It speaks of the love which exists between God and humanity, or between God and the Church, in the image of love between a bride and groom.
- ❖ The Sermon on the Mountain is the constitution for Christianity. It is the highest teaching humanity has ever known.

## Prayer

- ❖ It is a bridge linking God and man.
- ❖ It is the work of the heart, whether expressed in words or not.
- ❖ It is consecrating the lips and thoughts and sanctifying the soul. Furthermore, it is reconciliation with the Lord.
- ❖ It is horror to demons and the strongest weapon against them.
- ❖ It is opening the heart to God for a faithful conversation with Him, filled with frankness and love.
- ❖ It is exposing the soul before God.
- ❖ It is a link between God and humanity. Therefore, it is not a normal conversation but a heart talking to a heart.
- ❖ It is the feeling of the presence of God. It is an association with the Holy Spirit and bonding with God.
- ❖ It is the food of the angels and the spirituals; by prayer they taste the Lord and are nourished.
- ❖ It is quenching the thirsty soul for God.
- ❖ It is submitting one's life to God, for Him to direct it, "Your will be done".
- ❖ It is admitting that our struggle and our intelligence are not enough. Therefore, we resort to the Higher Power when we need care.
- ❖ It is eliminating our independence from God.
- ❖ It is an assembly with God: we go up to Him or He comes down to us.
- ❖ It is transforming the soul into heaven and into the throne of God.



- ❖ It is a complete death to the world and complete omission of the ego, where God alone remains in the mind.
- ❖ It is the ladder that connects heaven to earth.
- ❖ It is the bridge through which we pass to go to heaven.
- ❖ It is the key to heaven.
- ❖ It is a combination of feelings, which are expressed in words.
- ❖ The deepest prayer is the prayer which we raise when we are very tired.
- ❖ Often a person prays but rarely cries during prayer. Crying is a higher level which is an indication of needs and seriousness in prayers.
- ❖ Lifting up the hands towards heaven, which is where the seat of the Lord is. Lifting ones hands allows the body to share with the soul during prayer.
- ❖ At times the Lord answers quickly and at other times the answer is slow. He is wise in His quick response and in His slow response.
- ❖ The person who knows the power of prayer can never be defeated.
- ❖ Whoever feels delight during prayer and the presence of God, will not want to change the environment of prayer or move away from God.
- ❖ There are many short, strong and deep prayers which were very effective.
- ❖ There are two aims of prayer: one is to pray for oneself and the other is to praise God due to one's great love for God.
- ❖ A person who needs to drag themselves to prayer shows that love for God is not yet in their heart.
- ❖ There may be a prayer which has no words or conversation. The heart beat is a prayer, tears from the eyes are a prayer, the soul feeling the presence of God is a prayer.

### **Contrite Prayers:**

- ❖ This is the prayer which recognises all its sin and feels unworthy. It does not justify itself, does not make excuses but rather it confesses that it deserves judgement.
- ❖ A prayer in which the tax collector was not able to raise his eyes, felt humiliated and stood far away.
- ❖ It is a prayer in which one feels unworthy and embarrassed to ask for anything because of sin, but dares only to ask for mercy and to give thanks for all things.
- ❖ Prayer should not be measured by its length but by its depth and purity.



- ❖ The prayer of the Pharisee was longer than the tax collector's, but the Lord did not accept it because of his impure heart.
- ❖ Do not focus on the outer incense, but instead, purify your heart so that your prayers arise like sweet incense.
- ❖ The feelings in your prayer are more important than the words.
- ❖ The faithful person does not focus their prayers on themselves only but remembers others and prays for the Universal Church.
- ❖ Do not ask and insist, but ask and say, "Your will be done". And when you say that, you must say it with joy and without sorrow.
- ❖ Perhaps what you ask for will not benefit you. Perhaps the timing is wrong and the Lord will answer it later. This humbles you and allows the wisdom of God to work in you and allows you to wait on the Lord with trust.
- ❖ The words "have mercy" are the most used words in our Church.
- ❖ Prayer should start first with love from the heart, then thoughts from the mind, then words spoken with the tongue.
- ❖ The Lord gives us what benefits us and not what we ask for, unless it is beneficial, because most of the time we ask for what does not benefit us.
- ❖ Do not be disappointed if you ask the Lord and you do not receive. Perhaps the answer is not to give you your request.
- ❖ Assuredly, your prayers are kept with the Lord and have not vanished.
- ❖ Most of the time we are too daring in our prayers, although our prayers should be in reverence and humility. It is true that God is kind and gentle and loves us more than a mother loves her child, but it is not right, in this atmosphere of love, that we forget ourselves and forget that we are made of just sand and ashes.
- ❖ If you love God, you pray and if you pray, you increase your love for Him.
- ❖ Praising God is the deepest type of prayer.
- ❖ Whoever praises God continuously has peace in their heart and does not get angry or annoyed.
- ❖ When we do prostrations, it is not just the bowing of the body but it is bowing the spirit with the flesh.
- ❖ **The Lord's Prayer "Our Father Who art in Heaven...."** is an ideal prayer. It is the Lord Himself who taught it to us and that is why we call it the Lord's Prayer.
- ❖ There is no room for the individual in the Lord's Prayer. It is a prayer of a person who does not pray for themselves but for all of humanity.



#### ✦ **A prayer**

- "Have mercy on me Lord because I am weak. Don't allow anyone to fall into my hands and don't allow me to fall into anyone's hands. Before I say: don't give power to a person to trample on me, I say: don't give me power to push others out of my way. Always make me the oppressed but not the oppressor, the crucified but not the crucifier, defeated but not triumphant, because You will then be with me. Don't allow me to be victorious over people but give me victory over myself, in Your eyes".

#### ***The conditions of the acceptable prayer:***

- Must be with the spirit.
- Must be with love and fervour.
- Must be with understanding and attentiveness.
- Must be with reverence before God.
- And let your prayers be with faith.

#### ***Exercises in prayer***

1. Train yourself to extend the time spent in the presence of God.
2. Train yourself to wake up early and start the day with prayer.
3. Give more care to the prayers of the "hours of Agbia".
4. Try to practise praying in every place.
5. Train yourself to pray the short, repetitive prayers.
6. Train yourself to pray for others.
7. Train yourself to bring God into every topic and every problem.
8. Train yourself in personal prayers as well as the ritual ones.
9. Train yourself to contemplate on the Psalms and the Agbia and all the memorised prayers.
10. If you haven't yet reached the pure and holy prayer, do not stop praying.
11. Train yourself to continue praying, whenever you want to end it.

✦ **A prayer:** *"Have mercy on me O Lord, because if You do not have mercy on me, no one else will."*

#### ✦ **A prayer for the New Year:**

*Lord, make it a blessed year, a holy, pure year, to please you. A year in which Your spirit prevails, and shares the work with us. Hold our hands and guide our thoughts from the beginning of the year until the end, so that this year will be Yours to rest in it.*



*It is a New, pure Year, don't allow us to contaminate it with sins or defilement. Partake in every work we do this year. Silent we will be, and You will do the work on our behalf. Let us rejoice in all things and say with St. John the Evangelist, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that were made." (John 1:3). Let this year O Lord, be a happy year. Put a smile on every face and bring joy to every heart. Enter with Your grace in tribulations and give help to those who are tempted and grant us peace and quietness of mind.*

*Grant livelihood to the needy, healing to the sick and comfort to the mournful. Let us ask not just for ourselves but for all, because they are Yours. You created them to enjoy You, so let them be joyful.*

*We ask you for the Church, for Your mission, for Your words to reach every heart. We ask You for the sake of our country, for peace in the world in order for Your Kingdom to come to every place.*

*Let it be a fruitful year, with all goodness, for every day and every hour has its own work and don't allow any second to be idle. Fill our life with activity, work and productivity. Grant us the sacred blessing. Let the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us in all our deeds. We thank You Lord for You kept us till this moment and granted us this year, that we may bless You.*

### ***The spirituality of praying with the Agbia: Why do we pray with the Agbia?***

1. To increase our presence with God.
2. The Agbia is a school with which we learn to pray.
3. The Agbia includes all the different types of prayers.
4. The Agbia teaches us to praise.
5. It includes many details.
6. It is a prayer according to the will of God.
7. It reminds us of many holy occasions.
8. It keeps our mind always with God.
9. It occupies our mind with God and so grants us gentle thoughts.
10. It is a model of prayer, therefore it is a great teaching tool.
11. It helps us recite the words of God and Bible verses.
12. It unites all the members of the Church together in one prayer.
13. These united prayers will also bind the hearts and feelings.
14. We pray with the Agbia because it is the ideal prayer with which our holy forefathers prayed.
15. It plants the seeds of the faithful doctrines in the soul.
16. It organises our prayers.
17. It is full of all kinds of feelings.



- ❖ **The Agbia prayers are a song of love:** They are prayers flowing with love, love directed to God, to His name, His Book and His commandments, to His house and His holy places and also to His angels, people and His saints. Also, they teach us how to talk to God with love.
- ❖ **In the Agbia, there are prayers and answers:** The prayers are a cry from the person and the work of God for their sake. It has the request and has the quick response, so it is a prayer that carries the spirit of hope and joy. Therefore, the request often concludes with thanksgiving and rejoicing.
- ❖ **In the Agbia there is joy and happiness with the Lord:** Although the Agbia prayers contain repentance from sin in contriteness and tears, it is also filled with rejoicing and praising the Lord, His salvation and His works.
- ❖ **With the Agbia we find comfort in God's promises and we are filled with joy:** God's promises reassure the soul because they are truthful, and the Agbia prayers contain many of these divine promises. When we remember these promises in our prayers, our heart will be nourished with hope and joy, as the Apostle says, "Rejoicing in hope." (Romans 12:12).
- ❖ **In the Agbia there is the complete surrender to God:** Words of dependence on God are found throughout the Agbia.
- ❖ **The Agbia is a school of faith:** The Church teaches us that our Agbia prayers are not separated from our faith. The faithful doctrine is a part of the prayers. We believe in God, that is why we speak to Him in prayer and the Agbia speaks to us, in detail, about God.  
It is a lesson of faith and each time we pray from the Agbia we deepen our faith. Indeed, we understand our faith through the Church rites, the Holy Bible, the Doctrinal books and the teachings of the Early Church Fathers.
- ❖ **In the Agbia there is thanksgiving and gratitude:** Most people, in their prayers, ask and very few give thanks. However, the person who prays from the Agbia remembers God's blessings to him, so he gives thanks to Him for all things, confessing with joy and praise for his gratitude.
- ❖ **Praising with the Agbia:** The Agbia is full of praise, from the First Hour Prayer in the morning till the Midnight Prayer at night and all the prayers in between. What we learn from the Agbia is that praise is an essential element which is steadfast on the tongue and in the heart of the praying person.
- ❖ **Salvation in the Agbia prayers:** Salvation is a main subject in the Agbia prayers. We ask Him always and we thank Him for it. We remember God's salvation and His redemption in every hour of the Agbia.



- ❖ **Knowledge of the way:** The person who prays from the Agbia, asks the Lord for guidance in His way and His will.
- ❖ **In the Agbia we ask for God's help:** In the Agbia, we don't ask for the ability, but rather for God's help. We ask Him to grant us what we ask for. It is a lesson which the Agbia offers, to grant us a holy life.

## Fasting

- ❖ I would like you to fast gradually, so that you can reach not only hunger of the flesh, but even more than that, the ascetic flesh.
- ❖ Many people fast but they do not benefit spiritually because they do not understand what fasting is, and they do not fast in a spiritual way.
- ❖ Fasting is not just a bodily virtue. The first spiritual element in it is control of the will and the second is repentance.
- ❖ Fasting is not just bodily abstinence from food. It must have a positive dimension, which is offering and presenting spiritual food.
- ❖ Fasting is the oldest commandment known to humanity. The first commandment given by God to our father Adam was to abstain from a specific type of food, from a specific tree (Genesis 2:16-17), but he was permitted to eat all other kinds of food.
- ❖ By abstaining from food one rises to a higher level, a level which is above the physical and materialistic. This is the wisdom of fasting.
- ❖ Fasting is not just a commandment from God, it is a divine gift. It is a gift, a grace and a blessing. The Lord, who created us as body and spirit, knows that we need to fast. And fasting is necessary for our spiritual life, for our benefit, for our spiritual growth and for our eternity. So, He granted us to know fasting and to practise it, and He commanded us to practice it as a tender, gentle Father and wise Teacher.
- ❖ Fasting presents us with a good opportunity to bring God into every problem, and for the broken hearted to call upon the Lord who hears us.
- ❖ True fasting is to practise self-control and to use this practise in all other aspects of life.
- ❖ Fasting was a spiritual school, where the martyrs were trained. Through fasting, the Church taught her children the ascetic life and trained them to leave everything in the world, for martyrdom.
- ❖ From the physical point of view, fasting is abstaining from food for a period of time, followed by eating food which is completely free of animal products.



## ***Fasting and Prayer:***

- The prayer of a person who is fasting is the deepest of prayers.
- A body which is filled with food does not deliver prayers filled with the spirit.
- Two minutes of prayer while you are starving is much better than hours of prayer whilst full.
- ✦ Fullness of food makes the body heavy and so encourages sleep. In contrast, the person light in body, who does not have a heavy digestive system, stays awake. Fasting and staying awake enlightens the thoughts.

## ***The benefits of fasting for the body:***

1. Fasting is a period of rest for most of the body's organs.
  2. Vegetarian food protects the body from cholesterol related problems.
  3. With fasting one may reduce obesity.
  4. Fasting helps to treat many kinds of diseases.
  5. Fasting keeps the body light and active.
  6. Fasting is not hunger to the body, but food for the spirit.
  7. Fasting is a time for the spirit to be elevated, and draws the body upwards.
- ✦ The correct goal of fasting is our love for God, as fasting draws us closer to Him.
  - ✦ During the days of fasting, set for yourself specific days to stay at home and not leave the house. Organise your responsibilities, your issues, your visitations and so on, so that you may enjoy a time of seclusion on these special days.

## **Confession**

- ✦ Confession is to judge yourself.... judge yourself before God, in the presence of the priest, to receive forgiveness.
- ✦ When the priest gives you the absolution, he is actually performing a process of transfer. He transfers your sins from your account to Christ's account, transfers the sin from your head to the head of the Lamb, who carries the sins of the whole world. And so Christ abolishes your sin with His blood.
- ✦ The purpose of confession is not to sit with the priest and complain about others or discuss their faults, but it is a time to reflect on your own faults and mistakes.



- ✦ Confession is not merely a relationship between you and your confession father, but, above all, it is a relationship between you and the Lord.
- ✦ It is not right for a priest to make his children in confession a mirror image of himself, or for them to become copies of each other.
- ✦ The confession father is an oasis in your valley of life. A place to rest and to contemplate on God (not the oasis or the rest itself).
- ✦ The confession father does not strive to bind a person to his own heart, his love and his obedience, but rather to bind a person to God's heart, God's love and God's obedience. The Confession Father seeks to obscure himself from your life, so that the Lord appears in you. He does not think that he is the owner of the vine but rather, that he is an agent who the Lord has sent to His vine, to purify it, in order to bring more fruits.

### ***Confessing our sins includes four important points:***

1. Confessing our mistakes and sins to God in prayer.
2. Confessing in the presence of the confession father.
3. Confessing to all those you sinned against.
4. Confessing to yourself that you have sinned.

### ***Advice for the Confessor:***

1. You must be considerate of the time, responsibilities and health of the confession father.
2. Know that the spiritual benefit you derive from confession is linked to how much you open your heart and speak the truth during confession.
3. You must keep all advice given to you by your confession father to yourself.
4. Do not ask your confession father to agree on certain decisions you have already made, in order to get what you want.
5. Do not ask your confession father about matters which will not benefit you.
6. You should have complete trust in your confession father.
7. If you have any doubts regarding your confession father, approach him in a polite, non-offensive manner.
8. Do not treat your confession father as an equal and do not reproach him vigorously. During your confession, always remember that you are standing before the Lord's delegate.



9. Do not allow jealousy to enter into your heart when your confession father is dealing with another person who has their own difficult issues.
10. Do not consult your confession father too frequently about trivial matters.
11. You must be obedient and let it be a wise obedience.
12. If your confession father blames you for any of your sins, do not be upset or annoyed as he does this for your own benefit and do not try to justify yourself during your confession.
13. If you make a request of your confession father and he remains silent, do not take this silence as consent to the request.
14. In your confession, do not give only half-truths as you should tell the whole truth.
15. Do not convert the time of confession into a time to complain about others and their sins. Concentrate only on your own sins.

## Holy Communion

- ❖ Holy Communion gives purity and not preservation.
- ❖ Not everyone benefits the same way from Holy Communion. It is according to their inner heart.
- ❖ Be aware not to be like Herod, who said, "I come and worship Him", but his heart was not faithful and he wanted to kill Him, for whoever partakes of Holy Communion without being worthy, resembles Herod.

### ***Preparation for Holy Communion:***

1. Prepare by having a humble and a contrite heart.
2. Repentance and inner purity must accompany Holy Communion.
3. Physically prepare the body to partake in Holy Communion.
4. Reconciliation is a must before partaking in Holy Communion.

*Lord, it is not because I am worthy of partaking in Holy Communion or that I deserve to, but because of my need and for my remedy.*

## Almsgiving

- ❖ Giving is leaving the shell of the ego to share with others.
- ❖ Whatever you give to a needy person, you actually give to the Lord Himself, whether it be food for the hungry or clothes for the naked.



- ✦ What we have is not owned by us but by God. He gave us in order for us to give to others.
- ✦ We do not give God, we take from Him and then, in return, He accepts this offering from us. Just like a father who gives his son fruits and then is pleased when his son gives him one of these fruits in return.
- ✦ Giving, in Christianity is not charity. We do not give charity to others but we give the poor their rights, which the Lord deposited with us, as agents for their money.
- ✦ Giving in Christianity is giving to all, without discrimination. It does not know religion or sect, but knows love which appreciates need and sacrifice. Look at the candle which gives itself first before giving light to you. As it gives you light, it gives you itself.
- ✦ Do not give to God what you've rejected for yourself, but give what you love for yourself and what you want to keep.
- ✦ The greatest sort of giving which shows love and sacrifice is to give out of poverty.
- ✦ What you give must first be given from your heart; out of love before it comes out of your pocket.
- ✦ As people ought to give abundantly of material things, they should also give generously of their emotions, feelings and spiritual matters.
- ✦ The highest degree of giving is giving yourself.
- ✦ The important thing is not to wait for others to come to us for help, but have the initiative to recognise the needs of others.
- ✦ The poor have the right share in your money or at least the tithes.
- ✦ If your offerings are without love, then you are not offering anything.

### ***Practice in giving:***

1. Give without being asked to do so.
2. Do not postpone giving.
3. Give of the best that you have.



## Reading the lives of the Saints:

Reading the lives of the Saints is one of the most important spiritual means, used by God's grace, in order to develop our relationship with Him and inflame our love for Him and for His Kingdom.

### *The spiritual influences of the lives of the Saints are:*

1. They are role models and good examples.
2. They strengthen our faith.
3. They enhance our feeling of humility and contrition.
4. They give us the spirit of wisdom and discernment.
5. They guide us in continual spiritual growth.

## Contemplation

- ✦ **To contemplate on something means to concentrate on it, examine it closely, analyse it, explore it, and inspect it with depth.**
- Contemplation can be achieved in depth by opening the mind, the heart and the spirit to receive divine knowledge from above, or from within, from the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.
- Contemplation is the enlightening of the mind by the Holy Spirit.
- A purely intellectual mind, which does not have the Holy Spirit, cannot attain contemplation. It may produce knowledge and philosophy but not contemplation.

## Spiritual Training:

- ✦ **The importance of spiritual training:**
- Through spiritual training, a person may enter into a struggle from within; either to leave behind their sins or to gain virtues or to grow spiritually.
- Spiritual training indicates that the person is vigilant and watchful over their salvation, realising their mistakes and faults and training to overcome them.

## CHAPTER 5

### Service

- ✦ *The Service*
- ✦ *The Servant*
- ✦ *Words in service*
- ✦ *Serving the Individual*
- ✦ *Winning Souls*
- ✦ *The Discipleship*
- ✦ *The Life of Consecration*

**“The love which does not sacrifice is a barren love, without fruit”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## The Service

- ❖ Service is a serious responsibility before God and the Church.
- ❖ Service is more delivery than teaching. It is delivery of life to others, delivering a Godly picture to others and delivery of a living model.
- Service is the teacher before it can be the lesson.
- The servant is a person who has tasted the sweetness of the Lord and gives that taste to others, saying: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8). It is a life flowing from a high spirit to every other spirit.
- ❖ Service is filling up and overflowing. First you must have a life of companionship with Christ and personal experience of the spiritual life in order to offer God to others. There is a well-known saying with respect to service, "Only what is filled can overflow."
- If you are not filled, you can't overflow. You must be filled first before you can overflow onto others.
- ❖ Service is an effective force. It is the power of the Spirit that works in the servant and the people who are being served. It is the power of the word of God, which does not come back empty.
- ❖ Service is a spirit, not rules and regulations. It is the spirit of the servant, which the children absorb from the servant. It is the spirit by which the servant gives his lesson and the spirit with which he deals with the children.
- Service is the heart of the servant before their tongue. It is a warm heart, before a means of education and delivery of material.
- ❖ Service is a spiritual means of growing, not only for the children but also for the servant.
- ❖ Service is a mission, and the Lord chooses who He wants for it.
- ❖ Service is a natural outcome, which is greater than itself, that is, love.
- ❖ Service is a giving nature in the servant, who gives love, teaching, visitation, consolation, and assistance. The servant gives to every person on every occasion and in every place.
- ❖ Service is a good source of energy.
- ❖ Service is food which the servant offers to the spirit of the people being served, filling them with the good word of God.
- ❖ Service is holy zeal, a flame of fire inside the heart that makes the servant inflamed with love for others and seeking their salvation, never stopping until they connect others with God.



- ❖ Service is a bridge that connects people with God, or a bridge, on which the gifts of God are transmitted to people. It is like the stairs of Jacob which connect heaven and earth, ascending with people's requests and descending with the response from God.
- ❖ Service is part of the large debt that we owe the Church, who raised and taught us. Service is the spiritual duty of each person.
- ❖ The true service is not the service in which the spirituality of a person decreases until it is finished, because the person is concerned only with the outside service, forgetting the words, "The Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21),
- ❖ The service in essence, is an expression of the stored love in the heart toward God and people.

## The Servant

- ❖ The spiritual servant is a beautiful hymn to the ear of the Church and a pure icon that blesses whoever sees it. The spiritual servant is a staircase, always reaching to heaven, on which his disciples ascend.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a living Bible, or a moving Church. They are God's picture in front of their disciples.
- ❖ The spiritual servant always has a crushed feeling and a feeling of unworthiness.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is always a person of prayer; through prayer he is serving his children and solving their problems.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a candle lit by fire; they are zealous, inflamed for the salvation of souls.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is the aroma of Christ and others smell this beautiful aroma.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is continuously moving towards God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a person who always battles with God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a spirit and not just a mind.
- ❖ The spiritual servant does not give lessons but is a lesson themselves.
- ❖ The disciples of the spiritual servant do not need visitation, as they themselves desire his lessons.
- ❖ The spiritual servant loves his disciples and loves their salvation.



- ❖ The spiritual servant has spiritual children because they have been raised in a spiritual way and therefore, they become like their servant.
- ❖ The spiritual servant feels that the children he serves are entrusted to him and that he is accountable before God for them.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is patient until the seeds he plants grow, become green, blossom and bear fruit.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a very attractive magnet and whoever enters in his field becomes attracted to his spiritual life.
- ❖ The spiritual servant has the word of God, which is living and powerful (Hebrew 4:12), and which leaves an influence on the listener and does not come back empty (Isaiah 55:11).
- ❖ The spiritual servant's main concern is the salvation of the souls he serves, forgetting himself and thinking only of them.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is an honest person, working hard, with all his might for the service.
- ❖ The spiritual servant does not work by his own effort or ability but by the Holy Spirit who works in him.
- ❖ The spiritual person is not a person who trains for the life of repentance, but rather trains for the life of perfection.
- ❖ The spiritual servant aims for a spiritual life for his children, therefore his lessons are deep, practical and bring them closer to God.
- ❖ The spiritual person does not allow worldly matters to distract him from his spirituality.
- ❖ The spiritual servant does not feel that he gives, but rather, each time he serves, he feels that he receives something new from God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant lives the life of discipleship during his service. Each day he learns and experiences something new.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a person who lives with God and has experienced the way that leads to Him.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is detached from his ego; he is not preoccupied by it and he does not let it direct his service.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a person whose will is bound to the will of God. He is preoccupied, day and night, with the Kingdom of God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant has a big heart which accommodates everybody and does not resent any person.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a flame of fire in his service.



- ❖ The spiritual servant finds pleasure in his work with God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant cares for the spiritual food of his children.
- ❖ When the spiritual servant speaks on a theological topic, or dogma, or rites, he speaks with spiritual words.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is the salt of the earth, so what happens if the salt loses its saltiness!!
- ❖ The spiritual servant is like the sun, brightening wherever it appears.
- ❖ The spiritual servant is a blessing to all his surroundings.
- ❖ All those the spiritual servant serves feel that he is a man of God.
- ❖ The spiritual servant views himself as a beginner, not only in the service but also in the spiritual life.
- ❖ The servant is a person who speaks what God puts in his mouth.
- ❖ The servant is a person who carries God.
- ❖ He is a person who loves others and transfers the love of God to them.
- ❖ The true servant is sensitive towards the needs of others. He sits, learns and contemplates on what others need from him and on how to carry out these needs.

## Words in service

- ❖ The hand of God appears in difficult services. It also appears in the person's sacrifices and hard work.
- ❖ The service of the role model is a silent service, but has a more powerful influence than the service of the word, because it presents a practical model of the spiritual life, which is without doubt more powerful than just words about this life.
- ❖ The power of service is not in its length but in its depth, in the extent of its effectiveness and its affection.
- ❖ The power of service lies in the depth of its influence and not in the multitude of those served. It is not in the number of followers, but in the number of those you lead to the knowledge of God and His love.
- ❖ The success of service is not in the large quantity of those whom you have served, but in how your service has changed their lives and has led them to God.
- ❖ The power of the servant's meeting is in the number of dedicated servants.
- ❖ Witnessing to God should be in wisdom and love and let your testimony be convincing, saturated and complete.



- ❖ Some feel comfortable in a relaxed service where there is no hardship or fatigue, but in fact, the power of service is in bearing hardship with sacrifice and joy.
- ❖ True service is that which is offered with hard labour. Service is measured by the amount of sacrifice which the servant has made.
- ❖ Perhaps you have given hundreds of lessons in Sunday school, however, in God's eyes these are less than the one time, when you were sick and exhausted but did not make excuses and went to serve, preferring it over yourself. Or when you went to serve during exam time, in spite of needing every minute of your time. Here, service has a special depth.
- ❖ It is good for the individual to serve with care and honesty and with all their energy, but it is not good that service replaces God. The true spiritual service leads to God, but does not replace Him.
- ❖ The service of the spiritual person has its own special character; in it you feel that God is the One who works and blesses every step, and is not a result of this person or that person.

### ***Two things for service to succeed:***

1. That God be the aim.
2. That God be the means.

And that the ego should not be the aim or the means.

- ❖ Whoever loves service does not complain about it if it starts to become harder.
- ❖ Yes, it is good for us to work hard so that others may rest, and not for us to rest and leave others to work hard.
- ❖ The wise, humble servant does not neglect anyone or cause another person to feel down, but he respects all and others love him for his humility.
- ❖ Some measure the power of the servant by the length of his service (and this is where the expression "the old servants" came from), but truly, this is not an accurate measure, as we may find servants who have had fewer years of service, but are more productive and have greater influence.
- ❖ Be sure that you yourself benefit from your service, more than others benefit from it.
- ❖ Watch yourself, because there are servants whose spiritual life looks like a pyramid; first, rising to the top, then descending again as their time, interests and passions change. Their interest in service changes according to their own interests and they don't find time for their own spiritual life.



- ✦ You can't work on the salvation of others, while you personally, have not yet walked in the way of salvation.

### ***The specifications for proper teaching:***

1. Must be correct teaching.
2. Must be rich teaching.
3. Must be suitable to those who are served, and graded according to their level.
4. Must be pure teaching.
5. Must be Biblical teaching, based on the Word of God.
6. Let your teaching also be an Apostolic teaching, according to the tradition, which we have received from the Early Church Fathers.
7. Let your teaching also be complete, that is, do not mention only half the truth and beware of quoting single verses out of context.

### ***The Place of God in the service:***

- God is the One who invites us to serve.
- God is the Speaker in the service.
- God is the One who gives the power and the influence.

### ***Advice to the servant in relation to his family:***

1. Do not be a stumbling block to your family, but instead, inspire them to love the spiritual path as shown by your character, that they may respect your conduct in life.
2. Be compassionate in the advice you offer others and steer away from the spirit of pride and authoritarianism, but respect all.
3. Try not to impose on others an air of compulsory reverence, or an air of pedantry or harassment.
4. Be wise in your fasting; do not be a cause of disturbance in your family and do not drive them to be fearful of you and maybe make your fasting known outside the family.
5. Be wise in your worship and service, and do not let these impact on your studies and your responsibilities to your family.



Being consecrated and devoted to serving God and the wider family, which is the Universal Church, does not allow us to be neglectful of our duties towards our own family and relatives.

## Serving the Individual

Serving large groups comes with public status, it can be very influential and it generally does not need follow up. But to serve an individual has its own special features and needs deeper follow up.

**Serving the individual differentiates itself from serving a group. Some of the features of serving an individual are:**

1. It is a type of specialisation and has a direct benefit.
2. It is characterised by a special reward because it is done in secret.
3. It carries humility in service.
4. It portrays more love and care.
5. Perhaps serving an individual has its own dangers which may transfer to the larger public service.
6. Through individual service the servant receives a deeper spiritual experience.
7. The individual service has a more practical side than the collective service.
8. The individual work is love for people, it is a realization of the value of every single soul.

## Winning Souls

- ✦ The first key in attracting others is love. You cannot lead others to God unless you love them first and they love you in return. Because people are inclined to listen to those they love.
- ✦ Our most important mission in life is to gain souls. We gain these souls through our good relationship with them. We gain them, most importantly, for God so they become His souls.
- ✦ Attracting others needs patience, endurance and requires time.



### **How do you win others for God?**

- Do not offer spiritualities to others which are above their level lest they despair and fail at the beginning of their journey.
- Using wisdom, the servants should not lead others into contradictory spiritual teachings.
- It is not appropriate for a servant to interfere in the private matters of another person, and volunteer advice without knowing that person's circumstances and inner feelings.
- The wise servant knows when to rebuke regarding sin and when to open the door of hope, without scolding, discerning what best benefits the soul.
- The wise servant does not try to make others a mirror image of themselves.
- The wise servant must be patient and not get irritated.
- You can never win others if you always observe their mistakes and judge them, scrutinising their defects and talking about them in front of others. By highlighting their mistakes you make them feel small and hurt their feelings and of course you do not win them.
- Be sure that the person whom you praise honestly and sincerely, will be easy to win. Also those whom you encourage, discover their virtues, qualities and abilities, you will win.
- Identify the good points in the life of others, and praise their actions.
- Win God so you win people... Win God first, then you win yourself in God. And if you win yourself, you will win others by example before teaching.

### **The Discipleship**

- ❖ Discipleship starts in the life of a human, but does not end.
- ❖ Happy are those who live a life of discipleship all their life.
- ❖ Some believe that when they became servants, the era of discipleship for them has ended. This is incorrect thinking. In order to keep your humility you must always keep your discipleship.
- ❖ If you feel that you have become a teacher and you are above the level of discipleship, and then know very well that you begin to fall in pride.
- ❖ The Christian life is the life of discipleship, and whoever believes in Christ has been called His disciple.



- ❖ The spiritual person becomes a disciple by hearing a beneficial word. So search for it from all sources. Firstly, from the Holy Bible, then from the sayings of the Early Church Fathers, also from trusted teachers and, in fact, from any source, even if it is a word which comes from the mouth of a sinner but is useful.
- ❖ Discipleship does not know age or position and blessed is the one who lives as a disciple all his life.
- ❖ You are not disciples only by the words of the teachers, but by their life, even with no words spoken. Absorb their life through their good example. The ears are not the only way of learning, but the eyes also.
- ❖ Discipleship through books and reading allows knowledge and life, and in order to transfer some of your knowledge to life, you must have spiritual exercises. Read, understand well and extract a spiritually useful and suitable meaning for yourself and make a private note to yourself to remember it from time to time. Train yourself in it, give an account and watch yourself in its application.
- ❖ Discipleship to a confession father. Happy is the person who has a confession father on the level of spiritual advice, who does not only listen and read the absolution, but also gives advice and teaching, explains the spiritual path, and grants his child in confession the talent of discernment and differentiation.





### **Notes about discipleship under spiritual fathers and advisors:**

1. The advisor must be right in his doctrine, right in his guidance, tested and experienced.
2. If the father and the advisor deviate, you must not obey or accept their guidance.
3. It is fine for the individual to ask his teacher or advisor and his confession father.
4. It is not good that the individual tries to resemble his confession father in everything.
5. The advisor should also not suppress the personality of his disciple.
6. Also, an individual may have more than one advisor, to receive guidance on many issues.
7. An individual who receives guidance from an advisor or from books, may need to have some grading.
8. You should not consider your spiritual father as just a way to get approval and execute your own wishes on something you have already decided.
9. Before you go for spiritual guidance, you must pray so that God gives your guide the correct thoughts which suit your life.
10. You must know that the virtues, which you achieve according to your own desire, may lead you to vain glory.
11. How dangerous it is when someone says that he receives his knowledge from God directly, and that he is a disciple of Christ directly.
12. Teaching from God means teaching from Godly sources. We learn from God through His Holy Bible, we learn from Christ through His Holy life. However, we need those who can explain these books to us, and who can lead us in the spiritual path. Therefore, the learning process is not just theory as much as it is practical application.
13. The verse, "They shall all be taught by God." (John 6:45), can be understood by the verse, "He who hears you hears Me." (Luke 10:16).
14. Refusing the discipleship of the Church and wanting only to learn directly from God is neither an Orthodox teaching nor a Biblical teaching.
15. The spiritual life needs a humble heart, and there is humility in discipleship.
16. What evidence do you have that the thought which comes to you is truly from God? Perhaps there are many sources of this thought, which you believe comes from God.



## The Life of Consecration

- ❖ The life of consecration is a life of sanctification or customisation. Therefore, the person's life must be dedicated to the Lord. Not every person can live this life, but it is high level for those whose love for God has grown.
- ❖ Love is the way to consecration. In order to consecrate yourself you must love others. So any individual who has tasted salvation wants every person to receive this salvation also.
- ❖ Christ the Lord, in His preaching on earth, was working in two areas: group or collective work and individual work.



## CHAPTER 6

### Spiritual virtues

- ❖ *Virtues*
- ❖ *Love*
- ❖ *The Life of Faith*
- ❖ *The Life of Hope*
- ❖ *The Life of Submission*
- ❖ *The Life of Meekness*
- ❖ *The Life of Humility*
- ❖ *Meekness of Spirit*
- ❖ *Self-denial*
- ❖ *Reproaching Oneself*
- ❖ *Calmness*
- ❖ *The Life of Repentance*
- ❖ *Tears*
- ❖ *The Life of Purity*
- ❖ *The Life of Chastity*
- ❖ *Self-control*
- ❖ *The Life of Thanksgiving*
- ❖ *The Life of Discipline*
- ❖ *The Life of Joy*
- ❖ *The Life of Peace*
- ❖ *Wisdom*
- ❖ *The Holy Zeal*
- ❖ *The Love of the Individual for God*
- ❖ *The Fear of God*
- ❖ *The Steadfast in the Lord*
- ❖ *The knowledge of God*

**“Whoever lives with simple faith lives  
free from worry”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Virtues

- ❖ Christian virtues are linked, they are not separated. Indeed, they are integrated and do not contradict each other.
- ❖ Virtues which lack love and are not from the heart are not accepted by God.
- ❖ We must not just live the life of virtues but grow in them too. Grow in the fruits of the Spirit, grow in love towards God and others.
- ❖ Virtues are companions of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Virtues are not just doing good but mainly to love good.
- ❖ Your soul may be barren of all virtues, not having given birth to any at all, but with the Holy Spirit, it will produce many virtues and be blessed by God.
- ❖ Three virtues must be found within each virtue in order for it to be a true virtue. These are: love, humility and wisdom.
  - Wisdom gives the virtue depth and truth.
  - Love gives the virtue feeling and emotions.
  - But humility will hide the virtue away from the envy of the devil and give meekness to the individual, making them loved by all.
- ❖ When the virtue is followed literally, it may be damaged, but when there is wisdom in the virtue it becomes strong and powerful and has a practical meaning.
- ❖ The spiritual person does not acquire a virtue on the account of losing another virtue.
  
- ❖ **The importance of integrating the following pairs of virtues together:**
  - Simplicity and Wisdom.
  - Kindness and Strength.
  - Love and Firmness.
  - Meekness and Courage.
  - Love and Fear.
  - Service and Contemplation.
  - Talk and Silence.
  - Tears and Smiles.
  - Mercy and Justice.





- ❖ Virtue can mean purity or walking in God's way. It can mean strength of the soul, to be able to conquer all types of evil and their temptations and to manage the life of righteousness.
- ❖ Sin is following lust, therefore, virtue is to excel above the level of lust and be filled with spiritual joy.
- ❖ Perhaps the virtuous person is a good person who likes to do good and likes to be righteous.

## Love

- ❖ Love is the summit of all virtues, it is the first virtue. St. Paul the Apostle made it the greatest virtue, above faith, hope and prophecy.
- ❖ The virtue of love should be present in every virtue. Any virtue which is devoid of love is not a true virtue.
- ❖ If you have reached the living virtue, then you have reached God.
- ❖ Whoever loves, does not ask for himself, and whoever does not ask for himself is able to love.
- ❖ Love is not a time for the ego to enjoy itself on account of others.
- ❖ The way of love is a long road with many struggles.
- ❖ True love has its own strength and never fails.
- ❖ True love needs to be a practical love.
- ❖ Love is like light spreading everywhere without being noticed. It does not differentiate one place from another.
- ❖ Love can accomplish miracles.
- ❖ Love bears all things and sacrifices all things.
- ❖ Love, without giving is barren and bears no fruits.
- ❖ Love is a mother, which gives birth to countless virtues. From it comes kindness, sympathy, words of encouragement, words of comfort, care and protection, forgiveness and striving for the salvation of the soul. This is spiritual love.
- ❖ Love does not ask for itself. It is the one who bears all things. Those who concentrate on themselves do not know how to love as they should, and if they do love, their love cannot endure as it should.
- ❖ Indeed, whoever truly loves you will never cause you to lose your spirituality.
- ❖ True love never fails, although it may endure many obstacles and difficulties.
- ❖ The love which bears, is the love of a great, big, wide heart.



- ❖ The person who truly loves does not make excuses for their mistakes but repents and gets rid of sin.
- ❖ Our love for others must be through our love for God, which comes first.
- ❖ Another condition is that love must be practical.
- ❖ True love does not rest or have dignity, but aims only to achieve that love and therefore, sacrifice everything for the loved one.
- ❖ There are obstacles which prevent one from sacrificing. These are: love of rest, love of dignity and love of self. But true love does not care about rest, dignity or the self.

## The Life of Faith

- ❖ Faith is not just a collection of doctrines which we recite in the Creed. Faith is a life lived or dogma that leads to a life.
  - Faith is the beginning of the road to God. It is the first condition for salvation.
- ❖ Faith is the beginning of life with God. He is the only companion on the road throughout this life.
  - Faith is completely submitting one's whole life into God's hands and trusting His work in us.
  - Faith divides the seas and sends water out of a rock. The Bible says, "All things are possible for the believer."
- ❖ Faith is closing your eyes and seeing God.
- ❖ Whoever believes in God and in His giving will rest in His bosom and relax.
- ❖ Faith is a type of transfiguration which God offers to the mind in order to be enlightened.
- ❖ Whoever exhibits simplicity of faith lives far from the complex mind. Whoever lives with simple faith lives free from worry.
- ❖ Sometimes, when faith weakens, then the mind starts to work by itself.
- ❖ It is difficult for the non-believer to obey.
- ❖ Faith leads to inner peace and joy with God.
- ❖ Strong faith grants power to prayer. Power in prayer works together with power of faith.
- ❖ Our faith in God, His presence, His care and His protection gives us inner peace, comfort in our hearts and minds and contentment that the Lord's presence will take care of us more than we care for ourselves. Therefore, we must live in peace and abide in Him.



- ❖ The practical faith is the faith which bears fruit, with obvious signs shown in the life of the person.
- ❖ The power of God is able to do miracles, but it is waiting for your faith and He will give you according to your belief. Therefore, miracles may happen to some but not to others, although the power of God is the same.
- ❖ It is not only the heroes of faith who defended the doctrine who are heroes, but anyone who believes in the Lord and obeys Him, walks with Him and is righteous.
- ❖ Faith sees what the eyes cannot see and what the senses cannot feel.
- ❖ Faith does not contradict the senses, but rather, it has a higher level than the senses. It has a greater capacity than the senses, which have a specific range which they cannot exceed.
- ❖ The main issue is simply an element of time between faith and eye witnessing.
- ❖ Some people's faith never gets stronger because they live in the world separated from God.

### ***Faith and the Mind:***

- ❖ One may become troubled by their own mind but their faith reassures them in all things.
- ❖ Faith is more related to the spirit than to the mind.
- ❖ The mind may take you to the beginning of the road, but faith continues with you to the very end of the road. Faith does not interfere with the mind, but it goes beyond and even the mind cannot reach it.
  - The mind cannot comprehend the miracle, but accepts, asks and rejoices. Miracles are called miracles because the mind cannot explain or interpret them, but accepts them with faith.
  - We respect the mind but at the same time we acknowledge its scope and limits. We don't agree with the arrogant mind which is aware of everything, refusing that which is above the level of understanding.
  - If the mind wants to break all that it cannot understand, then it will destroy itself and lose its faith and surround itself in a very tight circle, which becomes its understanding and recognition.



- The wise person can reach God but the one who uses his mind cannot.
- The believer is wise and respects the mind and uses it in spiritual and divine matters. Amongst the believers there are philosophers and people with a high level of thinking and intelligence. In spite of this they do not mix the mind with the ego and they do not trust the power of the mind to comprehend all things.
- The simple and humble mind is one that accepts faith and miracles, meaning it does not become proud of its own understanding and does not demolish what is beyond its limits.

### ***Principals which strengthen Faith:***

1. Trusting in the characteristics of God.
2. Trusting in the sincerity of the promises of God.
3. Keeping one's eyes on God and not on the surroundings.
4. Reading stories of faith and about people who are champions of faith.
5. Being humble in heart and thoughts.
6. Having a personal experience with God.
7. Seeing God in all things.
8. Make God your friend.
9. Pray for the sake of faith.

### ***Things that lead to a weakened faith:***

1. Ego.
2. Domination of senses.
3. Subjecting faith to the mind.
4. The doubtful person.
5. Weak personality.
6. Fear.
7. Lust.
8. External conditions.
9. Delusions of demons.
10. Doubt.





## The Life of Hope

- ✦ Hope is one of the three great virtues which our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, told us about when he said, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13).
- ✦ The three bind each other; faith gives birth to hope, because whoever believes in God has hope in Him. And he who has hope in God loves Him and so, he will reach the highest level with God in love.
- ✦ Hope is very important in life. If a person loses hope he has lost everything, because the person who loses hope falls into despair, falls into sadness, falls into worry, disturbance and the bitterness of waiting without a goal. They can fall easily into the hands of the devil. So we say that it is the devil who destroys hope.
- ✦ The life of hope requires trust in God, trust in His promises, in His work, His love for you and for all and in His wisdom.
- ✦ Christianity gives hope, even to the bruised reed and the smoking flax.
  - The bruised reed which the Lord is able to straighten, and the Lord is able to send a wind to rekindle the smoking flax. So the Lord said about hope, "encourage the young in spirit". He gave hope, even to the feeble knees and to the hands which hang down.
  - In Christianity, there is hope for the individual, hope for the Churches, hope for the country and hope for the entire world.

### ***Truly with hope everything seems easy***

- With hope we can see an open road inside the sea. We hear the words of Moses the Prophet saying, "The Lord will fight for you and you are silent."
- With hope, we trust in the rod of Elisha, when it was laid on the young boy and he rose.
- With hope we trust that we will enter the Promised Land, even if we've been lost in the wilderness for 40 years.

### ***We concentrate on three things as we wait for the Lord:***

1. Your faith in God's love for you.
2. Your faith in His wisdom.
3. Your faith in His promises.



- ❖ Hope is a driving force for work. Hope does not mean idleness, relying on God! Never. Hope is rejoicing in the work of God. It urges one to share in God's work with enthusiasm.
- ❖ Nothing is impossible in a life with God. There is hope, whatever the sin is, whatever the obstacles are and however difficult the case may be. The greatest war by which Satan fights us is hopelessness.
- ❖ Do not live in today if today is difficult and too hard for you, but rather live for tomorrow because tomorrow you will see the hand of God stretching over you, to comfort you. In tomorrow, you see many solutions for your problems. If today is not bright, then tomorrow will open before you doors of light. The saints lived in tomorrow, in the eternal life and they put all their ambitions in it.
- ❖ The Lord is able to raise us, even if our heart stanches.
- ❖ The heart which is full of hope is always a joyful heart.
- ❖ You must know that you are in God's hands alone and not in the hands of people or in the hands of tribulation or events or in the hands of the Devil.
- ❖ Each cross must have a resurrection after it. The promise of resurrection carries hope and therefore, you must trust and not despair. Wait for the Lord in deep, inner peace.
- ❖ Instead of seeing the present difficulty before us, we look with hope to the joyful future which is in God's hands.
- ❖ The promises of God must be implemented, whether in 20 years, 70 or 5 thousand. What is important is that God will fulfil His promises at His specified time.
- ❖ The person who waits on the Lord trusts and depends on two main things while waiting. They are: the enormous love of God for mankind and His unlimited wisdom.

## **The Life of Submission**

- ❖ The life of submission is to submit your life to God, putting it in His hands and forgetting it there. Trust, with all your heart, that He manages your life in a good way, according to His blessed goodwill.



- ✦ Whoever lives the life of submission, actually submits to the Lord the aim, the way and the results. The Lord chooses the way and the method for him and every result that comes from the Lord is acceptable. Therefore, he lives in joy and is always content.
- ✦ The ego, which trusts in its own knowledge and power, finds it difficult to reach the life of submission.
- ✦ Whoever submits their life to God never worries, because they trust that the Lord will give them success. But the one who directs himself will be exposed to worry.
- ✦ The life of submission leads to reassurance even in difficult times.
- ✦ In the life of submission, leave the time to God and don't give Him dates. He knows what He is doing and He has more knowledge than you of the best and most suitable time.
- ✦ Pitiful is the person who has not tasted God. How can you taste Him? By testing. And how do you test Him? By entering into a life of submission.
- ✦ Faith in God's wisdom, leads us to the life of submission.
- ✦ Whoever believes in God's love for him, His concern for his comfort, and in God's wisdom and His right providence for his life and that God is the maker of all things, working all good for his sake..... He can submit his life to God and let Him plan it as He wishes. With such certainty, he always lives in the obedience of faith.
- ✦ **Life of Submission:** Never complains or becomes angry, but accepts everything with contentment and joy.
  - Whoever lives the life of submission and faith always lives in happiness and thanksgiving. He does not obey God's will within confines and obligations.
  - Submission to God must be true submission and not superficial. Some believe that they are submitting their life to God, but they impose their plan on God.
  - The Lord is the one who builds us, not us. Therefore, we must submit ourselves in order for Him to form and build us.





## The Life of Meekness

- The meek is one who is calm in character.
  - The meek has a calm voice, doesn't shout and are never rough.
  - The meek is also soft hearted and wants to please everyone.
  - They are calm from inside as well as outside.
  - They never defend or get revenge for themselves.
  - The meek is easy to negotiate with , they understand and do not cause trouble for those who deal with them.
  - The meek does not pressure anyone and does not use violence.
  - The meek does not seek their own comfort but the comfort of others.
  - The meek does not insist on their own ideas or impose their own opinion on others.
  - Their character is one of forgiveness.
  - The meek does not talk in a lofty, authoritative manner.
  - The meek is obedient and lenient, but not for evil.
  - He is a simple person who deals in a good and simple manner.
- ❖ Meekness does not conflict with courage or nobility, but everything under heaven has it's time.
- ❖ Meekness does not mean weakness and strength does not mean violence.
- ❖ Use firmness whenever it is needed to make decisions and use meekness whenever it is good. In your meekness do not be too soft so that you feel uncomfortable and in your firmness do not be violent in a way which may affect others. The Lord Jesus Christ used both meekness and firmness.

## The Life of Humility

- ❖ Truly humility, as the Fathers say, is when you know yourself; that you are from dust and even the dust is older than you and it existed before you.
- ❖ Humility is the first virtue in the spiritual life.
- ❖ Humility is the fence which protects virtues and gifts. Any virtue which is void of humility becomes exposed to the devil of vain glory and is lost through pride and boasting.



- ❖ The roots which protect the person is humility of heart. Whenever one is elevated, humility of the heart protects him, even if he is lifted to a high position among others, he must have a contrite heart which bring him down, even lower than the dust. If he is elevated from the outside but the inside is not built on the foundation of humility, all his virtues will feed vain glory and pride.
- ❖ The humble person can surrender his opinion and it does not matter to him if he is wrong and he is able to correct his mistakes.
- ❖ How deep are the words 'not me'? No one can say these words but the one who walks through the narrow gate.
- ❖ The humble person feels that he does not deserve anything, so he gives thanks in everything.
- ❖ The Lord is always with the weak and against the strong who are proud in their strength.
- ❖ Overcome your spiritual wars by your weakness not by your strength, because by recognizing your weakness, you will be able to conquer, by the power of God within you.
- ❖ Feel that, by yourself you are weak and with God who works inside you, you are strong and powerful. Therefore, keep this strong, divine power in you by always being humble.
- ❖ Do not trust yourself, that you are more powerful than sin, because feeling strong makes you lose your vigilance and precision and you end up falling into pride, which will take you away from prayer.
- ❖ The Lord is the only one who can truly be humble, because He is the only Most High, who came down from above.
- ❖ The humble person feels his own weakness and will therefore depend on the power of God and will be protected from the tricks of the devil.
- ❖ Humility is the foundation on which all other virtues are built.
- ❖ The humble person respects others, whether they are young or old, but the proud will preside over those who are younger and not respect the elder, either by their speech or their actions.
- ❖ How difficult is the word "I have sinned" for the proud person; it wounds him.
- ❖ The humble is the one who reaches repentance but the proud will not be able to.
- ❖ The humble person is the one who feels his weaknesses during prayer and that he needs a power to support him. So he always prays and asks for this power.



- ❖ The humble person feels that his prayers are weak and does not feel he is not the recipient of preferential treatment before God. He never stops asking people to pray for him and asks for the intercessions of the saints.
- ❖ Each time a humble person falls he rises again.
- ❖ He who compares himself with sinners, thieves and adulterers will have a proud heart, but he who remembers the level reached by the saints, will feel he has not achieved anything or has not done anything, so he remains humble.

### ***The Characteristics of the Humble:***

- ❖ Humility in self-denial.
- ❖ Never defends himself.
- ❖ Always blames himself.
- ❖ Blaming oneself leads to crushing the soul.
- ❖ This leads to a feeling of unworthiness.
- ❖ And this leads to a life of continuous thanksgiving.
- ❖ The truly humble person is aware of his sins and accepts everything which comes his way.
- ❖ The humble person, in his crushed spirit, always keeps his sins before him.
- ❖ Whenever the humble person reaches a certain high level, they always remember that they are incomplete and have not yet reached the level they should have obtained.
- ❖ The humble person never talks about himself on any occasion, so as not to be praised.
- ❖ He does not make himself a role model for others.
- ❖ The humble feels that pride is nonsense and dangerous and knows meaninglessness of vain glory.
- ❖ He runs away from praise and dignity.
- ❖ Another feature of humility is accounting all good deeds to the grace of God.
- ❖ The humble person hides, as much as he can, his righteousness from others, even from himself.
- ❖ The humble person praises others not himself.
- ❖ The humble person bears dignity and does not find a cause to boast.
- ❖ The humble person always tries to take the last row.



- ❖ The humble person puts the virtues of the saints before himself, and hence, his good deeds diminish in his eyes.
- ❖ The humble person puts before himself the ideal level of perfection, but he sees that he has not achieved anything yet.
- ❖ The humble person is humble in knowledge and understanding.
- ❖ The humble person is never stubborn and does not assert their own opinion.
- ❖ The humble person likes to be a disciple and accepts learning and criticism.
- ❖ The humble person stays away from anger and nervous outbursts.
- ❖ The humble person deals easily with others and is simple and cooperative.
- ❖ The humble person does not boast, even when he is growing in spirit and virtues.
- ❖ Before all sins, he doesn't lose his vigilance and does not lessen his prayers.
- ❖ The humble does not mind taking advice.
- ❖ One of his characteristics is obedience to and respect of elders.
- ❖ The humble shows his spiritual humility in his own humble body.
- ❖ The humble also shows his humility in his manner of prayer and worship.
- ❖ If the humble realizes his mistakes, he will admit them.

## **Meekness of Spirit**

### ❖ **Meekness before people:**

- He always takes the last row.
- He rebukes no-one, nor does he become angry with anyone or sadden anyone. He asks for the blessings and the prayers of others.
- With a crushed heart, he does not consider himself to be master over others.
- He never interrupts others while they speak.
- He prefers to be a disciple not a teacher.
- He does not defend himself no matter what befalls him.
- He does not talk about his experiences.
- He does not compare himself to others, which may elevate him above others.

### ❖ **Meek in the Presence of God:**

- In the presence of God, the meek person feels unworthy to stand before God. He does not stand before God to demand what he wants.
- Being poor in spirit, is in itself protection against falling.
- Poverty in spirit is accompanied by poverty in body. But not every person who experiences poverty of the body is poor in spirit.



- The meek person, within himself, is not conceited or boastful. He perceives himself as nothing. He considers himself weak and sinful.
- The poor in spirit, as he grows in spirit, does not become puffed up in his heart because he is crushed from within himself. And so humility becomes an impenetrable enclosure for his virtues and he is protected.
- The person who stands in fear of God is able to stand before others. But the Lord leaves those who feel their own strength and power.

## Self-Denial

- ❖ If the first commandment in Christianity is love, then self-denial leads to love. If you care for yourself, you cannot have genuine love for God and others.
- ❖ Indeed, the virtue of self-denial requires wisdom and examination. Self-denial does not mean attributing the work that you do to others and therefore appearing careless or lazy before your bosses. This would indicate that you are not faithful in the responsibilities which have been entrusted to you.

### *It is enough to say about self-denial:*

- It does not like to be obvious.
- It does not neglect the works of others.
- It does not attribute the works of others to themselves.
- Self-denial does not mean, in anyway, that you attribute your work in your job to others.

## Reproaching Oneself

- ❖ Self-reproach comes from humility; from self-denial comes humility. The person who is not humble, always puts the blame on others and not on himself and always judges and blames others.
- ❖ Whoever judges himself here on earth, will be saved from the Day of Judgment in the second coming.





## Calmness

- ❖ True calmness is not a veil behind which lies a restless character, only to be brought to light by unexpected events.
- ❖ True calmness is not the external calmness but internal calmness.
- ❖ Calmness has a relationship with love, to which it gives and from which it takes.
- ❖ The calm person is always peaceful and the peaceful person is also calm.
- ❖ Peace can be lost between one violent person and another, but it is not lost between an aggressive person and a calm person, because the calm one can tolerate the aggressive one.
- ❖ Calmness is a branch of gentleness and therefore, they are interchangeable.
- ❖ Whoever lives the life of faith, lives in peace, surrendering his life totally to the Lord, accepting everything in faith from His loving hands. Therefore, they will not be disturbed or annoyed by anything, but rather continue quietly and peacefully.
- ❖ The person who is not spiritually calm, places all the worries of the whole world on himself, thus causing him many problems.
- ❖ The person who is restless and whose nerves are not calm does himself physical, social and emotional harm.
- ❖ When a fiery character finds a calm person, he tries to provoke him. But if a calm person encounters a fiery one, he tries to pacify him.
- ❖ The person whose temperament is calm does not become upset easily, he is like an unshakeable mountain.
- ❖ The person who engages in quiet discussion gains you as a friend during the conversation. He talks objectively, with complete calmness, not interrupting you while you speak, but when you are enraged he will calm you down.
- ❖ It is not only desired that the tongue should be calm, but even more it should be calming.
- ❖ The tranquil heart remains calm in all circumstances and does not become disturbed. But the restless heart finds that all situations cause him to be troubled and he provokes confusion wherever he goes.
- ❖ The serenity of the calm person overflows onto others, soothing them if they are distressed. But the restless person contaminates others with his turmoil and his disturbance, causing them to be unsettled and irritated if they are calm.



- ❖ Whoever joins the calm person enters into their calmness, but whoever joins the irritable and agitated person gets polluted by their angry, irritated emotions.
- ❖ The company of a calm person is the best way to become calm.
- ❖ Some people cannot live without chaos in their life and cannot tolerate peace and tranquillity. Anywhere they go must be a noisy place and they always seek to make their presence felt by their loud voice. If they sit in a quiet place they become easily bored and need to leave.
- ❖ It is not enough for the calm to be calm on the outside, in his speech and nerves, but he must also be calm on the inside. His spirit must be tranquil. Serenity on the outside springs from calmness of the soul from within.
- ❖ Disturbed thoughts lead to the loss of calmness of heart. Likewise the disturbed heart disturbs the thoughts.
- ❖ The calmness of the body accompanies the calmness of the senses and this helps the person to have calm thoughts.
- ❖ When one is afraid, they lose their calmness and if they lose their calmness they become afraid.
- ❖ Sin disturbs the spiritual calmness of a person. As the Divine inspiration said: "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." (Isaiah 48:22). So, the spiritual person is always characterized by his calmness and tranquillity.

### ***Do not be easily provoked:***

- Accept all things in calmness, even if people are trying to provoke you.
- Do not allow external causes to provoke you from within.
- Do not become easily provoked or disturbed. Do not be volatile or easily manipulated or become easily ignited.
- Be calm and train yourself to have inner peace and a calm heart.
- Do not lose your temper easily and if you do, confine your temper and try to calm down.





### ***Advice and exercises on calmness:***

1. Train yourself to enter and leave calmly.
2. Let your manner of walking be graceful, without running and without any commotion.
3. Train yourself to speak quietly.
4. If you write an angry letter, don't send it in a hurry.
5. If you have thoughts which bother you, urging you to act hastily, do not obey them, but rather wait until you have properly examined them, calmly and from all aspects.
6. Train yourself not to rush.
7. Give your body rest and do not tire it.
8. Take advantage of the periods of fasting and practice spending them in calmness.
9. As much as possible try to avoid being provoked and the causes of being provoked.
10. Do not expect perfection from others.
11. Do not answer while you are angry.
12. Do not seek medication to give you calmness.
13. Do not search for calmness by escaping or becoming introverted or withdrawn.
14. Avoid using violence of any kind.
15. If problems become complicated, with no solutions, do not lose your calmness, but try to seek advice. Perhaps you will find something in this advice which may calm you and give you peace.
16. The ascetic spirit gives peace in the instances where the person loses his peace because of the pressure from desiring something and his frustration for not being able to achieve it. Therefore, if you are convinced of the world's vanity you will be able to calm yourself.

## **The Life of Repentance**

### **✚ Repentance**

- Is the beginning of the road to the Lord. It is the companion along the road till the end.
- Is returning to God.
- Is reconciliation with God.
- Is a spiritual awakening.
- Is a serious, pure heart, which the Lord has granted to sinners whom He loves.



- Is freedom from the slavery of sin and the devil.
- Is forsaking sin because of love for the Lord.
- Is a cry from the conscience and a revolt against the past.
- Is a complete change in a person's life.
- Is a renewal of the mind.
- Is the golden key, which opens the door of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Is the channel which delivers the worthiness of blood from the Cross.
- Is a coal fire, picked by the Seraphim, from the top of the Altar.
- Is the way of escape from the forthcoming anger.
- It is God's preservation of you and His pardon of your sin.
- It is God's outstretched hand, asking for reconciliation with you.
- Is the reply of mankind to God's invitation .
- Is a joy in heaven and on earth.
- Is a life of victory or a song of the victorious.
- Is a beginning of the long journey towards the life of purity.
- Is like any virtue in which one progresses and advances.
- ✦ Repentance, my brethren, is not just for those beginning their life with God, but it is for all, even for the Saints. It is a part of our daily prayers.
- ✦ Every person requires repentance, even if he holds a great position or high rank, even in his spiritual life. We all require repentance. We need it in our daily lives because we sin every day. There is no one without sin, even if he has only lived one day on this earth.
- ✦ With repentance, we prepare ourselves for the Lord to dwell inside us and by being pure we can see Him.
- ✦ Repentance is not just a holiday from sin, which we return to later. Rather, repentance is completely eradicating every connection with sin forever with definite determination and with love for God.
- ✦ As long as sin is a separation from God, then repentance is returning to God.
- ✦ As long as sin is enmity with God or disloyalty to God then repentance is reconciliation with God.

### ***Returning to God:***

- ✦ It is good to return, God always starts from His side. He is the one who asks and He is the one who invites us. And for this reason He sent us the Prophets and established the sacrament of repentance. He promised us that when we return to Him, "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:34).



- ❖ Do not delay repentance, because you don't know how long the visitation of Grace will be with you.
- ❖ Do not delay repentance for those who postpone repentance do not repent at all and destroy their lives.
- ❖ It is good that we seek repentance ourselves before others invite us to do so.
- ❖ Each person should say to themselves "repent". So, repentance is for all and not just for those beginning their spiritual life.
- ❖ Happy is the one who takes the opportunity which God has given him to repent and does not harden his heart. You never know, for it is possible that this chance may never come again.
- ❖ The Lord invites us all to repent, but each heart differs according to how much it can respond.
- ❖ Even if a person feels that he is not surrounded by the grace of God it is better to say: "I want to be in this state of repentance all my life".
- ❖ You feel the beauty of repentance, if you give justice to those you have wronged.
- ❖ Alternating between the paths indicates that your heart is not stable in it's love for the Lord and your repentance is not honest and not perfect or complete.
- ❖ Caring for the spirit is important and it is the good and positive side of staying in a state of repentance.
- ❖ A person will not repent if he does not rebuke himself and refuses the rebuke of others.
- ❖ Repentance comes more easily to the humble of heart. It is difficult for the person who is righteous in his own eyes to repent.
- ❖ It is easy to repent for one day, but it is important to repent always, to live the life of purity and repentance throughout your whole life.
- ❖ The powerful repentance which changed great sinners into great saints, teaches us that nothing is impossible.
- ❖ Repentance is to substitute one desire for another. Replace the worldly, materialistic matters by righteous and divine matters.
- ❖ Repentance is being completely convinced, in your heart, that you are a sinner. It is to judge and condemn yourself. Repentance is the declaration of your own condemnation.



- ❖ Repentance requires humility of heart. Whoever insists on his pride and ego cannot repent.
- ❖ If grace works in your heart and you feel repentance, do not delay, even for a few moments.
- ❖ Many people, after they repent, return to their sin. This is because they left the roots of the sin and left the door of sin open.

### ***Meeting with Yourself:***

- ❖ In our busy and noisy lives, filled with many worries which completely consume us; how lovely it is to free ourselves from it all, even for a while, and make time for the Lord, to contemplate, pray and open our heart to Him. Here we return to quietness and calmness.
- ❖ When you examine yourself, work with your awakened conscious, judge righteously, firmly, critically, and give account of yourself honestly and for all things.

### ***Reprimand Yourself:***

- ❖ Whoever does not reprimand himself, or is content with his condition, will never progress spiritually and reach a higher spiritual level.
- ❖ Whoever reprimands himself is ready to correct himself. But self-justification is from the devil, who takes away and prevents repentance.

## **Tears**

- ❖ The person who feels and regrets his sins, is ashamed to talk about them. The pressure which come from the feelings of regret and sadness of the heart, bring tears. These tears are more than words.
- ❖ The saints are very sensitive to sin. Sin wounds God's heart. They don't think of the punishment for sin but rather, they think of God's feelings and how they displease Him. Although they have reached a very high spiritual level, they still see their weaknesses and their sins and they break out into tears.
- ❖ Cry my brother, so the Lord may wipe every tear from your eyes when you see Him.
- ❖ But, if you don't cry here, what then? Will the Lord Jesus wipe the tears from your eyes in the other world?



- ❖ Whoever does not cry here will pour out fountains of tears of despair which will not be wiped. These are the tears which will not be quenched by the surrounding fires.
- ❖ The tender, sensible person has tears which flow easily. But the hard-hearted person has no tears and it is difficult for him to cry.
- ❖ One gains spiritual tears when he reaches the level of desiring nothing from the world.
- ❖ The slave cries fearing punishment, but the son cries due to his sensitive heart towards his father.
- ❖ The person who does not weep over his sins during his life on earth, will have tears waiting for him on Judgement Day when there is no hope.

### ***Tears and Prayers:***

- ❖ The person cries in his prayers if his prayers stem from deep feelings and emotions.
- ❖ He cries in reverence that he is not worthy of God's presence.
- ❖ He cries before the altar feeling the reverence of the place, or during Holy Communion feeling the same emotions.
- ❖ He cries because of his love towards God, who comes for him and does not repay according to our sins and weaknesses.
- ❖ He cries due to his emotions with some words during prayer that affect his feelings.
- ❖ He cries in shame because he did not do what he promised God.
- ❖ He cries because of his weakness and his shortcomings and for the number of times that he fell.
- ❖ The tears during his prayers can be the tears of repentance, because he was finally able to return to God after a long wait.
- ❖ They are feeling which change from one person to another and affect the heart, then the eyes weep.
- ❖ Tears have a voice which the Lord hears, even without prayers, but produces answers from the soft and gentle heart.
- ❖ Do not let your tears between you and your God be revealed to people. Do not boast because of it, otherwise they may be prohibited before coming.



## The Life of Purity

- ❖ True purity begins by completely refusing sin.
- ❖ There is a difference between the purity of children and the purity of those who are mature in age and spirit. Indeed, the difference is that a child has not entered into spiritual warfare and does not experience exercising their will. They have not reached a level of maturity which has entered into warfare with the enemy. The mature may have fought and won. By their free will, they may have refused all the temptations of sin. Those who have fought and won have the rewards of winners, which is not for children.

## The Life of Chastity

- ❖ Purity of heart is chastity of feelings, emotions and senses; the chastity of intentions and desires.
- ❖ Purity of the flesh is to keep away from all lusts of the flesh, or every desire which is related to the love of the materialistic world.
- ❖ The honest hand does not stretch out and steal from others or take what does not belong to them. Also, a pure heart does not enjoy dishonest earnings.
- ❖ The pure eye is not a lustful eye.
- ❖ The pure ear does not hear gossip and does not enjoy it, nor does it enjoy talk of others or lustful talk.
- ❖ The pure tongue avoids idle talk.
- ❖ The person who becomes accustomed to internal purity doesn't get reprimanded by external forces such as the law because he has a strong internal law.

## Self-Control

- ❖ The person who cannot control himself will be controlled from outside.
- ❖ Self-control comprises many aspects, such as: controlling the tongue, controlling the thoughts, controlling the senses, controlling the consumption of food, controlling desires and lusts, controlling the nerves from outburst of anger and controlling all aspects of ones behaviour.



## The Life of Thanksgiving

- ❖ We thank God for His love that we don't deserve. The person with a contrite spirit is the one who can give thanks. Why? Because the proud person believes that all the good things surrounding him are due to his own efforts and he deserves these things because of his good deeds and hard work, and these things belong to him. But one with a contrite heart feels that he is not deserving of anything and he gives abundant thanks for the little that he has.
- ❖ The life of thanksgiving is a life of contentment, where the heart is satisfied and comfortable in the surrounding circumstances. The thankful person says to God, "Lord, I thank You, just as I am. So long as I can walk on my feet, this is a great grace from You."
- ❖ The Lord does not need my thanks; rather we are in need of giving thanks to the Lord.
- ❖ Whenever we thank the Lord, we remember His kindness and His assistance. We feel sure of His love for us. And each time we feel His love for us, the bond between us and God grows and so we benefit.

### **Thank God:**

1. Thank God because He created you and gave you life.
2. Thank God for nature surrounding you.
3. Thank God for the natural talents He gave you.
4. Thank God for your faith.
5. Thank God for still being alive.
6. Thank God because He gave you a chance in this life to repent.
7. Thank God for the spiritual environment in which you are raised.
8. Thank God because now you are part of the Church.
9. We thank Him too, for not dealing with us according to our sins.
10. Thank God for His loving kindness and His care.
11. Thank Him for your state of health.
12. Thank Him for your sickness.
13. We thank God too, for He has protected, assisted, preserved, accepted us, had compassion upon us, supported us and brought us till this hour.
14. Thank God for the good that you see and the good that you don't see.
15. We thank God also for His grace working in us.
16. We thank God for the communion of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
17. Also, thank Him for the great redemption He has offered us.
18. We also thank God for letting us know Him.
19. We thank Him for His promises to us.
20. We thank Him for He called us His children and His friends.



- ❖ To not give thanks is hard for the spirit. A weary spirit refrains from giving thanks.
- ❖ Believe me, if the Lord discloses to us all the calamities we have been exposed to it would take our whole life giving thanks to Him and it would not be enough. Instead, He keeps them away from us, protects us and casts them away.

### ***Why we don't give thanks?***

1. Sometimes we don't give thanks because we don't see the good things in our life. Instead, we focus on the hardships and difficulties.
2. Sometimes we don't give thanks because we don't relate the joyful things in our life to God.
3. Sometimes we don't give thanks for something, unless it is taken from us or we are deprived of it. We don't realise the grace that we have until it is taken away from us.
4. Sometimes we don't give thanks because the matter is too small to give thanks for or it is ordinary.
5. We are happy with the grace and we are content, without giving thanks for it.
6. Sometimes we don't give thanks because we have not been used to do so in our life.
7. Sometimes we don't give thanks because we are selfish.
8. Sometimes we don't give thanks because we forget.
9. Sometimes we don't give thanks because it is a personal matter.
10. Sometimes because we don't know God's wisdom.
11. Sometimes we don't give thanks for good because of comparison.
12. Sometimes we don't give thanks because of ambition, always having aspirations above our current status and desiring more than what we already have.
13. Sometimes we don't give thanks because of a greedy, grumbling character which loves the world.
14. Sometimes we don't give thanks because of a weak spiritual life in general.



### ❖ ***Virtues related to thanksgiving:***

- Thanksgiving is related to contentment.
- It is related to humility.
- It is related to faith.
- Thanksgiving is also related to joy and peace.
- ❖ Whoever lives the life of thanksgiving is a noble person who acknowledges and does not forget a favour, never forgetting any good offered to him and expresses his thanks. He gives thanks from his heart and thanks is always at the tip of his tongue, to both God and others.
- ❖ Children of the Lord are always joyful, giving thanks in all things, they thank God with all their heart and with all confidence.
- ❖ There is a higher level of thanksgiving; to give thanks over the little.
- ❖ The highest level of thanksgiving is to give thanks over tribulation.

## **The Life of Discipline**

- ❖ It forces the person to take the spiritual path.
  - Forcing yourself is not imposing, but just a step forward for the better.
  - If the Lord gives wages for the love which is in each virtue, He also gives wages for whoever forces himself. He changed people who worked victoriously to overcome external difficulties or difficulties from within themselves.
  - By discipline, you train yourself, your body and your will.
  - Discipline is no doubt a rebellion against the pampering of the soul, or a war against the ego.
- ❖ Discipline is just the starting point, but it doesn't continue like this.

### ***Advices and training for the life of Discipline:***

- ❖ Do not submit to the love of rest or the pull of desires. Don't spoil yourself. Know that struggle will not go on forever, because once you find joy in the life of virtues, struggling will be completely demolished, and you will begin the life of love.
- ❖ Do not follow every thought that comes into your mind or every desire that comes into your heart. If you can't prevent yourself from these thoughts and desires then postpone them for a time and force yourself to continue the postponement. Perhaps by postponing you will receive the grace and will overcome.



Try to proclaim a revolution on yourself and on your desires. Create for yourself a spiritual, balanced schedule, compelling yourself to fulfil it.

## The Life of Joy

- ❖ The spiritual joy is joy in the Lord.
- ❖ It is the joy of repentance and deprivation from sin.
- ❖ There is joy when a sinner returns.
- ❖ There is also joy in pleasing others.
- ❖ There is joy of the fathers and of spiritual guides.
- ❖ There is a high level of joy in being happy in tribulation, trusting in its blessings and crown.
- ❖ There is also joy in successful service.
- ❖ There is joy in the fruits of work and joy in the work of God with man.
- ❖ Joy with God alone: we cannot be happy with the world as it does not satisfy us.
- ❖ We cannot trust anyone but God Himself and we cannot be happy without Him.
- ❖ The joy of the Lord is the only joy which cannot be taken away. Every joy whose source is not of God will come to an end.
- ❖ Be happy, not for a desire to take, but for leaving the desire.
- ❖ True joy is holy joy in God and joy with the spiritual life and with every spiritual way.

## The Life of Peace

- ❖ Truly, it is not desirable for a person to depend on external circumstance for their peace. If circumstances become disturbed, then the person becomes disturbed and if surroundings are calm then the person is calm.
- ❖ ***The meaning of making peace:***
- ❖ It has a triangular meaning; whoever makes peace between God and people, makes peace between people and each other, makes peace inside their own heart and God and people; peace between the spirit and the flesh so that no one conflicts with the other.



1. Making peace between God and people is directing people to faith and repentance.
  2. Making peace between people can be in two ways: Firstly, we don't want to be the cause of a dispute between people or a cause for more hatred. Secondly, we can participate in putting an end to hatred and encourage a return to love.
  3. But peace within our soul is removing any division or struggle inside us. Perhaps the key to peace between people is not using bad or hurtful words, as doing this causes fire between others. When a hurtful word is delivered, peace is lost. What are we to say then about those who add more words to the actual hurtful word or qualify it with a disturbed concept or invent words to inflame a fire??
- Do not think that you can achieve reconciliation between one and his enemy by being an enemy to him also. It is better to reunite him with his enemy if you can.
  - ✚ Inner peace: with this peace you are truly the son of God because the sons of God never raise their flesh against their spirit, but both agree together in the love of God.

## Wisdom

### *The Source of Wisdom*

- The first source is God through prayer.
- The second source is advice from others, which can be the voice of God speaking on their tongue.
- The third source is instruction from those who have wisdom and experience.
- ✚ Whoever has the spirit of God dwelling in him, has wisdom dwelling in him.
- ✚ The wise person knows that not every silence is virtue and not every word is sin.
- ✚ The wise person knows the boundaries of a contrite and broken heart, with tears and knows how to mix these with hope and comfort. He also knows how to live a life of joy in his repentance, in his secret tears and tears of comfort.
- ✚ The wise person does not take only one verse from the Bible and use it to measure his whole life literally, but knows how to use this verse appropriately, and knows when to add extra verses to make things clear.



- ❖ The wise person uses a reprimand or rebuke that will work in the right spiritual way.
- ❖ Any virtue without wisdom is not a virtue.
- ❖ Wisdom granted gives us a spiritual view and enlightens understanding, which leads to discernment and distinction.
- ❖ So many live only for today and don't think of tomorrow, not realizing that what they do today will affect them tomorrow and may even damage their future. But the wise person not only thinks of tomorrow and works towards it, but takes his thoughts beyond tomorrow, that is, to eternity, and stays away from anything which will affect his eternity.
- ❖ The person who is wise in his own eyes, does not need advice, guidance or teaching from others.
- ❖ The wise person does not become silent when he should speak and does not speak when he should remain silent.
- ❖ The wise person knows when to talk, how to talk, when to remain silent and how to respond.
- ❖ The wise person does not allow negative circumstances to occupy him, preventing him from working positively.

### ***Between intelligence and wisdom:***

- Wisdom has greater meaning than intelligence; perhaps it is part of wisdom, but a person can be very intelligent and have great mind but not be wise in his actions. Perhaps there is some obstacles that hinder his mind and his intellect in his practical actions.
- The source of intelligence is the mind. Intelligence may be just active, healthy thoughts, but wisdom follows healthy thoughts with good actions, in a practical manner. It does not depend only on the mind, but also benefits from experience, guidance, advice, prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- So wisdom includes the goodness of thought, precision and safety of expression. We say here; every wise person is intelligent, but not every intelligent person is necessarily wise.



## The Holy Zeal

- ❖ Holy zeal is a holy fire in the heart of the faithful person which pushes him, with great fervour to strive with all his strength for the salvation of people and building the Kingdom.
- ❖ Holy zeal is that fire which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about in Luke 12:49, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled."
- ❖ Holy zeal is the enthusiastic, fervent heart ablaze with the love of God who wants everyone to have this love in their hearts.
- ❖ Holy zeal is a strong power which works diligently and is not passive.
- ❖ Whoever has holy zeal does not rest or remain quiet until he finds a place for the Lord in every heart and seeks to save people by all possible means.
- ❖ Whoever loves the Lord wants everyone to love Him and their heart is filled with zeal when they see others far from God.
- ❖ Whoever loves God wants the Kingdom of God to spread, with God entering every heart, every house and every city.
- ❖ Not every zeal is holy. There are some wrong types of zeal such as the zeal which is conflicts with knowledge, is not spiritual or fruitful, or zeal which destroys or swears.
- ❖ Holy zeal saves sinners from their sins but does not destroy them.
- ❖ Holy zeal does not shout or making noise and is not impulsive. It resembles the fire that cooks well, not the fire that burns.
- ❖ Some misunderstand holy zeal believing it to be a revolution aimed at reformation and this revolution must be accompanied by loud noises, screaming, swearing, insults and destruction.

## The Love of the Individual for God

- ❖ True love of God is freeing the heart from everything.
- ❖ The love of God frees the individual from desires and fears.
- ❖ Whoever loves God deeply will reach a level of self-satisfaction with God.
- ❖ Whoever loves God will naturally love His children. He wants everyone to be saved and no one to go astray.
- ❖ Whoever loves God finds pleasure in pleasing God's heart.



- ❖ Whoever loves God wants to obey His commandments.
- ❖ The person who loves God, desires to always be with Him. His laws are his books, His commandments are his praises, His love is his food, which nourishes the spirit and nourishes the thoughts.
- ❖ Whoever loves God lives the eternal life. Loving God here on earth and also loving Him in the other world.
- ❖ Your love for God is what makes you repent and continue in repentance.
- ❖ The Lord only wants one thing from you, which all the commandments incorporate; this is LOVE. If you love God, you will complete what is required of you.
- ❖ God wants love, not just practice.
  - If you don't love God, then you don't know Him yet.
  - You are not a stranger to God and His love is not a stranger to you.
  - Every love that takes you away from God is a wrong type of love.
  - Whoever loves God does not do wrong, because his love for God prevents him from going against God.
  - Whoever loves God does not find it difficult to follow His commandments.
  - Whoever loves God does not feel restricted by the commandments but rather guided by them.
  - Whoever loves God longs to invite all people to His love.
  - Whoever loves God is obliged to love good and love the life of holiness.
- ❖ Whenever your love for God decreases, your busy life becomes an excuse to justify being away from Him.
- ❖ With whatever measure we love God, we rejoice with Him in eternity and this will be our happiness.
  - Truly, the soul that loves God wishes that everyone would love Him. The spiritual person wants everyone to love God with him.
- ❖ You cannot truly change unless the love of God enters your heart.
- ❖ The relation between God and myself must be a relationship of love not a relationship of requests made at the time of trouble.
- ❖ If the love of God fills the heart of a person, then he cannot do wrong, because that love controls his actions and behaviour. So all his will is directed totally towards God. But, if the heart is not filled with love for God, then his will is uncertain.
- ❖ If God is the priority in your heart, you can leave or sacrifice something for His sake.



- ❖ The most important thing you sacrifice for God is yourself.
- ❖ When one enjoys being with God, this is an incentive to make extra time for Him and to go deeper into the heart, with a deeper love and deeper thinking and interest.

### ***Practising for the Love of God:***

- ❖ If one practices for the love of God, he will find everything inside the word love.
- ❖ To reach the love of God, you must avoid every other form of love that is against Him, that is, keeping yourself from worldly desires.
- ❖ One thing which fills your heart with the love of God is remembering His care for you. If you remember what another does for you, His care for you, saving you, standing by your side in times of trouble, then you will love him. How much more then with the Lord, whose support for you is countless.
- ❖ In order to love the Lord, you need to be preoccupied with Him, think of Him continuously, for each time you think of Him you love Him more, and every time you love Him you think of Him.
- ❖ Read about Him in order to love Him, because how can you love Him without knowing Him.
- ❖ If you read about God extensively, you will find all His perfections, you will love Him and you will say with the Song of Songs, "He is altogether lovely."
- ❖ If you want to love God, take Him as a friend.

### **The Fear of God**

- ❖ The fear of God is the beginning of the road and its end is love. You cannot start the road from the end.
- ❖ The wise person starts the road from the beginning with fear which leads to love.
- ❖ Fear leads to love, then stops in order to guard it. Love keeps the fear inside, even by a different name.
- ❖ Whoever wants to jump to love without passing through fear will arrive at spoilage and wastage.
- ❖ Love produces fear, which means awe. The fear will be preserved as reverence and admiration.



- ❖ Whoever has the fear of God is not only afraid of perpetuating a sin, but continually strives to grow in the love of God which is unlimited.
- ❖ The life of repentance leads to the fear of God and the fear of God leads to repentance.
- ❖ The fear of God calls for respect, reverence, obedience, keeping the commandments and leads to His love, the life of repentance and the life of reverence.
- ❖ Whoever loves the Lord does not sin. The person who sins is a person who does not fear God.

### ***Benefits of the Fear of God:***

1. The fear of God leads to repentance and obedience to the commandments.
2. The fear of God is the beginning of the road; it is the fence of the spiritual life which prevents stumbling or going astray.
3. Whoever fears the Lord obeys God, but whoever does not obey Him is a witness against himself that he does not fear the Lord.
4. The fear of God teaches us the life of caution and scrupulousness.
5. Many who turned away from the fear of God turned to recklessness.
6. Whoever is trained in the fear of God reaches the distinguished position of talking with God.
7. Talking with God leads to seriousness in the spiritual life.
8. The Fear of God leads to humility and a contrite heart.
9. Fearing God gives birth to reverence and reverence gives birth to tears.
10. He who lives in the fear of God always gives account of himself.
11. The fear of God leads to self-reproach, regret and repentance.
12. The fear of God urges one to strive and labour for the sake of God.
13. The fear of God leads to spiritual growth.
14. Whoever has the fear of God in his heart does not only fear for himself but also fears for others and desires to spread the news of the Kingdom.
15. All of this makes the fear of God lead to prayer.
16. The fear of God also leads to knowledge so as not to fall due to ignorance. This inspires us to read and seek guidance.
17. The fear of God calls us to have good relationships with others.



### ***Training in the Fear of God:***

- Always put God before you, and remember that all your works are exposed in front of Him.
- Always put the glory of God and His greatness before you; you will admire His excellence and you will fear Him.
- Put the goodness of God and His holiness before you and you will be repulsed by sin.
- Remember that sin is directed to God Himself, so you will fear.
- Rebuke yourself, because you are a temple of God and the Lord dwells in you.
- Also, you will have the fear of God if you follow the life of repentance.
- You can reach the fear of God by giving account for your soul with persistence.
- Realise the signs of not fearing and stay away from them.
- Try to fear God as you fear people.
- Train yourself to fear God in your locked room.
- The person who fears God feels ashamed even of inner thoughts which are not seen by anyone.
- During your confessions before your Confession father do not be too easy on yourself.
- In order to reach the fear of God, do not be led by the world.
- If you want to fear God, associate with those who fear Him.
- To reach to the fear of God, do not mention the name of God except in a respectful and reverential manner and do not use His name in vain.

### **The Steadfast in the Lord**

- ❖ He who is steadfast in the Lord is indeed alive, and he who is separated from Him is dead.
- ❖ Being steadfast in the Lord is like a branch in the vine, where the juice of the vine flows in it and gives it life. If this juice does not flow through the branches they will dry up and die.
- ❖ Do not follow the crowd because you will fall when they fall and their mistakes will make you stumble. Be steadfast in the Lord and do not stumble because of anyone.



### **Guidance in order not to fall:**

If you want to have a steadfast relationship with God and not fall, practise the following:

1. You must have a fixed goal and strong determination to hold on to it in spite of external wars.
2. Hold on to the spiritual means which strengthen the love of God in your heart and strengthen your will so that you do not accept sin.
3. Stay away from bad associations which take your heart away from the love of God; just as the foreign women did to the wise Solomon, who took his heart away from God (I Kings 11:4).
4. If you find yourself deviating to another path, wake up quickly, correct yourself with firmness and correct the way.
5. Always pray and ask for God's help and protection.

Pray for me too, and let the Lord be with us all, guide our way to His good will.

### **The Knowledge of God**

- ❖ Truly whoever knows God will never leave Him.
- ❖ If you know God you will have to love Him, and if you love the Lord, you will increase your knowledge of Him.
- ❖ Our knowledge of God starts here on earth, but does not finish here, it continues into eternity where it reaches its perfection.
- ❖ There is no way that the limited can know everything about the unlimited.
- ❖ This divine knowledge is a very precious pearl and because of its great value the merchant went, sold all he had in order to buy it.
- ❖ If you want your spirit to know the purpose of God, let it first leave the wisdom of the world. Stand before God in ignorance and devoid of all knowledge and understanding and you will be filled with the true, spiritual and perfect knowledge and not the trivial, human knowledge.
- ❖ The vision of God is not for everyone; it is for the simple and righteous one.



# CHAPTER 7

## Values

- ✦ *Values*
- ✦ *Seriousness*
- ✦ *Commitment*
- ✦ *Righteousness*
- ✦ *Truthfulness*
- ✦ *Beauty*
- ✦ *Success*
- ✦ *Freedom*
- ✦ *Goodness*
- ✦ *Work*
- ✦ *Honesty and Faithfulness*
- ✦ *Justice*
- ✦ *Having Goals in Life*
- ✦ *Ambition*

**“If God does not work in you, then all your work is in vain.”**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Values

- ❖ Linguistically, the word values are the plural of the word value. It means, the things that are worthy of leading a person's life. Vernacularly it means the precious, supreme matters for the one who cares to follow a virtuous path, and the principals which are used to start every type of work.
- ❖ In the heart of every person there are particular interests that are valuable in his own view and all efforts and focus are placed on these interests.
- ❖ The ordinary person worries about his own comfort, even if it causes trouble to others. But the person who has values finds that his true comfort is by comforting everyone else, even at his own expense.

## Seriousness

- ❖ The person who is serious in his spiritual life respects himself, respects his principles, respects the words that come out of his mouth and respects his spiritual path. Therefore he is characterized by steadiness and stability, like a huge ship making its way in the sea of life, heading firmly towards its goal. Not like a small boat which is easily swept away in any direction by the waves.
- A serious person has a strong heart, which is not easily weakened by outside influences.
- A serious person does not make excuses for himself, nor justifies his mistakes and sins.
- A serious person's character always grows in his spiritual path.
- Seriousness grants a fiery spirit, which always leads one forward.
- If the serious person finds obstacles along the way, he does not use them as excuses but overcomes them.
- The serious person is dedicated in his worship, not with formality.
- ❖ Seriousness in life is an indication of maturity and a strong personality.

## Commitment

- ❖ Commitment is the most important feature of the spiritual path. The indifferent person is not at all a spiritual person.



- ✦ The spiritual person commits to every word he says, every promise he makes, every agreement with others and abides by rules and is devoted to every covenant between him and God.

## Righteousness

- ✦ Righteousness is contrary to extremism, contrary to deception, contrary to trickery and contrary to hypocrisy.
- The righteous person is truthful, does not walk in the wrong path but walks in a straight path and does not deviate from it.
- The righteous person is honest, explicit, does not lie or cheat others, and does not achieve his purpose in a cunning way or solve his problems by misleading others.
- The righteous person is trusted by all who surround him or talk to him.

## Truthfulness

- ✦ Is sincerity
- Is against falsehood and against deception
- Is against hypocrisy
- Is against insincerity
- Is against flattery
- Truth is God
- ✦ The truthful person is a just person, who is led by his values in life. The truthful person has the spirit of God in him because he is the spirit of truth (John 14:17, John 15:26).
- ✦ Whosoever is far from the truth is far from the spirit of God, and whoever is separated from the truth, is separated from God.
- ✦ The truthful word has its own strength even if it comes from a child's mouth, because the power of the truth comes from within oneself and not from without.
- ✦ The defenseless truth is stronger than armed falsehood.
- ✦ Whoever abides in the truth abides in God Himself, and whoever is far from the truth is far from God Himself.



- ❖ Some people are far from truth due to ignorance, but by alertness and knowledge are able to return to the truth, as long as their hearts are transparent and pure from within and their mind is the source of error.
- ❖ Some people refrain from speaking the truth because of fear, shyness, weakness or because they want to complement others. These people need to purify their hearts.
- ❖ There are some people who do not speak the truth in order to cover themselves. They hide their mistakes by lying or being hypocrites. These people need to repent and stop sinning.

## Beauty

- ❖ Beauty is a gift from God and it is even more beautiful when it grows in spiritual virtues.
- ❖ God is beautiful and He loves the goodness of people. His love for beauty is revealed in all His creation.

## Success

- ❖ Success is to conquer yourself, not to win others over.
- ❖ Success is to reach purity of heart, not just to achieve goals.
- ❖ Success is to reach the Kingdom of God within our heart, and every other intention will be within this Kingdom.
- ❖ Success is a blessing from God, and at the same time is a reward for honesty of work and obedience.
- ❖ The successful person succeeds regardless of the obstacles and the hardships.
  - The most important thing in the person's character is to be successful from within.
  - True triumph is spiritual success and, if success is in the materialistic aspects of life then it would be in a spiritual manner.

## Freedom

- ❖ Freedom is that the person is free, provided that he does not intrude on the freedom of the others or on the general order.



- ❖ God loves every human to be free:
  - Our freedom is with accountability and responsibility.
  - It is never your right to have absolute freedom.
  - Limits which are placed on freedom are for your benefit and not to restrict you.
  - True freedom is to be liberated from mistakes.
  - Whoever is liberated from sin can use freedom in the right way.
  - Some people push themselves to reach the level of true freedom.
- ❖ The absolute freedom that is sought by the ego is one of the wars of selfishness that aims to fulfill its own desires without limits and leads to atheism.
- ❖ Real freedom comes from one's inner soul, and not from the visible outer actions.
- ❖ There is a big difference between freedom and idleness.

## Goodness

- ❖ Goodness is to rise above the level of the ego and the desires and to seek the truth whenever it is found and to tolerate and endure for the sake of it.
- ❖ Goodness is purity. It is purity and holiness. It is perfection.
- ❖ Goodness is a desire in the heart for the work of righteousness. It reflects itself and its presence is seen by good works. It is not just routine to do good.
- ❖ Goodness is like flowing water which never ceases and if it does stop it becomes murky. Therefore, goodness always moves forward.
- ❖ The person who loves doing good, lives in continuous joy and peace.
- ❖ God's work is always good. He cannot do any other act but good acts.
- ❖ To judge if an act is good, it must be good in its method, and good in its aim and goal and, as much as possible, produce a good outcome.
- ❖ Truly, many good deeds require quick actions, as slowing down may cause danger and have painful consequences.
- ❖ The one who abides in goodness, is the one that has goodness in his nature. He does it continuously, as if goodness is mixed in his blood, and runs in his veins. Goodness is not a garment that he puts on and takes off, but a connected part of his human and spiritual nature.
- ❖ If one loves doing good, he does it without any pressure and not out of fear and without seeking any reward or praise of any kind.
- ❖ Force yourself to do good, as this will lead you to the love of goodness.



## Work

- ❖ It does not matter what type of work you do, but how you perfect that work.
- ❖ If God does not work in you, then all your work is in vain.
- ❖ It is not enough that the work we do is good in itself or its aim is good, but the means has to be good.
- ❖ If God is part of any work, then you will find it powerful, as the power enters it and also you will find success and blessings. Beware of doing any work where God is not there.
- ❖ Positive work is the work that will benefit us as well as others. Also, it is full of benefits and no losses, neither for us nor for others.
- ❖ Growing in knowledge is not enough, but we need to grow more in deeds.
- ❖ It is true of the following saying, "The kind person always forgets all the good deeds he did because he is busy with the good deeds he is doing."
- ❖ Pity the person who limits their thoughts to the past, with all its problems, mistakes, as well as its good dreams, and does not have time or power to do anything for the future.

## Honesty and Faithfulness

- ❖ The Lord tests you over a few things first and if He finds you faithful then He will trust you over much. But, if you fail and are not faithful and show dishonesty over the little, then is hard to rule over many things.
- ❖ The Bible said, "You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things." This means that, as you have been faithful in earthly things, I will set you over the heavenly. You have been faithful in this present world, I will set you over eternity.
- Be faithful over little, the Lord will set you over many. Be faithful in the first step, God will set you over further steps. Be faithful over your house, the Spirit will set you over the Lord's house.

## Justice

- ❖ Perhaps justice, in its absolute understanding, does not exist on earth, but will exist in heaven when the Lord ends earthly justice.



- ❖ The law is not for the pure person because their behaviour is already at a higher level than the law.
- ❖ The wicked are judged by the law, but the righteous are above the law, thanks to their inner consciousness. This is man in his true humanity.
- ❖ Not all people are equal in income, but we must all be equal in rights, duties and freedom. All are equal before the law and before God.
- ❖ The law does not judge your thinking, but God will judge your thoughts.

## Having Goals in Life

- ❖ Whoever lives a life devoid of goals will live a boring, burdensome life.
- ❖ Many elements constitute success. The foremost is that those who were successful in life had a strong and powerful goal which they placed before them and they used all their efforts to achieve it.
- ❖ Any goal which takes you away from God and from your salvation can be considered a trick from the devil and must be firmly refused.
- ❖ The spiritual person's goal is God and no one else.
- ❖ His whole aim is to reach God, know Him, love Him, have companionship with Him, abide in Him and have a relationship with Him. The Lord will dwell in His heart and he dwell in God's heart, saying with love to God, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides You." (Psalm 73:25).
- The spiritual person is stable in his goals and his means. He has only one goal, obvious, fixed and never changing. All his focus is on this goal and he moves toward it, always, with all his strength and his desires, never altering it. All his purposes will be directed towards it, like the arrow of the compass, always pointing in one direction, regardless of the change in position or place.
- Whoever's goal is God will not be affected if he loses anything earthly.
- Whoever's goal is God, does not even make spiritual matters his goal.
- ❖ Many say God is their goal but they want to enter from the wide gate. The wide gate never leads to God.
- ❖ We should judge everything according to its use, its goal and its means. The spiritual goal and the good means, can transform all works to good for human edification and building the Kingdom.



## ***The man and the mission***

- ❖ The value of a human's life is based on his mission during his life. If he has no mission, when he dies his life will be ended. But, the value of the life of a person who had a mission will live on, even after his death.
- ❖ In the world there are many missions, the greatest mission of all is to work for the salvation of people and keeping them from eternal destruction. The souls who work in this field are definitely great souls.
- ❖ The person who has no mission does not feel the importance of time; he finds ways of enjoying or killing time. He will suffer from boredom, weariness, restlessness and perhaps anxiety and despair, because life without a mission has no taste or feeling.
- ❖ The person who has no mission concentrates on himself, but his mission will start once he cares for others and does good for others.

## **Ambition**

- ❖ Ambition is not a sin; it is a holy talent to be used to direct oneself towards perfection and completion like the image of God.
- ❖ Ambition is the desire for elevation and aspiring always to move forward. Ambition is something natural and part of human nature.
- ❖ Sinful ambition is the ambition which concentrates on the self and has worldly aims through means which may be wrong. But Holy ambition is a spiritual ambition, with a spiritual objectives and spiritual means.
- ❖ When sinful ambition attains a certain level, it becomes puffed up and arrogant. Whereas spiritual ambition rejoices in the Lord in humility.
- The person who has worldly ambition competes with others to take their position, whereas the spiritually ambitious person helps others to reach what he has attained.
- The ambition of a person who not only wants to be first, but the only one, is undoubtedly evil ambition.
- The spiritual person seeks to rise above certain levels, not certain people.
- Contentment concerns material matters, while ambition concerns spiritual matters. Both go together and strengthen each other.

## CHAPTER 8

### Spiritual Warfare

- ✦ *Sin*
- ✦ *The Sinful Person*
- ✦ *Spiritual Warfare*
- ✦ *Inner Warfare*
- ✦ *The Devil*
- ✦ *Wars from the Devil*
- ✦ *The Ego*
- ✦ *Wars of the Thoughts*
- ✦ *Judgment*
- ✦ *Anger*
- ✦ *Envy*
- ✦ *Doubt*
- ✦ *Fear*
- ✦ *Lying*
- ✦ *Violence*
- ✦ *Cruelty*
- ✦ *Stumbling*
- ✦ *The Love of Praise*
- ✦ *Victory in Spiritual Wars*

**“In Heaven, God will not ask why we sinned?,  
He will ask us why we didn’t repent”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Sin

Not every sin we fall into is from the devil. Many of us, when we sin, say it is the enemy of good, that is, Satan, who makes us fall. But, perhaps the fall was due to the desires of the heart or unclean thoughts, or perhaps due to chronic bad habits, acquired habits or genetic habits.

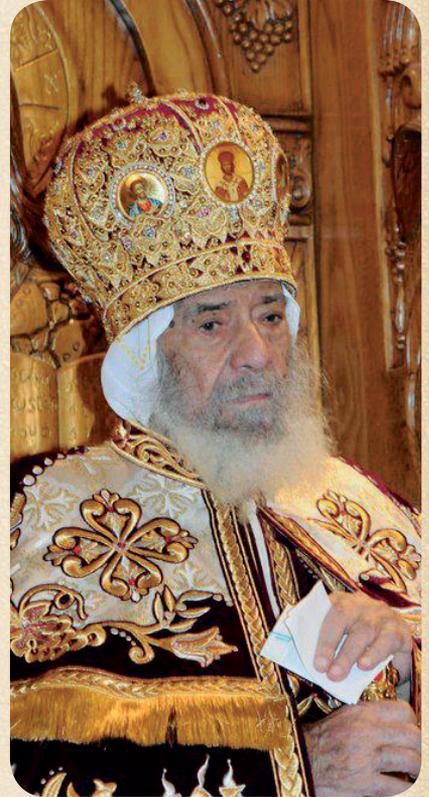
### ***The Concept of Sin:***

#### ***Sin from God's point of view:***

- It is trespassing the commandments of God
- It is rebellion against Him
- It is our pride and ego
- It is lack of love for God
- It is enmity or dispute with God
- It is separation from God
- With sin, we grieve the Spirit of God
- With sin, we demean God's Fatherhood
- It is a betrayal of God
- It is also a crucifixion of Jesus Christ

#### ***Sin in man's point of view:***

- It is a loss of the Divine image
- It is a deprivation of God
- It is a corruption of humanity
- It is a defeat, fall and weakness
- It is death
- It is a separation from God, a withdrawal from His companionship, His love and His Kingdom.



Sin is a betrayal in general. The sinful person betrays the love of the gentle God, who loved us unto the end (John13:1) and filled us with His blessings.

- ✦ If you dwell with God, you must isolate and separate yourself from sin and if you live in sin, you will surely be separated from God.
- ✦ Indeed, the complaint from the tares is a continuous complaint through the years.



My brethren, sin is ugly and fearful when the conscious is awake. One may not feel its bitterness whilst he is busy committing sin or busy doing other things. But as soon as he comes back to himself, regains his consciousness and realises his error, he becomes weary and suffers from the remembrance of sin. The steps of sin start first with connection, feeling then action. The feeling of emptiness affects whoever feels it and can lead to many spiritual wars and wrong paths if it is not properly filled.

At the time of sin, we forget God, His laws and our whole spiritual life. We also forget death and eternity. We forget the souls of angels and the souls of saints that observe us while we are sinning.

We sin because our sights are focused on dust, on the flesh and on material goods, for all that concerns us in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

Sin is originally directed towards God, before it affects people. From its beginning, in the thoughts (mind) and in the heart, and before it becomes an action, it is rebellion against God, His laws and His love. It is against God in its action and in its results, because it creates enmity between God and man.

Sin is not just merely attaining a lust of the flesh, but it has a nasty result on the soul afterwards.

Sins are not barren, they give birth to many other sins. It is enough to start for the rest to follow and one sin leads to another and then to no end.

Sin is never erased with time, but only perishes with repentance.

Every human being is susceptible to sin, regardless of his level of sainthood.

If evil is not deterred on earth, it will be deterred in heaven.

Stubbornness is called a sin, if it is done in a wrong way. However, it can be used for good, and then it is called determination and steadfastness for the sake of doing good.

Sin can never enter into a heart filled with the love of God.

Some sins are seasonal and not continuous.

The suffering of a repentant person due to sin is equivalent to his past lust for it.



### ***The outcomes of the sin:***

- ❖ Fear and anxiety
- ❖ The agony of the conscious
- ❖ The loss of the divine image
- ❖ The loss of dignity
- ❖ The loss of simplicity and purity

### **The Sinful Person**

The sinful person is he who has lost dignity and respect. He is a toy in the hands of the devil and in the hands of evil people. He has no honour, he even loses his self-respect. The man who sins is the man who does not value himself; therefore a sinner is called ignorant.

The sinful man is like a man who has been sedated and does not know what goes on inside himself. His spiritual feelings are on hold; he has no feelings and does not know what he should do and does not know how dangerous his situation is. He lives in recklessness and carelessness. Such a person may be woken up by rejection, temptation or tribulation.

The life of sin is the life of a person who declares independence from God and from His Kingdom. He does according to his desires and does not put God before him.

### ***The Illusions of the Sinful Person:***

- The sinful person thinks of victory where there is defeat
- Thinks of lust where there is loss
- Thinks of strength where there is weakness
- Thus, the Bible says, "Because they see but they cannot see, hear but they cannot hear and they do not understand."

The deprivation from God is the harshest punishment which faces a sinner.

It is devastating when a person sins but does not know he has sinned.

His conscious and his heart are in a deep sleep. Hence, there is no scolding, no rebuke, no reproach, no regret and no shame.

Justifications are ways of covering the sin and not repentance. How easy it is to continue committing the sin and continually find excuses.



## Spiritual Warfare

This can come from within, from the devil, from the world or from evil people. Do you think that one falls into sin due to the power of sin or from stumbling blocks around him or from the many tricks of the devil? No. It is because the love of God is absent from his heart.

### *Benefits of Spiritual Warfare:*

1. Humility
2. Prayer and holding on to God and seeking His help
3. Spiritual warfare leads to sympathy for sinners
4. It gives experience
5. It gives blessings in order to receive the crowns
6. It continuously gives us the spirit of awareness and vigilance
7. It makes us strong and fearless
8. It is a school of faith
9. It opens the door of heaven and grades us according to our level

## Inner Warfare

- ✦ It comes from the desires within the heart, from the thoughts of the mind and the movements of the body
- Inner warfare is harder than outer warfare because the person becomes his own enemy.
- ✦ The only reason for the fall is the conflict between the will of the person and the will of God.
- ✦ Whoever has no inner warfare, finds it easier to face and conquer outer warfare.
- ✦ Even though inner warfare may look mild, it may control us if we are not firm with it.

## The Devil

- ✦ He is the greatest psychologist and psychoanalyst. Psychology for him is not just theories but experiences on the practical and academic level and encompass a whole range of aspects. Therefore, he knows when to fight and how to fight and when to wait and from which door to enter, whether through the thoughts, the mind or the heart.



- ✦ Indeed, although the devil may have lost his purity, he has not lost his power as one of the most powerful angels.

### **Characteristics of the Devil**

1. Never stops fighting
2. Strong
3. Very experienced in wars and in human nature
4. Clever and a cunning
5. Liar
6. Nagger
7. Complainer
8. Talented
9. Cruel
10. Cunning in showing his mercy
11. Envious
12. Opportunist
13. Dishonest and deceitful



### **Wars from the Devil**

- ✦ No doubt the spiritual work incites the devil's envy, and the devil only envies those who succeed in their spiritual work.
- ✦ The devil's wars are against all of us, no one has escaped them. Do not believe that his wars are against only the beginner or the sinner.
- ✦ How easy it is for the devil to offer you sins with different guises, in a way which is easy to accept, where sins are shown as virtues.
- ✦ The devil does not insist on one particular way to trouble or fight an individual, but it is easy for him to quickly change his plans and tricks if this will lead to the person's fall.
- ✦ The devil is frustrated by your stable virtues, which seem to have become part of your nature. Therefore, he tries to destroy them using all his tricks. He offers you a new virtue and, unless you carefully examine it, you may lose your steady virtues, due to lack of experience.



- ❖ You cannot fall in the devil's temptations unless your heart desires it.
- ❖ The devil drugs the person so that he forgets everything except the sin, and awakes from it only after it is too late.
- ❖ The devil tempts the person with the obvious bodily virtues instead of the hidden spiritual virtues.
- ❖ Desires are the game the devil uses in his wars.
- ❖ The devil cannot conquer the faithful person, unless he surrenders himself to the devil and relinquishes his strength.
- ❖ The devil knows just the right time to attack. He seizes the opportunity when we are away from prayers, Psalms and meditations, away from spiritual surroundings and when God is not in our sights. So, the devil attacks when we are off-guard.
- ❖ If the devil comes to you offering a sin, say to him, "Go away! I am not yours. I am the house of God. I am a holy place for God. I am a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am a holy Church. The Father and the Son come to me, and built a mansion in me. The Holy Trinity dwells in me.
- ❖ The devil's wars can be slow and long-standing, or quick, sudden and cruel. We cannot feel the slow tribulations. He can attract his victims in the long run and they may not realise what is happening. But the spontaneous wars could in the form of frightening appearances or false revelations, or similar misguidance.

### ***The Methods the Devil Uses in War:***

- ❖ Don't think that in the beginning the devil will ask you to open a wide door for him to enter your heart. He will ask you for just a small opening, like the hole of a needle, and then he enlarges it until he fills your whole heart.
- ❖ The works of devil are known by their quick action, or perhaps it can be called "swiftness".
- ❖ His work is the contrast to the work of God which is characterised by quietness, steadiness and patience. It may take time, but it is perfect and calm, like the act of salvation and God's promises.
- ❖ It is easy for the devil to fight you while you are neglectful or lapsing, because he always works and plants weeds while you are asleep.



- ❖ The devil tempts everyone but he can't make us fall. In his temptations he just offers a thought or an idea but he can't force anyone to obey him.

### ***The Devil is Never a Giver:***

- ❖ The devil always tricks people into thinking that he is a giver. He tempts people, but he never gives and always takes. Indeed, he takes more than he gives.
- ❖ He gives adultery in order to take purity.
- ❖ He gives lust of the flesh and takes the joy of the spirit.
- ❖ He promises to give you the world in order to steal your heart and your eternal life.
- ❖ Sometimes he doesn't give anything, but offers only artificial and deceptive dreams. Even if he gives, we do not accept anything from him. The spiritual person only takes from the hands of God.
- ❖ Magic is a form of the devil's work, and the magician works with evil powers.

### **The Ego**

The hardest thing that a human falls into is to love himself in the wrong way. Your ego is what fights you more than the devil. Actually, when the devil fights you, he starts first with your ego.

- ❖ Division indicates the presence of selfishness, which works independently from the Spirit of God. It wants to force its opinion whatever the consequences are, and does not care about the dangerous consequences resulting from separation from God.
- ❖ Whoever concentrates on himself, wants everybody to focus on him.
- ❖ Those who love themselves are only interested in taking and not giving.
- ❖ Self-love is a great obstacle towards the love of others and goes against sacrifice and alms giving.
- ❖ If selfishness comes into service, it will destroy the service and itself.

### ***The Numerous Sins which are the Outcome of Selfishness:***

- ❖ The person who loves himself is always self-centred.



- ❖ He may praise and glorify himself, always depends on himself, and feels and trusts in himself.
- ❖ He is always far from obedience and guidance. The person who is proud of himself is always stubborn, even in his relationship with God. Thus, he cannot live the life of surrender.
- ❖ The person who is proud of himself is never humble and is always righteous in his own eyes.
- ❖ He never finds time to care for others, because he is always concerned about himself.
- ❖ The self-centred person is always difficult to deal with. If he rebukes others, he will have a cruel reproach and his anger may be strong. This anger may turn into envy and may lead to revenge. The fighter who is full of ego finds it very hard to cooperate with others and becomes aggressive with anyone who stands against his ego and his pride.
- ❖ The person who is proud of himself may reach a dangerous level and be difficult to deal with.
- ❖ A person who is proud of himself has a confession father as a formality. He does not seek the guidance of his confession father because he feels he knows everything and the solution is already in his mind.
- ❖ The person who is proud of himself is stubborn and inflexible. He feels his opinion is superior to anyone else's opinion and he can't accept any opposition to his ideas. He even becomes an enemy to whoever opposes him, or can hate that person and try to destroy him or, at the very least, ignore the opinions of others.
- ❖ Those who became arrogant have fallen.

### ***Victory over Selfishness***

- ❖ Whoever has conquered their ego from within can be victorious over the world and all the ways of the devil.
- ❖ The power of the self comes by rejecting any wrong suggestions from the devil whether they come via the thoughts or the heart.
- ❖ The true love of self is to walk in a spiritual path and unite the self with the love of God, to bring it to His kingdom.
- ❖ The true love of self is to discipline the self against all sins.



- ❖ The greatest war in our spiritual life is the war against ourselves and if we win this internal war, we will win every external war.
- ❖ My brethren, do you want to reach God? Then remove the ego from yourself, which you worship instead of God.
- ❖ If you don't get out of the self, which you worship instead of God, and make yourself great and glorified before others, you will never reach the height and manifestation of the spirit.
- ❖ When you make yourself like dust and ashes, then the Lord will stand by your side.

## **Wars of the Thoughts**

- ❖ Thoughts evolve from the senses then go to the mind, the heart and the will. Know that if you do not reject bad thoughts immediately, they may give birth to more thoughts, as no thought is barren.
- ❖ A thought is just like an obedient servant, who obeys our desires and prepares a way for the desires to be fulfilled.
- ❖ Protect yourself internally by positive spiritual work which protects your heart from thoughts. Let us care for the heart and its spiritual storage, instead of spending our spiritual life battling thoughts.
- ❖ If a thought flares up inside you, do not add more fuel to it.
- ❖ Despair makes a person relaxed with his thoughts and opens the door for thoughts to enter becomes weak and then falls. So you must fight the thoughts to win.
- ❖ Keep your mind busy before the devil comes and occupies it for you.





### ***How to Triumph over Thoughts:***

1. Don't be afraid of thoughts, but resist them and fight them.
2. Train yourself to lead your thoughts, and don't let your thoughts lead you.
3. Fill your thoughts always with spiritual matters, so that when the devil brings bad thoughts, he will not find an empty space in your mind. Keep yourself busy, as this is a preventative measure.
4. Always be alert, protecting your heart's purity, so that you don't allow bad thoughts, without being aware of them. Reject the thoughts from the beginning, when they are weak and you are still strong.
5. Give attention to spiritual virtues.
6. On the other hand, keep away from the pitfalls which bring bad thoughts.
7. As the senses are the door of the thoughts, let your senses be pure so that they bring you pure thoughts.
8. Be wary of the intermediate thoughts which are neither good nor bad.
9. If your thoughts weary you and you cannot overcome them, flee from them and from talking to people.
10. Fleeing from thoughts is better than fighting them.
11. Get rid of thoughts by praying.
12. Be aware also that, if thoughts continue, they can lead to bad thoughts and desires, and may become dangerous, because they pass from the mind to the heart and from the thought to the emotion.

### **Judgement**

- ❖ Judging others is not just cruel, but in judging others, the person forgets their own sins while judging other's sins.
- ❖ There is a spiritual law which says that one falls into the same sins in which he judged others. The Lord allows this to happen in order to confound the pride of those who judge others.
- ❖ A hidden type of judgement is that which is concealed behind guidance, criticism or warning.
- ❖ The main difference between criticism and judgement is that criticism obliges subjectively, but judgement always touches the personal side.
- ❖ The humble person never judges others.



- ❖ A word of judgment is never barren, it gives birth to sons and daughters, and its offspring are everywhere, and new generations may come as a result of additions or wrong understanding. It may not give birth to words only, but to different emotions and disputes.
- ❖ If you love someone, you will not judge them, instead you will defend them.
- ❖ Judging yourself protects you from judging others.
  
- ❖ **Self-judgement:** Who has a dead person in his house and does not mourn him; instead leaves him in order to mourn his neighbour's dead.
  
- ❖ Whoever judges others, grace and help will be taken away from him, and he will fall.
- ❖ Hatred is the mother of judgement, and it is worse than its daughter.

### ***Some Training to Treat Judgement:***

Train yourself to treat the sins of the tongue.

1. Remember the Lord's words, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent." (Revelation 2:5).
2. You can treat judgement with love.
3. Remember the damage that judgement has on yourself.
4. Keep yourself away from judgement, fearing the fall and fearing the consequence.
5. Train yourself not to think badly of others and be slow to judge.
6. Be kind and meek with people in your judgement of them.
7. Do not judge on appearance.
8. Train yourself to bear those who persecute you.
9. Take care not to judge those who have a disability.
10. Take care not to judge through criticism.





## Anger

- ❖ There are two kinds of anger: one is the wrong type of anger which is considered to be an obvious sin or group of sins, while the other is right and may even be described as holy anger or anger of duty.
- ❖ The unacceptable anger is one which is due to personal gain or due to material or worldly matters, and not for a holy purpose.
- ❖ The humble person never upsets or gets angry with anybody. This is because he always puts the blame on himself.
- ❖ The person who puts the blame on himself in all matters never blames others, and hence, he never finds cause to be angry with others.
- ❖ Envy is harsher and more cruel than anger.
- ❖ The person who is restless and unsympathetic becomes angry quickly and always seeks revenge.
- ❖ The Lord gave you the power of anger in order to direct it towards your own mistakes. This way you can correct yourself and fight against your own sins. This way you obey the Lord's commandment in the Psalms, "Be angry and do not sin."
- ❖ Anger is energy and it becomes a sin if it is of a bodily nature. However, the power of anger can be used for good. This power can produce enthusiasm and holy zeal, which and if it is destroyed, one becomes lifeless.
- ❖ Being slow to anger, gives you a chance to review yourself, to calm yourself from within and to control your nerves and your tongue.
- ❖ If anger escalates, it should not be treated with harsh words. As the saints say, "Fire is never extinguished by fire, but with water." Hence, a kind word can be a more effective way of extinguishing the fire of anger.

### ***Six Virtues for Treating Anger:***

1. With the virtue of forgiveness.
2. With the virtue of asceticism.
3. With the virtue of gentleness and meekness.
4. With reconciliation and peace.
5. With prayers and praise.
6. With patience and an open heart.



### ***Miscellaneous Practices to Treat Anger:***

1. Train yourself to not get angry and do not let others become angry with you.
2. As much as possible stay away from the causes of provocation. Do not exaggerate the causes and do not take the matter too seriously.
3. If you find a fire do not add fuel to the fire.
4. Spend time with the meek to learn from their quietness, self-control, and ability to avoid anger. Even if they are provoked they take the matter calmly.
5. Avoid discussions while you are physically, psychologically or mentally tired.
6. Choose the right time for discussion and do not argue with others while they are tired, exhausted, busy, or not yet ready for discussions.
7. Do not nag others.
8. With love, comfort those who have upset you rather than comforting yourself, even if you are right.
9. Do not be quick to become angry but try to understand others. Most of the time the angry person rushes into judgment before understanding.
10. There are many who may irritate you and interfere in your private life. Do not believe every word which has been said and do not become agitated without examining the facts first.
11. Remember that anger does not solve problems, instead it aggravates them.
12. Do not believe that courage and manliness are demonstrated by stirring up trouble. In reality it is tolerance which indicates strength, while loss of temper indicates weakness.
13. Train yourself to smile and maintain a peaceful countenance, voice and actions.
14. Do not expect perfection from others and become upset if you don't find it. Be realistic and deal with others according to their character.
15. Do not think negative thoughts about others or interpret their words in a way that affects you.
16. Do not be over sensitive towards your dignity and your rights, which may cause you to become upset about small things, and hence, you may lose friendships or companions.
17. Do not believe yourself to be a teacher or inspect the behaviour of others. Do not criticise, reproach or give many directions.



18. Do not be harsh in your reproach and possibly lose your loved ones.
  19. If you become angry, try to overcome it early and do not allow your anger to grow.
  20. Take note of the things that make you angry and train yourself to be rid of them. Just as you treat the consequences of your anger, you also need to treat its causes.
  21. Not every truth is welcome, as many do not appreciate someone revealing their mistakes with too much honesty. Speaking the truth must be accompanied by wisdom, love and kindness.
  22. Do not force people to accept your opinion or to follow your principles and do not expect all matters to proceed according to your desires.
  23. Avoid interfering in other people's business and do not try to discover their secrets.
  24. If someone gets angry with you, do not do the same, instead try to calm them as much as possible and be peaceful in your dealings with others.
- ❖ Learn the specific verses that admonish anger and repeat them. Contemplate on them whenever you struggle with anger.
  - ❖ As you reach a different stage in your anger, be careful not to let it escalate and worsen. Put boundaries on your anger at each step and do not let it reach a level of hatred or holding a grudge.

## Envy

- ❖ If indeed the evil eye is a reality then all gifted, talented and successful people would have perished by now.
- ❖ The word envy means the desire to remove the grace or the good from a person who is envied and to transfer it to the envier.
- ❖ Whoever loves virtue does not envy the virtuous person, and whoever loves the virtuous person does not envy them, but imitates them.
- ❖ Envy was the first sin in Satan's heart towards man and because of it he led them to death. Also, the first sin on earth for Adam's children was envy. Cain envied his brother Abel, and killed him and envy continued among Adam's descendants.



## Doubt

- ❖ Doubt weakens faith and this leads to fear then to falling.
- ❖ The person who does not doubt always lives in peace and rest.
- ❖ Faith kills fear and doubt, while fear and doubt may kill faith.
- ❖ Doubt is hades to the heart and thoughts.
- ❖ Doubt comes from living with people who doubt. Just as living with the faithful and believers, transfers faith and trust to you. Therefore, stay away from people who doubt, or at least be aware of their language and do not trust them.
- ❖ If doubt continues, it will destroy the soul and lead to depression and anxiety.
- ❖ Doubt is treated by trust and love. Whoever loves someone, will not doubt him.

## Fear

- ❖ Fear is prominent in the nature of man and it did not enter the soul until after sin.
- ❖ The person who fears and worries is no doubt a person who forgets the love of God and His promises.
- ❖ Not all fear is sin or war, there is a holy fear.
- ❖ Truly Satan destroys people through fear, and their inner faith is much weaker than their outer fears.
- ❖ Faith prevents fear and reminds the fearful person of the divine power that protects him.
- ❖ A person who fears death is one who has not repented, who is not prepared for death and who loves the present worldly life.
- ❖ The love of eternal life rescues the heart from the fear of death and gives it the spirit of readiness.
- ❖ If a person is enslaved to lusts, the fear of losing the lusts, or the fear of being punished for it will control him.
- ❖ ***We should not focus on the power of the devil and forget the power of God:***
  - We do not look at Goliath without mentioning the name of God, nor do we look at the Red Sea and forget Moses' rod, and we do not think about the wilderness without meditating on the clouds that cover us by day and the pillar of fire that guides us by night.



- Do not be scared of the den which is filled with hungry lions, but instead, meditate on the angel of God who shuts the mouths of the lions.
  - The Psalm says, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.", but immediately afterward it says, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm 93).
- ✦ The children of the Lord do not fear at all, even if the enemy surrounds them. Knowing that the Lord exists casts away all fear. But those who are fearful do not feel the existence of God in their life. Those who sin feel separated from God due to their sin, thus, they are separated from the power of help and protection.

## Lying

- ✦ Lying is a low action and is a proof of fear and evidence of a weak personality. A truthful person is courageous and takes responsibility for his actions.
- ✦ Lying is a sin behind which other sins hide. A lie can cover a previous sin or be part of a scheme to commit a sin in the future.
- ✦ Truly lying is the eldest son to all other sins. It is the disguise by which the sinful person tries to conceal his sin so that it is not seen.

## Violence

- ✦ With violence you can make others submit to you by force and silence them, but you cannot win their love.

### ***Violence is a compounded sin:***

- ✦ Christianity does not consent to violence in any form because it is not spiritual behaviour and it involves a group of sins:
  - Violence is evidence of a hardened heart.
  - Violence is against the virtue of meekness.
  - Violence is not compatible with love.
  - Violence is also the sin of enmity.



- Violence shows hatred.
- Violence carries a desire for revenge, or at least indicates intolerance.
- The ego manifests itself during the time of violence.
- During violence the person loses control.
- Violence is a sign of weakness.
- Tension and violence do not indicate manliness or a powerful personality.

## Cruelty

- ❖ Cruelty is an evil war, which, in its character, resembles the attributes of the devil, because cruelty is not an attribute of God. In contrast, God is always merciful and compassionate to all.

### *Cruelty is of two kinds:*

1. Cruelty towards God.
2. Cruelty towards people.

- ❖ **Cruelty towards God:** Is continuous rejection of God and closing one's heart before Him, and not acknowledging His blessings and love and His continuous knocking on our hearts.
- ❖ **Cruelty towards people:** It takes the form of: harsh words, cruel looks, cruel punishment and cruel rebuke.
- ❖ **The hardened heart:** towards God has an air of indifference and the word of God does not leave any mark on it. Not only does the word of the spirit not influence this heart but a person may even make fun of it, make sarcastic remarks and refuse to listen.  
The commandments of the Lord become a heavy burden.

## Stumbling

- ❖ Stumbling is when a person causes another to fall. It could be intentional, in which case, the punishment is worse than the unintentional stumbling. A person can cause another to stumble by presenting the sin, or making the sin easy, or by giving sneaky concepts of the sin, introducing it by giving it a name of virtue, or he can convince another of the advantages of sin and its benefits.



## The Love of Praise

- ✦ You must know that the praise of others does not lead to the Kingdom of God, but can distract you.
- You do not enter the Kingdom through the good opinion of others, but by God's acceptance of you.
- ✦ He who praises you now may not praise you tomorrow, and may ever criticise you tomorrow. People are not consistent in their praise and may not be sincere.

My friend, the praise of people is temporary and perishable. Those who shouted to the Lord calling Him their King, also shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Also, the praise of people is misguided as they do not know the whole truth. The weak soul is one which is happy with the praise and admiration of others. If praise reaches your ears, do not let it enter into your heart, but remember your sins and weakness.

## Victory in Spiritual Wars

- ✦ In order to triumph over mistakes and over the devil we must first triumph over our inner self.

### ***Do not be lenient with sin:***

- Being lenient turns the war from the outside to the inside of the heart.
- Leniency with thought goes to the heart and turns into feelings.
- Leniency with feelings turns into emotion or lust.
- ✦ It is nice to answer the devil with verses from the Bible because, "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12).
- ✦ The phrase, "Go away Satan", is a spiritual weapon which the Lord offers us to use in all spiritual wars.
- ✦ Whenever your spiritual life is weak, do not despair, because despair is one of the devil's wars through which he seeks to weaken your morale and invalidate your struggling so that you fall into his hands.



- ✦ The person who is emotionally satisfied is less exposed to sexual temptation. Thus, we must satisfy the passion of young people in a proper spiritual manner. The best way to achieve this is through the love of God, which is the deepest form of love.
- ✦ Do not panic when you stumble and rise, but instead, be happy that you rise after each stumble, and be certain that God gives you the strength by which you arise, even if you fall 7 times (which is a complete number). Stumbling is different from defeat; it is just a phase from which you rise to finally win.

### ***There is a big difference between victory and not fighting:***

If you find yourself not falling into a particular sin, it may mean that the devil is not currently fighting you with this sin. Or, perhaps you do not fall in it now because its circumstances do not suit you.

Hence, you do not fall because there is no fight with this particular sin.

### ***Elements of Victory:***

1. Keep away from the causes of sin and escape as much as possible.
2. Be scrupulous in your life and be careful even of the things which appear to be small.
3. Struggle with all your might and do not give up during wars.
4. You must strengthen the love of God in your heart by practicing the means of grace.
5. Let your spiritual principles be right, and let your aim be God and His Kingdom.
6. If you want to win, always have a humble heart.
7. Always feel that you are a beginner as this will lead you to advance and grow.

### ***Some advice for the spiritually weak person:***

1. Keep away from the area of sin that weakens your will.
2. Ask for power from God and mention your weaknesses in your prayers.
3. No matter how weak you are, do not despair.
4. Struggle with all your strength, no matter how small it is.
5. Concentrate on resisting the fixed, repeated sins.
6. Concern yourself with renewing the mind in order to reach a sound understanding.
7. Your weaknesses will disappear if the love of God enters your heart.
8. Remember there were many weak people who became mighty Saints.
9. Whenever you become weak, remember the grace of God.
10. Know that God always works with the weak.



### **Victory over Devils:**

1. If you are convinced that victory over the devil's wars is too hard or impossible, you will weaken your power and will surrender, and thus will fall. But if Satan fights you, be sure that it is possible to win, as God does not allow unequal wars.
2. Never fear the devil, in spite of all his talents, strength and tricks. He is a weak creature in front of the children of God.
3. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7).
4. You defeat the devil by faith, but by what faith?  
It is by faith in God's work in you. Faith that God can overthrow the power of the enemy and defeat all his traps set against us. "For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous" (Psalm 125:3). Faith that God is mightier than the enemy and that He fights on our behalf.
5. Humility defeats the devil for many reasons including:
  - The devil is not humble and humility reminds him of his pride, which caused his fall.
  - Humility reminds us of Christ's image, who denied Himself and took the form of a slave to save mankind, and by just remembering that, the devil becomes affected and flees.
  - The worst fear of the devil is when the humble person confesses his weaknesses and uses the power of God to help him against the devil's wars.

### **6- By wisdom and discernment:**

Wisdom reveals the devils tricks, also gives the method of dealing with the situation.

### **7- By seeking advice and confessing:**

Spiritual advice reveals the tricks of the devil and explains how to be rescued from them.

### **8- By vigilance and diligence:**

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."(1 Peter 5:8).



**9- By praying and fasting:**

"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29).

**10- Go away Satan:**

- The phrase, "Go away Satan", by which the Lord rebuked the devil, was not only for the temptation on the mountain, but set an example for us to use in all the wars of the devil with mankind.

**11- Confronting sin by the commandments:**

Memorise some verses to help confront sins that fight you.



## CHAPTER 9

### People

- ❖ *Types of People*
- ❖ *Important Principles in Dealing with People*
- ❖ *Advice for Dealing with People*
- ❖ *Speech*
- ❖ *Encouragement*
- ❖ *Criticism and Correction*
- ❖ *Friendship*
- ❖ *Kindness*
- ❖ *Excuses*
- ❖ *Treatment for Prying on others*

**“Bear the faults of others as God bears  
your faults.”**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Types of People

- ❖ There are people whose lives were a blessing for their generations, not only in the spiritual arena, but also in the secular arena. There are those who have lived as though they were never born. They spent a period on earth, as if they do not exist or were not created. The world did not profit anything from their existence.

### ***There are two types of people in history:***

- The type that writes and records history, and we call those “historians”.
- The other, and more significant type is the one that makes history.
- ❖ There are two types of people: The type that melts by love, and another type that exploits love for their own selfish agenda and recklessness.
- ❖ There are two types of people: The person who passes your way like a gentle, sweet breeze and another who passes like a violent storm.
- ❖ There is a type of person who has a twofold error: On one hand he does not serve others, while on the other hand he imposes himself as a burden on others to serve him.
- ❖ Actually, people follow one of three wills: Their own will, the will of others or the will of God.

## Important Principles in Dealing with People

- ❖ How beautiful it is when a person is the source of happiness to all those around him.
- ❖ Cheerfulness bestows additional beauty on the person.
- ❖ Concern for others removes selfishness from the heart. Thus, the person categorically refuses to build their comfort on the suffering of others.
- ❖ Truly, a hurtful rebuke does not repair relationships, but a kind word does.
- ❖ Instruction and rebuke are not suitable, except at the right time.
- ❖ Rejoice with the joyful and weep with the sorrowful. But many people apply only half of this command. They can rejoice with the joyful, but it's very hard for them to weep and suffer with those who are suffering.
- ❖ Admonition is admonition. But the way it is done can make it acceptable and effective for one person, while painful and unproductive for another, resulting in the opposite of what was desired.



- ❖ Whoever forgets the trespasses of people against him, will be able to love everyone, and will have peace in his heart towards everyone.
- ❖ Imposing your views will convince no one, and hence, will gain no one.
- ❖ The way of persuasion and empathy may take longer than the way of authority and power, but it is steadier and has a deeper impact.
- ❖ If you treat people with mercy, God will give you back abundant mercy. If you treat people with cruelty, you will get cruelty in return. Whatever you give will be given back to you in abundance.
- ❖ People need those who lift their spirits and alleviate their problems. With hope from within, a window of light shines among their worries and illuminates them, thus, giving them new hope.
- ❖ The noble person does not build his comfort on the suffering of others, but sacrifices his comfort for the comfort of others.
- ❖ The essence of dealing with people is trust.
- ❖ Matters depend on one's intentions and aims. We do not have the right to judge. Only God is aware of intentions.
- ❖ You show your love for people by tolerating them.
- ❖ Merely observing relaxed features will bring comfort to another person.
- ❖ We obey people within our obedience to God. However, if obedience to God clashes with the obedience to others, no doubt the conscience of humans will therefore listen to Saint Paul's saying: "God must be obeyed more than people".
- ❖ Wise people say, "A condition of companionship is agreement, and a condition of reconciliation is frankness".
- ❖ Praising people does not mean flattering them. But, when a person has a talent, you ought to discover it and praise it with honesty and sincerity.
- ❖ People do not like an arrogant person who speaks as if he is superior. But they like the humble person, who treats them as equals.
- ❖ The person who possesses a sweet tongue with good logic, who has a cheerful face and deals well with others may gain the whole world and all its people.



## Advice for Dealing with People

- ✦ Be cheerful with all people and do your best to spread cheer to everyone. Greet people with a nice smile and a kind word, because people do not like a frowning countenance or a gloomy face as this causes others to lose their peace of heart and their calm mood.
- ✦ Make cheerfulness one of your favourite features, which attracts people to your faith. Your cheerfulness is a joyful gospel, which makes people feel that your faith promotes peace in the heart. It reminds us of St. Paul the Apostle's words, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).
- ✦ Do not force people to respect you, as respect is a feeling which comes from the heart and it does not come by force, but by personal admiration.
- ✦ In your dealings with people, be like a breeze not a storm. Many people like stormy behaviour as it shows power. However, the breeze represents humility and kindness, which ought to be features of whoever sacrifices himself.
- ✦ Be victimised rather than be unjust, and be the crucified rather than the crucifier. Do not take revenge for yourself.
- ✦ Do not believe all that you hear about the faults of others.
- ✦ It could be your right or your duty to advise or rebuke, but this should be done politely and in a humble and loving way.
- ✦ If you wish to be fair in your judgement of people, you must always hear the other party, and do not gather facts from only one side.
- ✦ Make people happy to meet you and feel that you are a source of joy for them, and that your presence amongst them is desired.
- ✦ If you can't relieve the suffering of others, at least do not be the cause of their suffering.
- ✦ Give to others from your heart, before giving from your pocket.
- ✦ Instead of hurting others, try to win them.
- ✦ God doesn't always focus on our faults, so let us do the same with people.
- ✦ Do not demand idealism from people, instead, accept them as they actually are and not as they ought to be.
- ✦ We should be very meticulous in our own soul-searching, while very compassionate in judging others.



- ❖ Let there always be a cheerful word on your tongue for others. Be ready with nice words to say to whoever is in distress or in trouble, a prayer of invocation or a word of useful advice. Tell people, "Every problem has a solution and every locked door has a key".
- ❖ Let your soul be a comforting one, so that whoever listens to you may be comforted.
- ❖ If you can't offer good deeds practically, offer them through good words, so that people rejoice when they see you.
- ❖ Do not give yourself dignity and impose it on others, but let people dignify you due to what they see of your kindness and humility.
- ❖ If you respect others, they will respect you. Respect others for their humanity, regardless of their age, position or social status. They are human beings like you.
- ❖ Do not demand respect from others, but let them choose to respect you because of what they see in your attributes, which will compel them to respect you.
- ❖ In dealing with people, choose your expressions carefully. Most likely you can choose a better way of expressing yourself, which is free of errors or misunderstandings.
- ❖ Do not be influenced by every opinion that you hear, and do not let it destroy an old, strong belief that you have. But take adequate time to investigate, question and find the truth.
- ❖ Fill the earth with mercy, fill the earth with tenderness, fill the earth with love and fill the earth with pity. In turn, you will be rewarded with mercy, tenderness, love and pity by the same measure you give to others.
- ❖ If you ask God to deliver you from poisonous arrows, do not aim poisonous arrows at others. Whether it is through a cruel tongue which damages their reputation or hurts their feelings, or by treating them in a cruel way, or by pursuing them in their livelihood or in their business or in their work.
- ❖ My brethren, if you are unable to do good deeds, you should at least refrain from doing evil to others.
- ❖ Do not just listen, but investigate carefully and be certain, at least in important and serious matters.



- ❖ A piece of advice to those who are exhausted due to hard work; do not enter into lengthy discussions or into arguments, particularly with those who are inflexible in their opinion and are difficult to persuade. It is not right to make important decisions or try to resolve conflicts while you are in a state of bodily exhaustion. Beware of arguing while you are exhausted, as you may lose your temper.
- ❖ If you become a boss, treat everyone gently, and be well aware that you are merely the boss of their work and not of their personalities.
- ❖ If you don't carry people's sins, carry their sufferings.
- ❖ Be cautious in thinking that you are a single island in the ocean, which has no connection to other lands or countries. Do not separate yourself from participating in people's joys and sorrows, as they are part of your flesh and bones.
- ❖ Do not consider yourself to be the most important person in the place you happen to be, believing that your opinion is the most important one, your decision is the most important decision and your status is the most important status.
- ❖ How nice it is when we offer the good news of salvation to every person who is under stress. We tell those who are tired and carrying heavy burdens, "Here is the Lord and He tells you, 'Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest". (Matthew 11:28). We tell the broken hearted that the Lord has come for you, to comfort you and save you.
- ❖ Bring cheer to people, sow hope and bring smile to every face.

***Be a happy song in the hearts of all.***



### ***How can we deal with people and gain their love?***

- ✚ There are several ways to deal successfully with people, to gain their hearts and lead them, through love, to the spiritual path. As the Bible says, “He who wins souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30).
- 1. Fulfil, in your life, the ideals that people long for.
- 2. Do not desire what is in the hands of another. Do not make others feel that you are taking sides against them and that you want to take what is in their hands or what they wish to obtain.
- 3. Bear with others in their times of weakness or their sin, and win them by your patience, forgiveness and tolerance. There is no doubt that this will make them regret their abusive behaviour towards you.
- 4. Praise others and show them your appreciation. Make them feel that their good deeds are known to you and valued by you.
- 5. Respect others and treat all with courtesy. Not only your elders or those you are obliged to respect, but even the young and those who are less than you in position and age.
- 6. Work on building people not on destroying them.
- 7. Do not rebuke excessively, and if you are obliged to do so, let it be done without embarrassing anyone. Do not suspect people, and do not try to catch them doing wrong. Do not make them feel that you are taking a hostile or critical stand against them.
- 8. Make excuses for people and defend them as much as you can, in a rightful way, not a hypocritical way, and without being courteous at the expense of fairness.
- 9. Give continuously and abundantly. If you can't help someone, offer him a kind word or a sweet smile or a genuine compliment. Perform your duties for all without negligence.
- 10. Treat people with humility, gentleness and kindness. Because kindness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle said, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22).
- 11. Understand people and let them understand you, calmly and with a good spirit. Thus, live with them in mutual understanding and in love and peace.
- 12. Bring empathy into your relationships with others. Rejoice with the joyful and weep with the sorrowful. Do not let an opportunity pass when you can comfort another's heart.



### ***How you love people and people love you***

1. Put a clear target before you to love others, even if this leads to sacrifice.
2. For the sake of people's love, respect everybody, even those who are younger and of a lower status than you.
3. Your meekness is an important factor in gaining people's love.
4. Respect them, help them and sacrifice yourself for them.
5. Meet them with cheerfulness and kindness.
6. Do not excessively blame or rebuke.
7. Defend them and praise them.
8. Be a good person, who possesses the qualities that people appreciate.
9. Tolerate others.
10. Be faithful towards them and be wise in your faithfulness.

## **Speech**

### ***When do you speak?***

- ❖ Speak when the ear is ready to hear you. If you find the person is not ready to listen, keep quiet.
- ❖ Do not speak to an exhausted person, or someone who is physically or mentally tired or under pressure.
- ❖ Do not speak if the person is busy, and does not have time to hear you.
- ❖ Choose the most suitable time for the person in order to present your opinion. They should be ready in heart and psychologically to hear and understand you.
- ❖ If you intend to reach a conclusion, you should win the person you are speaking to, and hence, you will gain the whole discussion and its outcome.

Many people aim at winning the discussion by any means, even if they risk losing the other party in the discussion. They will end up losing everything, since logic alone is not enough, but the psychology is also important.



1. Whoever destroys the other party in a discussion and proves him wrong, especially in front of others, will never receive any benefits from him.
  2. Whoever interrupts the other party in a discussion and does not give him a chance to speak, responding before he is finished, and making him feel that he is an adversary, will never find a favourable response in the heart of the other party, and will not be able to convince him of his opinion, even if it is logical.
  3. Whoever undermines the thoughts of the person who is speaking with him and says they are weak and superficial or unpractical or illogical, this one too will not reach any results. Hence, respect the opinion of your adversary, regardless of how much you oppose it, you can respond to him in a polite and well-mannered way.
  4. Try to reach the heart of whoever you are speaking to before reaching his mind. You can be sure that if you gain the heart you will gain the mind too.
- ❖ When speaking is a necessary virtue, we will then be blamed for not speaking.
  - ❖ The sins of the tongue are not infertile, too many are their offspring.
  - ❖ The wise rule is to talk when it is suitable to talk and remain silent when it is good to be silent.
  - ❖ Everyone needs to hear a pleasant word that makes them happy, and hence, loves the person who says it.
  - ❖ The word that comes out of your mouth cannot be retracted.
  - ❖ It is difficult to say the same words to everybody, since each person has what suits him and suit his circumstances.
  - ❖ The spiritual person does not use cruel words, but his words are gentle, because one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is kindness.
  - ❖ Cruel words are not acceptable to the loving and gentle God, whose mouth is sweetness itself and His lips drip sweetness as the honeycomb (Song of Songs 5:16 and 4:11).

## Encouragement

- ❖ Encouragement is a great virtue, and the Bible says about it, "Encourage the disheartened, uphold the weak, be patient with all." (1 Thessalonians 5:14).



- ❖ The disheartened person is one whose morale has been broken down from within, and they have low self-esteem, so they feel helpless and close to desperation. These people need encouragement, they need someone who holds their hand and helps them stand up, so that they don't fall or get lost.
- ❖ You should try to save your weak brethren from their weakness and help them stand up, even if you have struggled and noticed that your efforts have not achieved results and they continue in their weakness and failure. Do not become restless from working and do not abandon them, but encourage them to stand up again, bearing in mind that their rising up might take time and needs your patience.
- ❖ Do not think that encouragement is for the young only, as the old need it too.
- ❖ If you see a confused, desperate, and broken person, do not misjudge him. If you see a person who has failed, do not despise him but support him and give him a word which will lift his morale. Give him a word of hope, open a window that enlightens the way.
- ❖ Search for the good points in the life of a sinful or a weak person and highlight them and praise them.
- ❖ My brother, if you are on the top of a mountain, do not despise those on the bottom or in the valley or even in the swamp, and if God gave you grace and you have been successful, do not look at people from above, and do not despise those who are unsuccessful, desperate and disheartened.
- ❖ Your excessive rebuke of a weak person may destroy him.

## **Criticism and Correction**

- ❖ The critical eye lacks love and humility.
  - The loving person does not criticise much. Also, a humble person looks at his own faults and not the faults of others.
- ❖ In life, I've met people whose only talent is criticising rather building. They criticise a lot and do not contribute positively in any way. It's easy to criticise, but building others is difficult.
- ❖ Criticism which only focuses on negatives is a form of attack and whoever does this is unfair.
  - Be objective and unbiased, and do not be cruel in your criticism.



- ❖ There are individuals who can only see defects in others. They look at others only to condemn. They always criticise and because of this they lose people.
- However, the spiritual person does not criticise much, and does not judge much. And where there is a spiritual need for criticising, it is done with wisdom, love and gentleness and thus gains people.
- ❖ Instead of condemning people, have mercy on them, and instead of rebuking them for their faults, help them to get rid of such faults.
- ❖ People need eyes which are closed to their faults, not staring at everything they do. They need an eye, which ignores a fault if it sees one as if it did not see anything at all.
- ❖ We want to eliminate the personalities of others and make them think the way we think and feel the way we feel and if they don't, we strongly criticise them.
- ❖ Let's aim to be merciful in our judgements, otherwise, we may only see the fault without seeing its causes, motives and circumstances.
- ❖ Many of us criticise others, but few are concerned enough to help them overcome their faults.
- ❖ I should not lose myself for the sake of correcting others. Whoever wants to correct others should do it in the right way.

## Friendship

- ❖ Friendship is pure love between two spirits, there are no feelings of the body in it.
- ❖ A friend who defends you when you are mistaken is not a real friend. This defence doesn't reflect the truth or real friendship, and his love for you is a harmful kind of love.
- ❖ Whoever corrects your faults, take him as a friend.
- ❖ The wise man increases the number of his friends, but the ignorant loses his best friends.
- ❖ There is a way of getting rid of your enemy, it is by converting the enemy into a friend.



## Kindness

### *Treat people with kindness:*

- ❖ If you are not kind in your dealings with others, you are not a spiritual person at all.
- ❖ The kind heart does not rebuke much and if he rebukes, he uses soft, not harsh words.
- ❖ The kind heart gains people by its kindness.
- ❖ The kind person discovers the good in people and praises them. He doesn't concentrate on the points of weakness.
- ❖ The kind heart doesn't despise the weak persons, but supports them.
- ❖ It is true that through violence, a person may lose his loved ones, while, through kindness, he gains his enemies.

## Excuses

- ❖ Excuses are a wide door, once you open it, you will find an excuse for everything.
- ❖ Some people find excuses in obstacles, while the strong ought to be capable of defeating obstacles.

## Treatment for prying on others

1. Respect the privacy of others, and be convinced that each person has his own secrets that he should not divulge, even to his dearest friends. Likewise, you too have your own secrets.
2. Always ask yourself: What is my business in this issue? What right have I to interfere in it? Tell yourself this, instead of having someone else tell you, and embarrass you.
3. Put boundaries on your relationship with others.
4. If you ask someone about a matter, personal to him or to others, and find that he is not willing to answer or escapes from responding, or is trying to change the subject, do not persist.
5. Do not try to read other's mail or go through his books or papers. If something private falls into your hands, be discrete and do not try to look at what is not your right to see.
6. Be morally pure in sight, sober in hearing and hand.
7. Be careful not to lose your friends through prying

## CHAPTER 10

### The Family

- ❖ *The Family*
- ❖ *The Home*
- ❖ *The Engagement*
- ❖ *The Marriage*
- ❖ *Raising Children*
- ❖ *Honouring Parents*
- ❖ *Fatherhood*
- ❖ *Motherhood*
- ❖ *Childhood*

**“God created two ears.... one to listen to one opinion and the second to listen to the other opinion. The mind of a person exists in between examining both opinions Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda”**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## The Family

- ❖ The Christian family is, a man who is devoted to God, who marries a woman who is devoted to God. When they have children, those children will be God's children.
- ❖ If the family needs the necessities, there is no need for luxuries.
- ❖ Every member in the family has rights and also has duties.
- ❖ The spiritual family offers the community a spiritual model and spiritual children.
- ❖ Often girls who do not find love and tenderness from their parents and family, go astray.
- ❖ For the family to live an ideal life, it should be filled with love and trust. Love should be present between all the family members: paternal love, maternal love and the love of the children towards their parents.
- ❖ Love brings an atmosphere of peace into the house and makes everybody feel secure, and the spirit of friendship and cooperation unites them.

## The Home

- ❖ The home is the essential environment that forms the person's character, psychology, principles, ideas, thoughts and habits.
- ❖ The home in which there is no love, will contain doubt and mistrust, and hence, will have no peace.
- ❖ The home which is filled with quarrels and fights will plant fear in the souls of the children, and will eventually create in them a phobia of marital life.

## The Engagement

- ❖ The engagement period is a period of dating and friendship, and a period of preparation for marriage.
- ❖ It is a period during which the engaged couple endeavour to reach a degree of friendship and love that constitutes the foundation of the marriage, since a marriage that is not built on harmony, friendship and love, would not succeed.



- ❖ One of the factors which obstruct awareness of reality during the engagement period, is when the engaged couple becomes involved on an emotional level, using feelings, and this affects the senses and the mind; thus shifting their attention from the true nature of the personality.
- ❖ The engagement is not a binding contract and can be broken without agreement from the other party.

## The Marriage

- ❖ • Marriage is not a union between two people, but between three. The third is God, He is the 'third-party' in the marriage.
- ❖ • The marriage is not merely a social or sentimental relationship between man and woman, but it is a responsibility.
- ❖ • Both persons should be of a mature age and mature spiritually, intellectually, socially and academically.

### ***Conditions of marriage:***

- There should be spiritual and religious harmony between the married couple. They should both be Orthodox Christians, possessing proper doctrine and faith, with a spiritual life linked to the Church.
- There should be harmony in thoughts, principles, customs and the manner of life.
- There should also be harmony between the characters.
- ❖ Some people may think that marriage is a social function. No, marriage, before anything, is a spiritual function through which, the family produces children for God and the holy Church.
- ❖ Marriage is not merely a relationship between a man and a woman, but, it is a responsibility that requires preparation.
- ❖ In the Christian concept, marriage means a spiritual man, who is a temple of the Holy Spirit, unites with a spiritual woman, who is also a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit joins them in the sacrament of matrimony, to become one person.



- ❖ The married couple are two people who live in the same house in a lifelong companionship, therefore, they ought to be in perfect harmony. They are like two horses pulling one carriage. They cannot do this unless they are walking in the same direction, at the same speed and by the same force. They must walk together and stop together. They should aim for the same target, without either one pushing the other.
- ❖ Difference in doctrine does not only tear the union of marriage apart, but it also tears the children, who would be confused regarding whether to follow the father or the mother.
- ❖ The concept of divorce in the Church is forbidden because it is a splitting of the one body. Hence, it has been permitted only in the case of adultery, because in this case the one body has already been torn.

## Raising Children

- ❖ One of the most dangerous things our society faces is the inadequate attention of parents towards the upbringing of their children.
- ❖ The most important responsibility of the parents is raising their children in the fear of God, treating them with kindness, meeting their needs, educating them, presenting their own life as a model and disciplining them in firmness mixed with love and tenderness.
- ❖ What an ugly sin when a child gets a bad impression of his parents and, accordingly his esteem for them diminishes. But what is the cause of such a sin, except what he sees in the life of his parents and their way of thinking.

## Honouring Parents

- ❖ Honouring parents requires love, obedience, respect and gratitude.

## Fatherhood

- ❖ Fatherhood is a duty and responsibility and not simply authority. Fatherhood is care, maintenance, attention, love, kindness and tenderness. It is struggling for the sake of the children in order that they may grow up perfect and righteous.



## Motherhood

- ❖ The mother's tenderness should be coupled with wisdom, so that it does not become inappropriate pampering, which could harm the child's education. It should not be exploited by the children, and hence, make them act carelessly when they see that their mother overlooks their mistakes or is very lenient.
- ❖ The kind and cheerful mother will gain the love of her children.
- ❖ The wise mother will respect her children as they respect her.

## Childhood

- ❖ The child is the primary nucleus of the society and the Church. If we win him we win a whole generation, and if we lose him we lose the future of this generation and consequently, lose future generations.
- ❖ Young children are our responsibility. If we can't plant goodness in them, we should at least not make them stumble.
- ❖ The things which are imprinted in the child during his childhood, will affect his whole life.
- ❖ Children often make mistakes due to lack of attention from adults towards them.
- ❖ **Unless you are converted and become as little children:**  
It is a wonderful and dangerous commandment and is an essential and important condition for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. If we do not pass through spiritual childhood, we will not enter the Kingdom. Of course this does not mean we act like children mentally, but in heart, spirit and soul.

### *Characteristics of Children:*

- The first characteristic of children is innocence and simplicity.
- The child is also characterized by being curious and seeking knowledge.
- The child is constantly growing.
- He is also cheerful.
- He does not bear malice.
- He is also distinguished by his great love. The love of a child is very affectionate and much greater than an adult's love.
- The child has faith and trust.
- He is also characterized of being truthful and does not exhibit courtesy at the expense of truthfulness.
- The child desires ideals.
- Also, one of the beautiful things in the child is that his virtues are natural and spontaneous.



## ***Twenty five Observations in Dealing with Kindergarten Children:***

1. We should go down to the child's level and not talk to him from above.
2. Start by showing the child your cheerful expression. This will make him feel comfortable and not nervous, by your calmness. Be careful with your facial expressions, ensuring that they are not frightening to the child.
3. In this developmental stage the child uses the senses more than the brain. This means that he absorbs information through the eyes, ears, smell and taste more than through the brain. Thus, it is not appropriate, at this age, to go through detailed explanations. At this age, the visual and audio methods are more useful for clarification of issues.
4. The child, at this age, loves animals and birds and he sees them as creatures which talk. At this age, stories about animals are good because they nourish the child's imagination and suit his age. The more such stories have a specific aim, the more useful they will be, because they will combine imagination with spiritual principles.
5. The child likes to play and receives entertainment and pleasure from it. He likes those who give him toys and adults who play with him. As adults we should provide the child with a play area and types of games which entertain him, and offer him what he likes, not what we like.  
There are certain types of games that involve exercising the intellect and experience, which could be offered to the child as he matures in his thinking. Examples of such types of play are those which involve construction and demolition.
6. The child likes those who make him laugh. By laughing, he may express his happiness and satisfaction.
7. A child is naturally active. He has energy which he uses in moving and we cannot expect him to sit still and quiet in one place. If we don't provide him with an area for proper movement, he will move in a way that we may see as disturbing.
8. The use of a loud voice is natural for a child, because his vocal cords are young and are not yet exhausted. It is difficult for him to speak in a low, whispering voice, and quite often we rebuke him for his loud voice.
9. We should teach our children to pray, and offer them guidance in prayer. We should teach them kneeling, prostrating and raising the hands. We give them prayers to memorise.
10. Children have a vivid imagination to invent stories and imagine incidents that did not happen, but they believe them to be true. Therefore, do not accuse them of being liars.



11. Children like movement, and hence, they like to learn songs that are accompanied by movement.
12. **Children do not like lengthy talks but like repetition**, because they can't concentrate during long discussions. If you give such talks, they will lose interest and become involved in another activity. They like short segments that can be grasped and understood easily.
13. **Children adore imitating**. They imitate movements of the hands and the head and the manner of walking as well as facial expressions. They also imitate sounds and verbal expressions and try to absorb people facing him and chat with them.
14. **The element of love**: If you love the child you can direct him, as the child follows the person who loves him and would be willing to obey him, because he trusts him. In contrast, the child alienates the person with whom he does not feel love and may become stubborn with them.
15. **Jealousy**: The child gets very jealous if another child receives praise or love which he doesn't receive from you. Therefore, try to be fair in dealing with children, and don't make them hate each other because of you.
16. **He owns everything**: The child feels that he has the right to take and own everything. His mind doesn't accept that something belongs to his father, mother, siblings or guests, but he takes it without any problem or inconvenience. And, if you try to take it back from him, he will cry, scream and object. Do not accuse him of being a thief.
17. **Truthfulness**: The child will trust you if you are truthful. Whether truthful in the information you convey to him or in keeping your promises to him.
18. **Nature**: The child loves nature with all its details. Children like colours, and hence, colouring is entertaining to them.
19. **Love of diversity**: Children get bored with things that are repeated. He likes diversity and change.
20. The child **likes praise** and sees it as proof of love. Through praise, you win the child and you make him feel your love for him. Also, through praise, you encourage the child to do good.
21. **Fear**: Be careful of the different forms of fear. Do not make the child fear God and the priests by continuously saying, "God will be angry with you if you do that, He will put you in hell." Do not make the image of God fearful to the child.



22. Teaching should come at the right time: **First praise the child** by saying that they are nice, cute and gentle, and perhaps you can give them some chocolates, lollies or gifts. After making them feel satisfied, start the Lord's Prayer and Agios (Holy).
23. We should also teach the child **to give**. If all his life is just "taking", this will not be good for him.
24. In early childhood, the child is quick to **memorise**, and has a very strong memory. We should therefore use such talent and encourage them to memorise those things that are beneficial such as Bible verses, hymns and Coptic music. We should also add to his memory stories from the Bible and Saints. The Sunday School teacher who neglects to encourage children to recite has wasted a very important stage in their life. Be sure that if you do not fill the child's memory with beneficial things it will be filled with many other things.
25. **Rituals:** How beautiful is our Church in everything it possesses which saturates the senses of the child. Such saturation also reaches the child's spirit. The child who is ordained Epsaltos at a young age and gets used to coming to Church and participating in its sacraments, will have deeper spirituality. A person who has received the **doctrine and faith** during their childhood will have a mind which assists them in understanding and will not doubt when they reach the stage of intellectual maturity. The things which are imprinted in a child's mind will affect their whole life.

### ***Remarks concerning the child of primary school age:***

1. Receptiveness: The child, at this stage, is ready to receive many things. He accepts the information you offer him and does not object.
2. The child is a believer: The child is born a believer, faith is an instinct planted in his soul. This stage of late childhood is the best period to plant the faith of God's love and care for us. This age is also suitable for talking about God's power and glory.
3. The child, at this age loves stories. If he goes to Sunday School and does not hear a story, he considers that he has not received anything. He loves stories and loves the story teller. At this age, stories about torture and the suffering of martyrs are not suitable.
4. Punishment and Reward: Loving the child does not mean spoiling him in a harmful way. We should reward him for good work, and rebuke him for wrong in a kind manner.

## CHAPTER 11

### Words of Gold

- ❖ *Lessons from nature and living things*
- ❖ *Experiences in life*
- ❖ *Definitions*
- ❖ *Analogy*
- ❖ *Be Aware*
- ❖ *There is a difference*
- ❖ *Wonder with me*
- ❖ *Words for meditation*
- ❖ *Questions for thought*
- ❖ *Very private*

**“Your nature is not evil. Evil is an intruder”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Lessons from nature and living things

- ✦ The story of nature and its creation is a symbol of every desolate life, void and dark, awaiting hope. Just as the Lord said, "Let there be light", and nature was waiting for the hand of God during the six days, ending with the words, "It is good".
- ✦ The night is not all dark; occasionally it has some light, the light of heaven, the light of the stars, and the light of the moon.

### ***There are 3 kinds of fruits:***

- One kind drops to the bottom of the tree that does not need any effort to fall.
- Another kind needs the tree to be shaken for the fruit to drop.
- And the third, such as the Palm tree, needs an expert to climb the tree in order to collect its fruits.

### ***Contemplate with me:***

- The rays of the sun enter the king's palace and the house of the servant without differentiation.
- Light purifies every place it reaches and does not become defiled by it.
- Light shines without you asking it to.
- ✦ Great is the difference between the nature of the roots and the nature of the stems and the branches. The branches, by nature, sway and bend to the right and to the left, according to the direction of the wind. As it sways it may make a sound. The roots however, stretch down, into the ground, calmly and without sound, and it feeds and nourishes the noisy branches.
- ✦ If you were to throw a rock at a mountain it would not shake it, and the mountain is not affected. But if you throw the same rock at a window it shatters and crumbles. So I want you to be a mountain, which is not easily shaken, and not a window.
- ✦ The autumn winds do not shake the strong and stable trees, they only affect the dry, dead leaves, which fall down. The autumn winds do not affect fixed branches or even the green leaves because they have life and they can withstand.



- ✦ We learn from the Nile River that a drop of water falling continuously on a rock or a mountain can form a groove on the surface. This provides a very important lesson in perseverance.
- ✦ During Sunset, I say to myself: The sun has never stopped shining on the earth, but it is the earth that turns its back on the sun. Yes, the sun is fixed in its place, but the earth moves around it, and this is what we call sunset, it is simply an expression of the earth's orbit. Likewise, in our relationship with God, we feel that God has abandons us, but we are the ones who turn away, and our face is not directed towards Him. If we return to God, we feel His presence with us and we feel His light shining on us, because God is constant and there is no variation or shadow of turning with Him (James1:17).
- Dead fish float on the surface of the water, but strong fish swim in the water and resist the current.
- Storms blow but they do not destroy everything in their way. They may smash the weak cottage, but cannot shake the firm mountain. They can shake a small tree but cannot affect a strong one.
- The water of the Nile, with all its force, sweeps away any soil in its path and digs channels, but it cannot sweep away the six great cataract stones which remain fixed and are not affected.
- **Lessons from the ant:** This happened in 1960 when I was sitting at the entrance of my cell and I saw an ant walking on a pile of sand. The sand beneath it collapsed and the ant fell. Each time it fell, it did not hesitate for a moment to stand up again, and the sand continued to collapse underneath it, and it stood up quickly, never letting failure leads it to despair. This was repeated before me many times until it finally made it to the top. I was very surprised with this little ant, and I learned a lesson and said to myself, "I still have not reached the level of perseverance of an ant, nor have I reached its determination, which does not submit to any failure".
- All my life, I have never seen a single ant stand by and watch others, but they are all in continuous movement, always working, never stopping for a moment and in complete cooperation, working towards a common purpose. So I said to myself, "If God created the ant only to give us this lesson, this would have been enough for it as a mission in life.



### **Lessons from Nature:**

- ❖ **Nature gives us lessons in order and precision:** We begin by introducing that wonderful relationship which exists between the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets. How the earth rotates around its axis, in a regular rotation every 24 hours, resulting in day and night. Also, it rotates in another cycle around the sun every year, resulting in the four seasons. This cycle has never been broken over thousands of years.
- ❖ Another example of precise systems, is the human body. By this we mean the system which God created, and not the one which humans destroyed by negligence, or by being exposed to disease, plague or accident. They are very accurate and organised systems.
- ❖ **Nature works tirelessly and does not ask comfort for itself:** The earth does not stop working at all, nor does the moon and the rest of the firmament, from the sun, the planets and the stars. It is a continuous work and wondrous activity. It carries out its mission in all honesty. All these are lessons for us.
- ❖ **It works for others and implements the will of others with obedience and honesty:** Truly, what does nature benefit for itself from all its work? What does water benefit when it evaporates through heat and rises, then condenses as rain, falls and continues this cycle of rising and descending every season and every year?
- ❖ The whole of nature works in serving others, but there is no existence of itself in its work. It is a sacrifice. It obeys the laws which God put for it and does not deviate nor argue concerning them.
- ❖ **Nature gives us a fourth lesson in cooperation and team work:**
  - All nature works together to do one job. It is enough that the person eats one meal and finds the hand working to offer the food, the teeth grinding it and the tongue hurling it into the pharynx, oesophagus and the stomach. Secretions from here to there, until it takes what is useful and transfers it into blood, tissues and energy and then, the excess is excreted through the intestines outside the body. Every member and system in the body works with the rest of the system for the benefit of the whole body in wonderful cooperation. Receiving from one member to deliver to another.



You will find the same cooperation between heat, wind, rain and plants. All work together in order to perform efficiently for the benefit of the multitudes. And there is no way any part of nature has worked alone. The same cooperation exists among the ants, and in the bees, in a wonderful participation, which needs more time to discuss.

✦ **There is another lesson in the Bible:** "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26). When one member hurts, you find the Nervous System getting involved and you find the feelings of pain appearing. Perhaps you find the bell of danger ringing to push for treatment, the bell from temperature, or the bell from palpitation of the heart, or from blood pressure, or headache or other things, all calling and saying, "Here is a sickness, treat it". If a microbe enters the body, you find movement from the white blood cells, and you find the defence system preparing to fight it, besides the help of the peripheries and the brain. Saint Paul says, "If one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26). The face smiles, the heart reassures, the nerves calm and the hands and legs do their service and express their joy. It is a lesson in unity demonstrated by nature.

✦ **The Sixth lesson which nature introduces to us is, that it works without being influenced by the opinion of others:**

- The rain comes on time and does its job; it is not affected by the sower's thanks, if he waters his plants, and the man does not complain if he gets wet, or his hut falls down due to heavy rain, or his clothes got wet. The rain does not seek false glory, therefore, it is not influence by praise or ridicule. It is enough for it to do its work honestly. Also, the sun, the heat, the cold and the wind do their work and are not interested in the praise of those who are satisfied by them or have complaints. Their only concern is to fulfil their duty.

✦ **The Seventh lesson which we take from nature is wisdom:**

- Look at the vine that sheds its leaves in winter until it gives you the opportunity to sit under it and enjoy the sunlight. Then by summer, it is covered with leaves, because now you need the shade and not the warmth. Due to wisdom also, many plants and fruits appear at the most suitable time for man! For example, the watermelon appears in summer, because you need to be saturated with its water due to the heat. Oranges appear in winter because you need Vitamin C to protect you from colds. And there are many other fruits which show their wisdom by appearing at the right time.



❖ **The Eighth lesson from nature is denying yourself:**

- We take this lesson from the roots, for example. They are found under the ground and they do not appear, however they carry the whole tree. And, as the tree grows in height, the roots dig deeper into the ground. This same lesson is found in the foundation of buildings. We praise the architecture of high rise buildings, their décor, lights and furniture but no one talks of its foundation, which is hidden beneath the ground; it denies itself yet it carries the whole building.

❖ **Nature introduces a ninth lesson to us in the varieties of virtues.**

- Flowers offer us their beauty and their fruits for us to enjoy, some fruits are sour in taste, but benefit our health and some flowers are used for treatment.

❖ **Some parts of nature give us the tenth lesson on power and durability.**

- For instance, the mountain or the hill which stands still even if the wind blows or it rains and whatever caves humans dig through it, or paths, or buildings, it remains standing and is not shaken. Also, the river flowing downstream does not change its direction or become influenced, regardless of the bumps in the water and waves.

❖ **Sometimes we take from nature a lesson about adapting to the environment:**

- The plants of the desert, which cannot find water have leaves that retain moisture and do not allow the water to evaporate from it. Another example is the polar bear, which has fur to protect it from the cold weather, while the horse has a different type of skin because it does not live in cold weather. Doesn't this give us a lesson on how God looks after His creation? Surely it does.

❖ **From the thorn, we learn that everything works together for good, and this is a lesson in faith.**

- A writer once wrote the words of wisdom, "Even the thorn can be useful as a fertilizer to the field!" There is no surprise in this because if you burn a thorn, it turns into ashes which are fit to fertilize and benefit humans. Also, burning thorns gives other benefits such as warmth or heat.



✦ **There is a lesson in humility which we can take from clouds and water:**

- Water evaporates, becomes lighter, rises and turns into clouds, but it does not forget its origin, that it was once lower than the surface of the earth. Therefore, it is humble because it knows that this elevation will not last and there will come a time when it will become cold, condensed and the wind will blow and makes it rain and the roots of a tree will absorb it and it will flow under ground.
- Do you think clouds can be proud and look down on the water? It knows its origin. Or do you think the water will have low self-esteem when it remembers its friends of droplets which evaporated and were raised up? Never! Both of them accept their position. Whether God raised it to heaven or sent it down to the ground, or the roots of the trees absorbed it, or it entered into the leaves or branches. It is another lesson in submission.

✦ **Another lesson can be taken from the fertilizer, which we use to fertilize the ground:**

- Man may see and despise it because of its smell and its sight, but the fertilizer accepts its position. God, who created it, can change it. It can enter into the tree as food, or be transferred into the buds, and becomes fruit. Then man eats it and it enters into his body, and can be transferred into tissues inside him. Do you think a human can be humble if he knows that some of his tissues were once a fertilizer in the ground?!

✦ **We can also learn a lesson from God's care and concern:**

- This lesson teaches us not to worry about our needs because God cares about us without us asking. God tells us, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30).



- ❖ **Many lessons from the birds: Believe me I have learnt much from the birds.**
- **I received a lesson in contentment .** I was sitting in front of my cell in the monastery's garden. Some seeds had fallen on the ground, perhaps from a farmer, and a bird came to take some seeds. I thought it would eat them all until it was full, but it only took a couple and fled, leaving behind all those goodies, not regretting or feeling sorry for what it had left behind.
- ❖ I received a lesson in contentment. I remembered God's words, "They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns." (Matthew 6:26). It was singing happily, and left everything.
- ❖ **Also the bird gave me another lesson about the life of faith:** Because it left the other seeds behind and flew away, and it was very confident that, wherever it goes, it will find its food.
- ❖ Also, I wondered about the bird, that loves its freedom. I was impressed that it was not attached to a particular spot for provision of food.

## Experiences in Life

- ❖ The person who works hard is happy with the fruits of his toil.
- ❖ Contemplating on the unseen, saves the person from worldly doctrines, immorality, and existentialism, which only cares for the existence in this earthly world.
- ❖ Half the truth is not all the truth.
- ❖ What is important is not that the person starts, but what is more important is that they continue.
- ❖ Crying alone does not resolve problems.
- ❖ Laziness and zeal contradict each other in the life of the person or the group. So, if you find zeal it will expel laziness, negligence and carelessness. But, if one becomes lukewarm it leads to laziness.
- ❖ The sad beginning does not worry us, but what's important is the joyful end.
- ❖ Few steps with consistency, far better than many steps taken but fractured.
- ❖ The old saying of the Saints; "The middle road saved many."
- ❖ Whoever looks only at mistakes, will find himself discontent with the community, liking nothing, and everything he sees will be subject to criticism.



- ❖ The true greatness is the complete personality, beautified with virtues, which is in God's image and likeness.
- ❖ Those who adhere to the laws and forget its spirit, are not just in their judgement.
- ❖ Those who are successful in society are those who deny themselves, and those who failed are those who were selfish.
- ❖ Pride, self-dignity and ego, hinder a person from repenting his sins.
- ❖ Yes, if you light a candle, the darkness disappears, without you fighting it, and without disrupting your positive work.
- ❖ Whoever wants to benefit can benefit from everything, and from every person and from every incident. He extracts benefit from everything which passes his way and not just from people whom he meets but also from nature.
- ❖ Whoever likes to benefit can even benefit from a word of rebuke, even from a harsh word, even from a word which is spoken to someone else and not to him.
- ❖ The best thing in life, is pain for the sake of God.
- ❖ Your work is not to pull out the tares, but to grow as wheat, until the great reaper comes and finds your field full of wheat. So he gathers 30, 60 and 100 and fills the place with wheat.
- ❖ The preoccupation with pulling the tares will dissipate energy.
- ❖ It is not important to reach quickly, but what is more important is to reach safely.
- ❖ I used to believe my eyes more than my ears.
- ❖ While the theological scientists search out daunting things, many simple people penetrate and enter the kingdom of God.
- ❖ Pain is deeper and stronger than joy, and more truthful. In it the person stands before the truth of life and realizes that all the worldly joy is small and trivial.
- ❖ Events reveal what sort of a person one is. They are light thrown on a person and reveal his true personality.
- ❖ Reasonable reproach is acceptable.
- ❖ Even if it appears that God is silent in some situations, He intervenes after that, repairs and turns evil into good.
- ❖ The problem with the majority of people is that they change their outside appearance to be one of righteousness, but within is the opposite of this, and they live in conflict.



- ❖ Patience resolves many problems, which the mind has been unable to resolve, but, in time they can be solved. With patience, you give God the chance to intervene and solve many problems, which may need time, or may need to stay in the mind for a period until they mature.
- ❖ The person who is strong in his thinking, confident in his strong reasoning and his defence, speaks in quietness and is motivated by confidence. But the weak has lost his logic and opinion, so he becomes nervous and raises his voice.
- ❖ You can make a person obey you by intimidation, but you cannot make him love you. God wants our love before our obedience. And, whenever He wants obedience, He wants it out of love.
- ❖ Life taught me that a human should not look at the past at all, "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead." (Philippians 3:13).
- ❖ Yesterday is not in your hands and it passed and will not come back. But the present is in your hands, and you can work for the future. Those who look forward will continuously advance and extend their sights to eternity and to God.
- ❖ Since lust does not rest until it fulfils itself, then it is best to escape from it.
- ❖ If the devil of thieves walks in a way, the devil of lies will say, "Take me with you."
- ❖ There are situations which require speed and, at other times, speed will corrupt and the situation needs prudence and patience. In both cases one needs wisdom and appreciation of the conditions.
- ❖ The potter, with his complete freedom and authority, looks with wisdom at the piece of clay. If he sees that it is good, smooth and soft, then he will make a pot of dignity, because its characteristics qualify it for that.
- ❖ I saw in the way of life, lots who have fallen and they could be raised up, but the demons of stubbornness made them continue in the wrong way until they were completely lost. The demon of stubbornness has a father and a master, which is the devil of pride, and if both devils work together on a person, they could completely close all the doors of repentance for him.
- ❖ I have met along the way of life, people who do not talk about high ideals, except when they ask for it in others, or when they criticize others who do not walk in it. So, to them ideals are just lessons which they give to others, and as I said before, they are just for outside export and not for internal use.



- ❖ Offer practical ideals in your life before you give lessons to others, which perhaps may be difficult for them to perform.
- ❖ Many have lost their lives due to tenacity and stubbornness, and some have lost others with them in the same style. Often, these have lived without advice and depended on their own thoughts or emotions. So, their life was lost, without benefit and without wisdom.
- ❖ We saw many who were humble as students and signs of humility and kindness appeared in their character, but when they became teachers and leaders, they lost their humility and meekness and displayed different image than before. Some asked me, "Did the service damage them?" I said, "No the service did not damage them, but rather revealed things which were hidden in their souls, and perhaps their attitude in their service or their understanding of it was not right."
- ❖ 40 years ago, before I became a monk, I was walking along the road and I saw a worker welding a piece of metal. This piece surrendered to the blazing fire until it was welded. I asked myself, "Why do we complain and protest when we suffer and God uses the welding method on us?"
- ❖ I know from experience and from many stories, that the superficial reconciliation, which does not clear up the causes of disagreements, stays as a deposit or as impurities in the heart and disturbs the mind whenever reminders of it come up, disturbing the emotions and feelings. So reconciliation is not considered true or complete, reaching a state of calm, until these things are cleared up.
- ❖ I saw many who try and treat the results of the problems without treating the causes. And the cause remains, leading to the same results. But the causes should be treated first so that the results will automatically disappear.
- ❖ God works in a calm and balanced method, which we consider to be slow. But all of God's works are in their suitable time. There is no speed and no delay in them, the timing is calculated wisely, with wonderful and divine accuracy.
- ❖ There is no doubt that many circumstances demand speed, and delay could be risky, so it is better to make a firm, quick decision.
- ❖ The person who lives for his desires lives in fear. Perhaps the fear of not fulfilling his desires or fear of losing it, if it has been fulfilled.
- ❖ Just as you may learn from people's virtues, you may learn from their mistakes.
- ❖ We cannot conceal idealism from people, but we offer it in a way that allows each person to take from it according to his own capacity.



## Definitions

- ❖ **Power (strength):** Power is not defeating your enemy, but rather transforming your enemy into a friend.
- ❖ **Hunger and thirst for righteous:** Means hunger and thirst for God, His commandments, His ways, and for virtues, in all their aspects and spiritual means.
- ❖ **Cruelty:** Cruelty opposes compassion, and there are two kinds of cruelty: cruelty towards people and cruelty towards God. Cruelty of heart towards people is known, which means treating them with violence, rudeness, torture, ignorance and the like. But cruelty towards God is refusing Him and not responding to His voice in your heart.
- ❖ **Spiritual betrayal:** Spiritual betrayal is opening your doors to the devil, who wants to destroy the Kingdom of God inside you.
- ❖ **Harmful friendships:** These are the friendships which harm your spiritual life, your doctrines and your mind, and damage your heart and feelings.
- ❖ **Stumbling:** It is everything that causes you to fall from the outside, or anything which brings to you a wrong thought, or wrong emotions, or a sinful desire. Stumbling can come from hearing, or seeing, or reading or from the rest of the senses.
- ❖ **The Environment:** Means the general atmosphere surrounding the person, the reflection of the environment in which he lives, its trends, the quality of life, the prevalent principle in the society, style of dealing and the concepts that all or the majority espouse to.
- ❖ **The Bad Word:** Means, not only the evil word, but also the word which is of no benefit.
- ❖ **Gossiping:** It is talking about people and their mistakes. One of its causes is free time and the company of people who gossip.
- ❖ **My Neighbour:** My neighbour is not just the person whose house is close to mine, but rather, my heart is close to his heart. My neighbour is every person who needs my help.
- ❖ **The Great Person:** The great person is great in his heart, in his love. He is the one who; through the work of grace in him; can be bigger than the mistake, and is superior in his spirit and idealism.



- ❖ **The Moral Murder:** Is the one who exposes the personality of a person. There are many kinds; defamation and damage of another's reputation, value and social status among others. All of these are called moral murder.
- ❖ **The Money of Injustice:** Is not the money which you obtain from injustice, but it is the money that makes you fall into the sin of injustice, if you keep it with you.
- ❖ **Hymn:** It is a spiritual song. It must have spiritual music and a sacred tune. Therefore, it is not nice to mix it with some lyrics which may stir up feelings other than spiritual feelings.
- ❖ **Simplicity:** It is the opposite of complexity and, in Christianity, not being naive. A Christian person can be simple but wise at the same time. The simplicity of Christianity is a simple wisdom, not complex, like some philosophies. Therefore, the Lord Christ said, "Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Matthew 10:16).
- ❖ **Lustful Love:** It is specifically the love according to lust, enjoyment and luxury; the lust of the senses which leads to desire and to sin.
- ❖ **The Peaceful Souls:** Are those who relieve and comfort others.
- ❖ **Great Souls:** Are those who can endure a lot and rise above small things and are not influenced by anything, even major things are treated with calmness, without revolting or becoming annoyed.
- ❖ **But Small Souls:** Are those who become annoyed quickly from the smallest things, and cannot bear anything then their hardship bursts out from their heart to their tongue to the ears of the people and fills the world with clamour.
- ❖ **Sheep's Clothing:** This is a kind of deceit, or a cover up, or hypocrisy, in which the person hides their sinful reality.
- ❖ **Factionalism:** Is when one attacks others without knowledge, thinking or perhaps, without any reason, while supporting and defending others in the same manner, without knowledge, thinking, or reason.
- ❖ **Insinuation:** Is the narrow conscience, which suspects wrong where there is no wrong, or magnifies mistakes unreasonably, or sinful complexities affect him without justifiable cause, or one who loves precision and becomes fanatical in applying it and this takes them away from the truth, so they misjudge proper behaviour. The insinuation is literal, pharisaic and superficial without understanding.



## Analogy:

- ❖ The honest soul resembles a boat without a hole for water to enter. The water surrounds it from all sides, but it does not find any access to enter.
- ❖ Each one of us must be a fruitful tree in the garden of God. A tree with fruits, giving fruits and seeds which are of its same kind.
- ❖ Perfection is like the horizon, it is the furthest thing your sight can reach. There you will see heaven and earth embracing, and when you reach it, you will see another horizon waiting for you, further away. And when you reach that one you look forward to further horizons, and you continue moving from one horizon to another, rising from one perfection to a higher perfection.
- ❖ Be like the dove that carried a green olive leaf to Noah, and it knew that the water on the ground had subsided.
- ❖ Do not be like the bells, which invite people to enter the Church, but they themselves do not enter.
- ❖ The broken-hearted person is like the olive that is squeezed to produce oil, like a flower that is crushed to give a lovely fragrance, like incense that burns to give a sweet smelling aroma which rises, like a candle that melts to give light, like a grain of wheat falling to the ground, which dies and remains alone, but when it dies it produces much grain (John 12:24) and like the well which, if it is not dug, will not give water.
- ❖ The broken-hearted is the sacrifice which becomes ashes. He is, before himself, before others and before God, just ash and dust.
  - The contrite, humble heart is a sacrifice before God in which the divine, fiery justice and fiery love work within the inner feelings and transformed him to mere ashes.
  - The righteous believers are like trees, which stay green permanently; they are not autumn trees, but offer fruits as well as leaves, and their leaves shall not wither but offer shade for people and serve them, and at the same time, they are not leaves without fruit, like the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord (Matthew 21:19). They do not just have appearance without substance.



- ❖ Are you, in your life, coal or essence? Imagine, for example, the black piece of coal, whoever touches it becomes dirty. However, when this coal enters into the censer and absorbs heat from an external source, it becomes inflamed; brightness and light replace its black colour and it reddens and glows. So at first, it was a coal that dirtied whoever touched it, but then became a cleansing essence.
- So, are you coal or essence? Did a new thing enter into your nature? Does the fiery Spirit of the Lord work in you? Has the Lord put you in His Holy censer, and do you give out a fragrance of incense?
- ❖ The righteous believer is a fruitful tree, which must produce fruit because the sap of life runs in him, and he is implanted on the waterways and his life has fruits. His words have fruits and cannot return void (Isaiah 55:11), his service has fruits producing 30, 60 and 100 (Matthew 13:23). All these fruits show that the Spirit of God works in him, and he has companionship with the Spirit of God. You will know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16).
- ❖ If need be, God does not mind sending a cyclone against your life's ship, forcing you to throw some worldly tasks outside the ship. It's possible that your life's ship is loaded with self-righteousness, stubbornness or the love of the world, and when it is shaken by the waves, it will stumble. My brethren, let your ship be lighter. Perhaps God permits your ship to be hit so that you throw out self-righteousness, the bag of lusts and basket of stubbornness. Throw out all that disrupts you, and leave nothing inside you but the love of God.
- ❖ Desire to be a lamb of the flock, with someone else looking after you, not to be responsible for the flock. But, if God wants to use you as a leader, then ask Him to give you the strength you need.
- ❖ If you throw a stone at the mountain, it is not shaken or affected, but if you throw the same stone at a window, it will shatter and crumble. So be a mountain and not a window. I want you to be mountains that do not vibrate easily, or vibrate slowly, or vibrate at all.
- ❖ Whatever the circumstances around you, be a flower in the midst of thorns, an island in the middle of the water and wheat in the midst of the tares.



## Be Aware

- ❖ Beware of transferring from a worshiper to a scientist.
- ❖ Beware of thoughts that drag you down and books that sweep you away, or searching for knowledge, or becoming a source of information, and in the process of gaining information, you forget your soul.
- ❖ Beware of getting interested in controversy and being preoccupied with it, leading you into countless quarrels, and you lose your love for others, and you love winning an argument and defeating others.
- ❖ Beware, my brethren, if you are in a position of authority. Watch out and refuse to use force, violence and your power of authority.
- ❖ Beware of looking back. Do not dwell on the world which you left behind for God. Do not try to remember the sin for which you have repented. Do not look back at all, but look forward and try to grow in your repentance and not return to your sin.
- ❖ Beware of entering into confrontations or heated discussions when you are physically tired.
- ❖ Beware for the person who rebukes frequently destroys himself, as the wise man said, and loses his friends.
- ❖ Beware of making critical decisions while you are angry.
- ❖ Beware of strange thoughts, and do not be lenient with these strangers entering your mind.

## There is a difference

- ❖ **There is a difference** between cruelty which rebukes the person for his sins, and gentleness which makes the sinner confess his sins of his own accord and repent.
- ❖ **There is a difference** between love and lust. Love always gives, but lust always takes.



- ❖ **There is a difference** between criticising and judging. The main difference is that criticism can be objective, but judging touches personal aspects. Correct criticism is a type of analysis and a process of precise assessment, which highlights the negatives and the positives. It gives the topic its complete rights, and gives an excuse if there is room for an excuse. But judging, which only sees the negatives, is a type of attack and would not be fair.
- ❖ **There is a difference** between laziness and waiting. Laziness has negligence, but waiting has wisdom.
- ❖ **There is a difference** between pleasure and happiness. Pleasures are sensuous and linked to the senses, the body and matter, but happiness and joy are linked to the spirit.
- ❖ **There is a difference** between the needy and the deceitful. Having mercy on the poor does not mean taking God's money which belongs to the needy and give it to cheats. Therefore, distribution needs wisdom.
- ❖ **There is a difference** between a person who looks at money as a tool with which to serve God, and another who sees it as a means to serve his own lusts.
  - And between a person who looks at what he has, so he accepts and gives thanks, and another who looks at what he lacks, so he complains and revolts.
  - And between a person who looks at the good in others and praises them, and another who looks only at their mistakes, faults and imperfections.
- ❖ **There is a difference between:** a sermon where the listeners come out saying, "He is a scholar and knowledgeable preacher" and a sermon where they come out saying, "We need to repent."
- ❖ **There is a difference between** an honest person and a selfish person. The honest person does not care by whose hands the work is done, as long as it is successful. But the selfish person cares that the success should be by his own hands, even if it leads to disruption of the entire work. His selfishness is a stumbling block, which impedes every success.



## Wonder with me

### **Wonder that many people insist on the means and forget the Lord.**

- ❖ I wonder that the people of the world maybe bold in their nonchalance, but the sons of God are ashamed of their righteousness!!
- ❖ I wonder that some try to solve their problems through sins. There are those who try to solve their problems by lying, and sometimes they call it a white lie, or they use cunning and deceit. They may even try to solve their problems by violence, or escape from their problems by drinking alcohol or taking drugs to forget the problems, or they take sedatives and sleeping tablets or smoke. None of these can solve problems, but rather cause them to escalate into another problem. And the worst of all of these is to seek help from a sorcerer, magician or fortune-teller.
- ❖ Wonder with me how some people to whom God gives grace, make it into something offensive. Money is grace, beauty is grace, art and freedom are grace, also science, power and discipline. But how easily these things are made into something offensive through many means.
- ❖ I wonder that the majority of arrogant people call themselves not arrogant.
- ❖ God Who is perfect in everything, Who is unlimited in His perfection, He bears the weakness of people, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench". But people do not bear each other's weaknesses, although all are liable to fall and sin.
- ❖ I wonder how people measure things. They see power in weakness, and see winning where there is defeat. These are wrong measures.
- ❖ Wonder with me, how most people who criticise are those who cut corners and are the least hard working.
- ❖ Wonder with me, at the person who has two scales of judgement: one scale by which he weighs the deeds and actions of others, and the other scale by which he weighs his own deeds, and perhaps the actions of his friends. The two scales are completely different, to the extent that one act might be considered wrong, according to one of the scales, while according to the other, it is right!
- ❖ I wonder that a leader, instead of trying to help in solving people's problems, occupies them in solving his own problems. And instead of having a big heart that offers kindness and love to all, seeks to get kindness and sympathy for himself.



- ❖ I wonder that, despite the need for service, we find servants fighting, competing and quarrelling instead of serving, leaving many places without service.
- ❖ Wonder with me, that God wants to save people, and they do not want salvation for themselves.
- ❖ I am not surprised by those who were attracted to the world and have perished. This is something normal, and there are many examples. But, I wonder about those who perished inside the Church. Perhaps a servant perishes due to his pride, love of authority, anger, love of praise, or because of deviation in doctrine, or due to stubbornness and sticking to his own opinion or becoming an enemy to all.

## Words for Meditation

- ❖ How many times is the Lord with us, and we don't recognise it?
- ❖ The Lord does good for me, but it is me who does not do good for myself.
- ❖ The devil does not prevent people going into the house of God, but he waits for them outside to disperse what they gathered.
- ❖ Every person in the world can get angry and swear and attack others, but the strong person is the one who controls his nerves, his tongue and his senses.
- ❖ The early maturity of the talented, gifted child has no other explanation than the riches God has granted as gifts, poured out on His children with abundance which cannot be described.
- ❖ The Spirit of God can not dwell in the hard hearted person.
- ❖ How many lamps have people tried to hide, but God raised them for their light to shine.
- ❖ It is not the place that glorifies the person but the person that glorifies the place. The true greatness comes from the inside.
- ❖ Many are a storage place of treasures of knowledge, but their spirits are still empty.
- ❖ I am afraid that we have lost the tears to cry for our sins because we are preoccupied with the sins of others and not our own.
- ❖ Do not think that the devil only works in places of entertainment, but he can also enter places of worship and work there.



- ❖ There are some who can bear insults but not indignity because to bear indignity is harder than bearing insults. Since many who received praise boasted, and their hearts became full of their ego and they lost their humility and meekness.
- ❖ Perhaps someone can say words without feeling, but crying is a feeling without words.
- ❖ Those who do not own horses or chariots, own the name of the Lord.
- ❖ The Lord is merciful to us because He knows our weaknesses; He knows our muddy, soiled nature. The Lord had pity on us. But we always stand in judgment of others. Each one of us wants to wear the clothes of a judge and condemn others.
- ❖ Regardless of how high the straw is elevated it is still straw.
- ❖ The scrupulous person is not only this way with people, but also when alone in his own room.
- ❖ Many take God's kindness towards them with joy and happiness and they are satisfied with that, but do not make it a cause to love God.
- ❖ The pleasure in the imagination can be stronger than sensual pleasure, because imagination has a wide range and does not stop at certain limits. It is far from reality and creates false happiness.
- ❖ The true and great wage is not for the one who sows in good soil but for one who is able to convert bad soil or salty soil into good soil. The bad soil may have been left this way for a long time because no one would tend to it due to the difficulty of the work.
- ❖ People enjoy and admire the great light, and they don't see the electric generator that generates the electricity.
- ❖ Life with God starts with death, we die in order to live. We are buried with Him in baptism in order to rise in new life.
- ❖ The flesh is embalmed with fragrance, but the soul is fragrancd by virtues.
- ❖ Some apologise with their lips if they make a mistake, but not with their heart.
- ❖ The last row means the last in status, not in seating.
- ❖ Whoever eats spiritual food does not feel the hunger of the flesh quickly.
- ❖ Obeying the commandments is good, but loving the commandments is greater.
- ❖ The divine power exists but requires you to see it.
- ❖ God's secrets appear to the simple hearted who find joy in them.



- ❖ People love to be happy, but they learn from agony and pain.
- ❖ Many people concentrate during their worship and their relationship with God on the outside only and neglect the core. But the outward appearance does not build the kingdom at all.
- ❖ The hearing with the mind gives knowledge and information, but knowledge with grace gives experience and life.
- ❖ A person's life is in the hands of God and not the hands of people.
- ❖ The simple farmer can easily believe what a philosopher cannot.
- ❖ We want people who have already reached God, so they will take others with them.
- ❖ The cooperative worker always tries to find solutions for every problem, but the tedious employee can find a problem with every solution.
- ❖ The oppressed can be silent, but their silence is a scream heard by the Lord.
- ❖ Freedom from slavery is never easy, but is always necessary.

## Questions for Thought

- ❖ What harm is caused to you when someone judges you wrongly or thinks you are wrong? Would this hinder you from attaining God's Kingdom, or would God judge you according to what people say?
- ❖ If a loud voice is necessary at times such as in a crowd, what benefit does it have at other times or in private conversation?
- ❖ What benefit do you get from gathering information about virtues, if you do not follow it?
- ❖ If you do good for God's sake, not for the sake of the people, why does it bother you whether or not people see these good deeds or not?
- ❖ If you did not eat the Manna, then how can you describe its taste to people?
- ❖ In order to correct any person, the Lord is willing to use soft words, and at times may use the whip. The two ways are possible, so how would you like to be treated?
- ❖ Why do you live outside yourself? All your concerns are what others do, your judgement upon them, your emotional reactions towards them, and the effect of this on your own spirituality. Your own soul is lost in the midst of your judgements on others, you find no time for your soul.



- ❖ When you pray saying: "Have mercy upon us, O God", ask yourself first, "Do you have mercy on others in order to be worthy to receive mercy from God?"
- ❖ Why are we waiting for God's strike to wake up? Why not be awake from now, so that we do not force God to use harsh methods?
- ❖ My brother, ask yourself where do you waste your days and nights? Wishing that it will be a successful journey towards perfection.
- ❖ If one does not fear his father who is seen, then how can he fear the Lord who is unseen?
- ❖ Isn't it shameful for us to judge others extensively, but not judge ourselves?

## Very Private

- ❖ The Lord, in the last day, will not judge you for the sins of others, but will judge you for your own sins.
- ❖ Correction is required, but it is not right to perform it in an angry manner.
- ❖ Comfort does not create heroes and pleasure does not create holy people and saints.
- ❖ Whoever runs after his desires gets exhausted and becomes a slave to lust.
- ❖ Doing good deeds to those who offend you makes them ashamed.
- ❖ You cannot be a light, unless you love the light. You cannot disperse the darkness, unless you hate it from the depth of your heart.
- ❖ The important thing is not our position or our looks, but our goodness and our fruitfulness.
- ❖ The spirit that lives far away from God, lives in emptiness, and regardless of the emotions offered, it will never be satisfied.
- ❖ If we remember our sins, the Lord will forget them for us. If we forget our sins, the Lord will remember them for us.
- ❖ If we want forgiveness from the Lord, we also have to forgive those who trespass against us, whatever the offences are, even if they are many.
- ❖ Satisfying a lust does not protect the person from it, but it will increase it and make it worse.

## CHAPTER 12

### Sickness and Tribulation

- ✦ *Sickness*
- ✦ *Trials and Tribulations*
- ✦ *Problems*
- ✦ *Pain and Suffering*
- ✦ *Carrying the Cross*

**“God gives you what is good for you and not what you ask for, unless what you ask is for your good. Because, many times what you ask is not good for you”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Sickness

- ❖ Sickness will probably affect me on earth, but will lead me to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- ❖ It is strange that many can only see suffering in sickness.
- ❖ Be thankful for all the blessings you received due to your sickness.
- ❖ Many illnesses led to repentance and were more effective than sermons.
- ❖ Some sicknesses have led people to prayer and fasting.
- ❖ Sickness was even beneficial to the Saints, as it revealed their weaknesses and prevented them from having false glory.
- ❖ During sickness one feels his weaknesses and so returns to God and begins the search for reconciliation with the Lord. He awakes from his sleep and returns to God; praying and asking for help and healing.
- ❖ A painful and serious illness may strike suddenly and awaken the sinner and make him return to God more than a thousand sermons can. Especially an illness which leads to death, or may be long lasting and cannot be treated.
- ❖ The sickness itself can be a word of benefit, a whisper in the ear of the sick person, with words which cannot be found in books. Sickness may also bring benefit to those who are close to the sick person, such as family and friends and those who come to visit.
- ❖ Sickness is a school for humility, for prayers, for endurance and for repentance. It is an excellent foundation for all virtues. It is a fountain for prayer in its depth and warmth, for the sick person and for their loved ones, especially when the pain is severe. It leads to prayer, vows and repentance. It can deepen love, sympathy and the interaction between families. It is pain, and the pain is a useful blessing to the person. So let us see the positives of sickness and thank God.

## Trials and Tribulations

- ❖ It is called a tribulation because the heart no longer has room to tolerate it. However, the big, wide heart is not affected at all.
- ❖ The person who has hope does not look at the trial or the tribulation, but rather looks to the Lord who is victorious over tribulation, knowing that nothing is impossible for the Lord, and that He can do all things, hoping in God's love and promises.



- ❖ Each person on earth has his own difficulties in life, whether they are visible to others or hidden in the heart, whether they are spiritual, psychological, physical, family related or social.
- ❖ It is not by human effort that this person will be saved, but by God's hand.
- ❖ Why do you put God as the last resort? Start with Him and don't go astray.
- ❖ God's solutions are the most powerful and most successful, so let's focus on Him and hold on to our faith.
- ❖ In every tribulation or trial, know that God prepares you for your mission. It is important to know how to use it for your benefit, without complaining or becoming frustrated.
- ❖ Often, during times of tribulation, we see the Lord. This does not mean we see Him with our eyes, but we see Him in His works.
- ❖ The time of tribulation is a time of needing God, and during this time you will feel God's presence more than any other time. You will feel how God's hand interferes, works and saves you.
- ❖ Indeed, when there is no human solution, we see God's hand at work.
- ❖ While we are in full strength we depend on that strength, but it is during times of trouble that we experience God's presence.
- ❖ Hardship is a school for us, where we practice prayer and holding on to God. By faith we train ourselves to see how the Lord works with full power.
- ❖ To thank God for the presence of the tribulation is deeper than to give thanks in the tribulation.
- ❖ The wide and big heart is the one that gives thanks to God in the midst of troubles, and it is not affected by tribulation. The one who gives thanks is the one who loves the Lord.
- ❖ The tribulations that you bear are an indication that you are serious in your love towards God, and you are ready to offer or sacrifice everything for His sake.
- ❖ If you follow the path of the Lord and you find everything going smoothly and there are no tribulations or physical hardships, then you should ask yourself, "Have I lost my path"?
- ❖ The most important thing for our Lord is the salvation of His children. If trials and tribulations on earth are beneficial for their eternity and will lead them to humility and a contrite heart, then there is no objection to giving tribulations.



- ❖ The Lord protects you from all evil. He does not take away the temptation but He protects you while you are in it. The tribulation exists and evil also exists, but the Lord protects you from all evil.
- ❖ When you enter into tribulation say to yourself: “The Lord protects my going in and my going out. He protects me as I enter tribulation and protects me as I leave it.”
- ❖ The Lord does not keep His children from hardship. He does not prevent trouble or tribulation from touching them. However, God gives victory over the hardship and provides strength to endure.
- ❖ In many cases all the doors seem closed, except one, which seems to be opened by God: “I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it.” (Revelation 3:7).
- ❖ The faithful believer is often surrounded by sadness and troubles. He must enter from the narrow gate, walk in the difficult path and carry the Cross, and exit to the Lord outside the city carrying His shame: “Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” (Hebrews 13:13).
- ❖ Wherever tribulations are present, there the Lord, the Saviour, will be.
- ❖ Trials exist, but so does the Lord. Faith and belief in Him will overshadow all the trials, so that we don’t see them. Instead, we see God’s work and are glad in it, and we praise Him with Psalms.
- ❖ The tribulation which comes from God has three features:
  - ❖ **First:** It is for good.
  - ❖ **Second:** It has the solution with it.
  - ❖ **Third:** It is within our limits, our coping and our endurance.
- ❖ Don’t wait until God sends you trials and tribulations to turn back to Him, but return on your own for the sake of God’s love, for the love of good things and for love of the eternal kingdom.
- ❖ We learn from Job’s tribulation that every tribulation has an end.
- ❖ The Lord is a kind and gentle Father who never leaves His children. Allowing tribulation in our life does not mean that He has abandoned us or rejected us. Also it doesn’t mean that He is angry or not happy or unsatisfied.
- ❖ There is not a single person who has never encountered tribulations. They are for all, even for the prophets and the saints.



- ❖ No one receives a crown unless he becomes victorious. There is no victory without struggle or fight, and no fight without being exposed to tribulations. These test our faith and our spirituality.
- ❖ The Lord always comes at the right time. We think that He is slow but it is not like that.
- ❖ The Lord allows difficulties to happen in order to test our love, our will and our obedience.
- ❖ Keep the Lord between you and the problem and it will disappear, and the living Lord will remain. Don't put the problem between you and God lest the Divine help disappear from you, and you will be left with the tribulation. You will then complain and become frustrated.
- ❖ If a trial or tribulation engulfs you, don't despair and don't allow sadness to overcome you. How easily you will pass through a tribulation when your heart is peaceful and calm, and when you remember, with faith and depth, these three expressions:  
God exists,  
All is for good  
Wait for the Lord.
- ❖ It is a beautiful, spiritual experience to see the Lord in our tribulation. We see Him with us in His power. Perhaps, if it wasn't for the tribulation, we may have never seen Him in this way. This is one of the benefits of trials and tribulations.
- ❖ The person who is full of faith is never affected by tribulation, because he trusts in the work of God and His protection. He has faith that the Lord will care for him in the day of trouble more than he cares for himself.
- ❖ This person believes in the power of God's involvement in his troubles and that, no matter how complicated the problem is, God has many solutions.
- ❖ Every tribulation is, without doubt, an opportunity for a spiritual experience where the person has a deeper understanding of how God enters the problem and how He works in the problem.
- ❖ Do not look at the severity of the problem and how it appears now, but look with hope seeing God's solutions, even if we cannot see them with the naked eye.
- ❖ The tribulation itself comes with grace, and divine help, and with the solution to the problem, as well as protection from the problem.



- ❖ No doubt our eyes are limited and we are short sighted. We may see the tribulation but we can't see the blessings, which the Lord will definitely offer from this tribulation.

## **Problems**

- ❖ The problems themselves are not the danger, but rather the way we deal with the problems and how we respond to them.
- ❖ There is no problem that lasts forever. One day it must come to an end. This needs time, patience and a strong faith.
- ❖ Some people, when faced with a problem, become distressed and attempt to deal with the problem in a human and earthly way. But there are others who look above, into heaven for the answers.
- ❖ Don't exaggerate the complexity of the problem, and the difficulty in solving it. Every problem has a solution.
- ❖ Finding solutions to problems is very important. We all feel the need to look for solutions. The best thing, if possible, is to avoid the problem. This requires tremendous wisdom and grace.
- ❖ It is not right to solve one problem by creating another, and it is not right to solve the problem in a wrong, non-spiritual manner such as lying, beating around the bush or using trickery.
- ❖ The Lord enters at the right time and in the right way. And may be with a solution that we never thought of, or expected.
- ❖ The faithful person leaves the problems in God's hands and forgets them.

### ***Advice regarding problems:***

- ❖ Rather than focusing on the hardships facing you at the present time, look with hope to a joyful future that is in God's hands.
- ❖ Every problem that seems complicated to us has many solutions in God's hands. Every closed door has many keys in God's hands. He is the one who opens and no one else closes (Revelation 3:7).
- ❖ Hope keeps away fear, worry and disturbance and brings peace and joy (Romans 12:12).



- ❖ Don't look at the suffering without looking at the work of God, who changes evil to good.
- ❖ God is capable of changing the direction of all our circumstances and can redirect them according to His will.
- ❖ Human weakness cannot achieve anything, but the power of God can. What human's wisdom cannot accomplish, God's wisdom can.
- ❖ Be confident that you are not alone, that you are surrounded by divine help and heavenly powers, and Saints are interceding for you.

## **Pain and Suffering**

- ❖ Meditating on pain and suffering elevates our souls above the materialistic world and above earthly matters. Therefore, the person who is in the state of suffering is strong and has depth of spirit. Many who suffer become detached from the world and their love of the world lessens.
- ❖ Whilst in the joyful state, the person may feel that the world is on his side. However during the state of suffering and pain, one feels the world has turned its back on him, and the love of the world disappears.
- ❖ Perhaps the Lord has allowed pain or suffering in our lives for our own spiritual benefit.
- ❖ The feeling of joy can be superficial but the feeling of pain can be so deep that it reaches the person, touches the heart, the emotions, the senses, the feelings and the passions.
- ❖ How truly noble is the heart, which is in pain yet praises with the joyful hearts.
- ❖ The pain of the soul is more severe than the pain of the body.
- ❖ Often we do not give thanks whilst in pain, because we do not realize the true blessings of pain and its glory.
- ❖ Perhaps the life of leisure takes us away from God, but the life of pain and suffering draws us closer to God. Our prayers become deeper and stronger and our fasting becomes more spiritual. We draw closer to God through repentance and reconciliation.
- ❖ Trust that Christ is the Friend of every sufferer.



## Carrying the Cross

- ❖ A person who has earthly hope or seeks earthly dignity, will not be able to carry the cross.
- ❖ We are all invited to walk the path of Golgotha, carrying our cross. There is no other way to the Resurrection except by Golgotha.
- ❖ The cross is a sign of loving God. You have to carry the cross on your way to Him.
- ❖ The practical side of the Christian life is the journey to Golgotha, and Christianity without a cross is not true Christianity.
- ❖ We don't separate the cross from its joy and its glory, and we don't separate it from God's help and His grace.
- ❖ The cross is every hardship we bear for the sake of our love for the Lord, or for our love for others, or for the sake of the Kingdom.
- ❖ The cross is the narrow gate through which the Lord called us to enter through (Matthew 7:13).
- ❖ If you carry a cross, accept it with joy for the crowns you will receive, with no complaining or doubting.
- ❖ The cross for us is a symbol of strength and power. Through the cross we see the power of love, the power of sacrifice, the power of self-denial and the power of endurance.
- ❖ If you want to reign with Christ, go to the cross.
- ❖ Carrying the cross is a condition for living with Christ. It is also a measure of our commitment and steadfastness in His way.

## CHAPTER 13

### Personalities and the Holy Fathers

- ✦ *Personalities in the Holy Bible*
- ✦ *Our Father Jacob*
- ✦ *Joseph the Righteous*
- ✦ *David the Prophet*
- ✦ *The Virgin Saint Mary*
- ✦ *Saint John the Baptist*
- ✦ *Our Forefathers the Martyrs and the Saints*
- ✦ *Saint Mark the Apostle*
- ✦ *Saint Anthony the Great*
- ✦ *Hegumen Father Mikhail Ibrahim*
- ✦ *Archdeacon Habib Girgis*

**“Instead of promising God changing to better, take from him a promise, in your prayer, that he changes you for better”.**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Personalities in the Holy Bible

- ❖ The Holy Bible presents us with many different kinds of saintly personalities. There are many different images of saints; each with their own character, differing in age, race, profession, social status and spiritual path. By this we learn that holiness may be obtained by all, and it is not just for specific types of people.

### *Virtues and Personalities in the Holy Bible:*

- ❖ **For every virtue we like, we will find a character in the Bible that represents it:**

We see Job as an example of patience.

Simeon the Elder is an example of hope and anticipation.

We see David, an example of repentance and humility.

Abraham was an example of obedience and faith.

We see Jacob, the quiet and the long-suffering.

John the Baptist was well known for his courage.

Paul was filled with energy, zeal and instruction.

Also we see the Virgin St. Mary, who was distinguished by her quiet character and contemplation.

They are all different flowers, colours and perfumes, a bunch of virtues presented to us in the Holy Bible as people. They are given to us as role models and examples to follow.

## Our Father Jacob

### *Our Father Jacob was a pioneer in many matters such as:*

He was the first to make a vow to the Lord.

He was the first to use the expression "The house of God".

He was the first to call a city "The house of Bethel".

He was the first to consecrate a place for God and anoint it with oil.



## Joseph the Righteous

***His personality was characterised by the following features:***

1. He was a loved person.
2. He was successful and the Lord was with him.
3. He was an example of purity and chastity.
4. He was a man of dreams, and he also explained dreams.
5. He was patient until the Lord converted evil to good.

## David the Prophet

- ❖ He was gentle, loved music, was full of courage and was a mighty man of war.
- He was very kind hearted, but also strict and violent on other occasions.
- He was of simple character and also prestigious.
- He had times of joy mingled with times of sadness.
- He was meek, humble yet proud and powerful.
- ❖ He did not focus too much on sorrow and did not allow it to affect him, but rather turned to God in prayer.

## The Virgin Saint Mary

- ❖ Each saint in our Church has one feast, which is the day of their departure to heaven or martyrdom, and probably another feast commemorating the day their relics were discovered or a miracle being performed through them or if a church is built in their name.
- ❖ However, the Virgin Saint Mary has many feasts. The quiet virgin who meditates is an example for us all. Let's all be like her, contemplating much and talking less.
- ❖ The greatness of the Virgin is revealed by God choosing her among all the women of the world. The only human for whom the Divine waited thousands of years until He found her, and saw her as worthy of this great honour, about which Archangel Gabriel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35).



- ❖ She is the Mother of us all, our Lady, Pride of our Race, the Queen, who sits at the Right hand of the King, the Ever Virgin, the Pure St. Mary, full of Grace, the Capable Mother, the Chosen One, the Merciful Mother of Light, the Compassionate Mother, the Mother of Salvation, the True Vine whom the Church raised above the Angels. We say about her in the praises and the hymns: "You are raised, O Mary, above the Cherubim and the Seraphim."
- ❖ We don't look upon St. Mary as just a great saint, but as a mother, and not just an ordinary mother but a capable mother full of mercy and support.
- ❖ How great is the heart of Saint Mary!! How it was able to expand to accommodate what she heard and saw. Her heart is a treasure of spirituality. How wonderful are the words of David the Prophet who said: "I hide Your words in my heart." (Psalm 118).
- ❖ In the Church's view, she is above the Angels and the Archangels. We acknowledge her in our prayers and our hymns before mentioning the three great lights, Michael, Gabriel and Rafael the Archangels.
- ❖ The silent, contemplative Virgin is a great and profound example for all. Let's be like her in her meditation and quietness. Let's pass our time in meditation and contemplation rather than excessive talk.
- ❖ The Virgin St. Mary changed what Eve did and restored the reputation of women in the world. She brought back to the female gender her pride which was lost.

## **Saint John the Baptist**

- ❖ What distinguishes John the Baptist from others is that he lived a perfect life during a dark time in history.
- ❖ One of these distinguishing features is that he was a man of the wilderness and lived as a desert hermit and ascetic. This left a mark on his life and shaped his character. In the wilderness he learnt prayer and meditation, he learnt courage and rigor and he also learnt to be faithful.
- ❖ He was fearless, strong and always spoke the truth regardless of the outcome. Truly, the ascetic person never fears.
- ❖ John's voice did not fade after his death but continued to echo against the enemies of truth. Indeed, Herod was still afraid of John even after his death.



- ❖ John put his pride to death and did not give any regard to his ego. Christ was of foremost importance to him. Let this be a lesson to the servants who feed their ego through their service, or take up a service in order to enhance their ego.
- ❖ People have testified regarding the greatness of many, but their testimony was false or based on ignorance or flattery. However it was God Himself and His Angels who testified to the greatness of John the Baptist.

## **Our Forefathers the Martyrs and the Saints**

- ❖ The greatness of the Saints was in their devotion and attachment to God. The Lord was their one and only goal. They concentrated all their emotions on Him and had no other wishes or desires that would distract them from Him.
- ❖ Those who do not honour the Virgin St. Mary or the other saints, disregard the words of the Lord to His saints: "For those who honoured them were also honouring Him".
- ❖ If we are children of the saints then we must do as they did.
- ❖ Likewise regarding the martyrs and confessors, whose suffering was a beautiful fragrance and sweet smelling aroma before God and people. This resembles the pain and suffering that servants endure in their service.
- ❖ As for the hermits, they are people like us who eat and drink, get sick and feel pain and agony of the flesh, but they are ascetic and have a high level of fasting. They live in the inner desert, removed from the world in areas unknown to anybody. Some go for years without seeing another human being.
- ❖ How many saints left the world but the world did not forget them. They remain before us always.
- ❖ The bodies that suffered for God's sake and offered themselves as a holy, living sacrifice, were rewarded by the Lord and became blessed in all generations.

## **Saint Mark the Apostle**

- ❖ We are indebted to this great saint and owe our faith to him. He who preached in our country, Egypt, in the name of Jesus Christ. He shed his pure blood in our land for the sake of preaching the word of God.



- ❖ We are indebted to this saint, who was the first to write a Gospel for us, which documented the life of Jesus Christ, His work and His redemption of all humanity.
- ❖ The first Church in our Egypt was named after St. Mark and his holy body is buried in it.
- ❖ There was no other house which had as much recognition as the house of St. Mark, where our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His pure disciples and where He washed their feet and established the new Covenant of His holy Body and Blood. It was in this house that the disciples hid before the Resurrection and before the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to talk in tongues. Also, it was in this great house that the first Christian Church in the world was established, in its famous Upper Room.
- ❖ The lion of St. Mark is well known and it appears in icons of him. The lion relates, either to the first miracle performed through St. Mark where a lion and lioness were killed in the name of Christ, or it refers to the Gospel of St. Mark, which begins with the words, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." (Mark 1:3). Or because his Gospel represents Christ the Lord in His glory and His kingdom on the basis that He is the lion, which came out of the tribe of Judah as mentioned in the Book of Revelation, "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." (Revelation 5:5). Also, the four Gospel writers are referred to in the Book of Revelation as four animals, and St. Mark was represented by a lion, "The first living creature was like a lion." (Revelation 4:7).

## **St Anthony the Great**

- ❖ The life of a saint like Saint Anthony teaches us many things. It teaches us the concept that a person can be satisfied completely in God alone and have need for nothing else. His life also teaches us how one can be alone without getting bored or feeling lonely because the heart is totally with God, filled with Christ. His life gives us a practical example of friendship with the Lord and companionship with Him, which fills the heart and the thoughts.
- ❖ Some of the virtues we have seen in the life of this saint are: understanding, discernment, humility, quietness, calmness and solitude, with love for the Lord.



- ❖ This righteous saint was an innovator. He was the first to open a new, difficult but beautiful way, in which no one else had gone before him. And he was loved because others loved this path too.
- ❖ He was not just a father to monks but is known as the Father of Monasticism. He was the one who formed the foundation of monasticism and introduced it to the world.
- ❖ He did not flee from the world but he was lifted above earthly matters, and this was the mystery of his greatness and the reason why he was admired by all.
- ❖ He was above fear, and never feared the devil and his soldiers but rather they feared him.
- ❖ He never married and never had children but he has hundreds and thousands of spiritual children all over the world.
- ❖ He was a good transmitter of the word of God, the grace of God, the blessings of God and the peace that comes from God. He was a person who took from the Lord and gave to the people with the same power.

## **Hegumen Father Mikhail Ibrahim**

- ❖ We are honoured to have lived in the same generation as Hegumen Father Mikhail Ibrahim. Many generations are envious because we have seen him, listened to him, enjoyed him and were blessed by his prayers.
- ❖ We see so many different kinds of people, but this kind is rare to find. He was a heavenly person who lived with us for a while, offering humility and kindness and a pure spiritual life. He served in his health and in his sickness, in his youth and in his old age, in his strength and in his weakness and continued serving as a priest, giving guidance and now he intercedes for his people.
- ❖ He was a quiet soul, full of faith and calmness, filled with inner peace.
- ❖ He was very particular in his life. He gave the Lord everything. He was simple, meek and humble, and was loved by all.
- ❖ He was an extraordinary person who provided us with the ideal example of priesthood, that it is not just knowledge but spirit. He showed us true fatherhood, caring in tenderness and wisdom from above, which comes from the fruits of the Holy Spirit.



## Archdeacon Habib Girgis

- ✦ Our teacher Archdeacon Habib Girgis was not just a teacher of his generation but a role model for all. Each time I visited him I benefited from his words and recorded them in my diary. When I saw his meekness, calmness and peaceful heart, I said to myself, "If a human being could be so meek and kind, how much more our kind Lord be?" So I glorified God through this person.



## CHAPTER 14

### Doctrine and Rites

- ❖ *Theology*
- ❖ *Sources of Legislation in Christianity*
- ❖ *The Creed*
- ❖ *Tradition*
- ❖ *The Lord Christ*
- ❖ *The Holy Spirit*
- ❖ *Salvation in the Orthodox Concept*
- ❖ *The Church*
- ❖ *Intercession of the Saints*
- ❖ *Hades*
- ❖ *The General Resurrection*
- ❖ *Judgement Day: The Last Day*
- ❖ *The Kingdom of God*
- ❖ *Eternity*
- ❖ *The Heavens*

**“Thus, suffering for the Lord becomes a measure of the glory that awaits the faithful in the eternal Kingdom”**

*Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda*



## Theology

- ❖ The Science of Theology speaks of God, blessed be His Name. No one should speak of God except those who know Him, or at least became a disciple of those who knew Him. The Science of Theology needs accuracy in interpretation and expression, and knowledge that the sources used are trustworthy in their faith.
- The dialogue of Theological is not a fight or war as it was in the past, but rather is a dialogue in love and a desire to understand and have a common comprehension, using a spiritual approach.
- The true theologian, or the true believer, does not submit verses to his own personal understanding; rather he subjects himself to the concept of the verses.

## Sources of Legislation in Christianity

- ❖ The main source of legislation in Christianity is the Holy Bible, which includes both the Old and New Testaments. Also, there is tradition and general consensus.
- ❖ There is also the Ecclesiastical Laws, whether they are from our Fathers the Apostles, from Ecumenical Councils, from the Early Church Fathers (the great teachers of the Church who were Patriarchs and Bishops) and lastly, from the Laws of Apolidas and Bassillios. These are recognised laws and are applied in the Church's world.

## The Creed

### ***The Creed contains the main truths of the faith. They are:***

1. The Oneness of God. The Creed begins with, "Truly we believe in one God".
2. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the divinity of each Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity and their work.
3. The doctrine of the Incarnation, Redemption and Salvation.
4. The doctrine of Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
5. The doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead and the afterlife, in the age to come.
6. The doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus which will be the Judgement.
7. The One Holy Universal Catholic Apostolic Church.



## Tradition

- ✦ Tradition is all the teachings that have reached us by way of the Apostles and the Early Church Fathers, transmitted orally and which are not found in the Bible. These subjects may not have been mentioned in the Bible, but do not, in anyway, contradict the teachings of the Bible.
- ✦ Tradition is the life of the Church or is the living Church.

### ***The Correct Tradition:***

What we mean by correct tradition is:

1. The teachings of the Lord Himself, which have reached us by way of Tradition.
2. The Apostles' Tradition, which are the teachings of our Fathers the Apostles, which have been passed on from generation to generation.
3. The Church's Tradition, which the Holy Church Councils announced in their systems and laws, or what has reached us through the Early Church Fathers, the Heroes of the Faith.

## The Lord Christ

### ***The Nature of the Lord Christ***

- ✦ The Lord Christ is God, the Incarnate Word. He has complete divinity and complete humanity, and His divinity is united with His humanity without mixing, blending or changing, complete union substantial Hypostasis, and words are unable to express it, as is said, it is a great mystery, "Great is the mystery of Godliness, God was manifested in the flesh." (1Timothy 3:16). And that union is permanent and never separate at all. We say in the Holy Liturgy, "His Divinity never departed from His Humanity not even for a single instant or twinkling of an eye".
- ✦ The Divine nature (God the Word) united with the Human nature, which the Word (the Logos) took from St. Mary, by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sanctified and consecrated the womb of St. Mary, a complete sanctification, so the baby born from her does not inherit the original sin, and formed, from her blood, a body that the only Son of God united with. This union has been since the first moment of the sacred conception in the womb of St. Mary.



- ❖ And, by uniting the two natures, the divine and the human, inside the womb of St. Mary, One Nature was formed, which is a Godly nature, the Incarnate Word. The Holy Church could not find a true expression, deeper and more accurate, than this expression. St. Kyrillos the Great (Pillar of Faith), used this expression and St.
- ❖ Athanasius the Apostolic before him, and both of them were prominent in theological teaching on the level of the whole world.

### ***The Incarnation***

- ❖ We must completely differentiate between incarnation and appearance. The word incarnation means, He took a body, but appearance means, He took a form that He appeared in it.
- ❖ The tender God did not want us to be frightened by His Divinity, but He came down to us due to His kindness.
- ❖ The Lord Christ represented us by providing to the Father the image of the complete human, who obeys His commandments. At the same time He offered to humans the Divine image, which they were created in.
- ❖ The Lord Christ came to provide us with this Divine image being a practical example before us, in order for us to see and imitate Him.
- ❖ God approached us so that our perception of Divinity does not remain that God is mighty and scary. He wanted to attract us through love and not through fear.
- ❖ Man wanted to stand with God, side by side, therefore, instead of man rising to God, God descended and stood side by side with man.
- ❖ God, who entered into the womb of St. Mary, to take from her a body, wants to dwell in your body to fill you with love.
- ❖ The expression, "God with us" does not mean that Emmanuel is with us only in the period of His incarnation but is with us always.
- ❖ One of the blessings of the Divine Incarnation is the blessing of the human nature. What I mean by this is that the Lord Christ, when He wore our nature, blessed this nature. Therefore, in the Liturgy of St. Gregory we say, "You blessed my nature in You."
- ❖ He blessed this nature so as to return it as it was: The image of God and His likeness.



- ❖ He took the defeated and weak nature, and gave it a powerful Spirit.
- ❖ This blessed nature became an altar for the Spirit.
- ❖ The Lord Christ sanctified all the instincts of man.
- ❖ When man could not go to God, to reconcile with Him, God descended to reconcile with man.

### ***Redemption***

- ❖ Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He will sacrifice Himself on behalf of Man.
- ❖ On the Cross, the Lord Christ reconciled people with God, by the work of atonement and redemption.
- ❖ The work of forgiveness is a work of covering. God took our sins and threw a cover on it, and this is what atonement means, to cover. God atones for our sins means that God puts His saving blood on our sins, so they are covered by His blood and do not appear to anyone, even before the Judgment of God.

### **The Holy Spirit**

- ❖ The Holy Spirit is the source of life in the whole world, either life by means of existence or dwelling, or life with God. And the Creed describes Him as "The life-giver".

### ***Humility of the Holy Spirit***

1. In humility, the Holy Spirit works in everything, in building the Church in confidentiality and in secrecy. So, His works are called the Sacraments in the Church.
2. In His humility, the Holy Spirit talks through the mouth of the Apostles and utters through the Prophets, also without appearance.
3. With the same humility, He grants strength to His servants.
4. Also in humility, He grants talents.
5. Thus, the Holy Spirit works in the Church in secret and in confidentiality, but in the end the visible work is that of the Church.
6. And due to His humility, He accepts to live in our bodies.
7. And because of His humility, He bears us.



- ✦ Who sees the secret work of yeast in flour? Perhaps scientists say that it works on the reproduction of cells, but we do not see anything. The yeast that the Holy Spirit Has made, represents the secret work in the Church. It is a hidden power, which works and we do not see. But we see its result at work through a hidden power to build the Kingdom. It is the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the unseen works in the Sacraments of the Church.

## **Salvation in the Orthodox Concept**

### ***The Conditions of Salvation:***

1. Faith
2. Baptism
3. The Sacraments of the Church needed for Salvation
4. Good Deeds

### ***The Blood of Christ***

- ✦ There is no salvation except by the blood of Christ. All the good deeds, regardless how great they are, cannot save man without the blood of Christ.

### ***The Sacraments of the Church:***

- ✦ Those who deny the Sacraments of the Church and their effectiveness in Salvation, deny the work of the Holy Spirit Himself, by Him the Sacraments are accomplished.

### ***Baptism***

- ✦ Baptism is death and birth: death of the old person, and birth of the new person in the image of Christ. It is a birth from water and Spirit (John 3:5).
- ✦ In baptism the man obtains renewal and not infallibility.
- ✦ Baptism is needed for salvation, because it is death with Christ. It is a belief that this death is a means of life, and confession that the wages of sin is death.
- ✦ In Baptism we share in the death of Christ and we receive the adoption of being His son or daughter. Through the Holy Spirit we live a righteous life as His children. Both Baptism and Chrismation are necessary for our salvation.



## **Repentance**

- ✦ There is not one theological scientist in the world, who says that humanity can be saved without repentance.
- ✦ Since man sins every day and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), then he needs salvation by death. Truly the price of salvation is Christ's blood, but Christ's blood wipes only the sin of the repentant. Thus, repentance is not the price but it is the means, and without it we do not deserve the Holy Blood.

## **Good Deeds:**

- ✦ These good deeds are the fruits of faith, and evidence of the existence of faith, and with them we complete faith.
- ✦ Salvation is not accomplished through good deeds however, without good deeds, there is no salvation. So, salvation only occurs by the blood of our Lord Christ, but good deeds qualify us for this Blood.
- ✦ If God does not forget, even a cup of cold water, so it does not waste his wage. And He does not forget the labour of love, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58).

## **The Work of the Church in Transferring Salvation:**

- ✦ The great act of salvation, which the Lord Christ offered on the Cross, is transferred by the Church to people through the work of the Holy Spirit as assigned by the Lord Christ Himself. This is done by the church in three ways: Preaching the word, giving the sacraments and reconciliation and guidance

## **Grace**

- ✦ The work of grace in humans is a work of free will, it encourages but does not force. The grace of assistance does not cancel the grace of freedom.
- ✦ Grace occupies your heart by love of doing good, your will becomes powerful to do it and encourages you but does not force you.
- ✦ Truly, but for the grace of God, which protects us, we would all have perished.



- ❖ The expression “all by grace”, which many people use, is not correct, because if all is by grace no one would sin and no one would perish. Also, this expression means that grace drags a person’s will, but in reality this is the contrary to the will of God, which leaves people with their free will , to do what they want.
- ❖ Grace carries salvation for you, but you must accept it.

### ***The Possibility of Renunciation of the Believer***

- ❖ We say that all the chosen are believers, but not all the believers are chosen, because believer may leave their faith and perish.

### ***The Danger of using One Verse***

- ❖ Using one verse from the Bible, in isolation in matters of dispute, is not sufficient and does not give the Biblical truth. All the verses that are relevant to the issue must be gathered, in order to produce proper understanding.

## **The Church**

- ❖ The Church is beautiful in what she offers in icons, lights, candles, incense and her 12 columns which represent the 12 disciples. The columns have crowns which represent the crowns of the apostles. She is beautiful with her rites and what they carry in meaning and symbolism. She is beautiful in her hymns, music and praises.
- ❖ When we mention that God is our Father, we mention that the Church is our mother. We do not become sons of God except through the motherhood of our Church. Are you saying that you became a son of God by faith? The Church is the one who gave you that faith, through preaching and serving the word. You believed and were baptised so you became a son of God, all that was through the Church.
- ❖ The Church invites us to repent in all the caring work that she does.
- ❖ The Church is the spiritual atmosphere, which helps in the life of repentance.
- ❖ For the Church to succeed and become strong, the Holy Spirit must work in her.
- ❖ The children of God must be different from the world, and the Church must retain its spiritual nature, which characterises it.



- ❖ If the Church cares for the sick and establishes hospitals, dispensaries and health services, it does not mean that she has deviated from her spiritual message as her mission is not just preaching, but also to comfort those in pain.
- ❖ Teaching in the Church is for honest people, who are trusted by the Church.

### **Priesthood**

- ❖ Our Fathers the Apostle did not have the spirit of authority, but rather the spirit of service.
- ❖ The priest is for the sake of the people and not the people for the priest.
- ❖ The individual who cannot look after his own household is not fit to be a priest.
- ❖ All the works of the priesthood, and the works of service and care, are works for God, in which God's work is hidden, and He allows us to appear in the picture. He works in us, and works by us and with us, but He is not visible. Hence, it appears to others that we are the ones who do the work.
- ❖ The priest is the angel of the Church, according to his position, and he is expected to be like an angel in his purity. The white vestments he wears during the services symbolise this.
- ❖ The priest is not a separate entity from God in his work, but he is commissioned to do the job as a steward of God (1 Timothy 1:7).
- ❖ We do not believe in the infallibility of the priest, but in his authority.
- ❖ The priest confirms whether the sinner is deserving of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of his sins and that is by verification of his repentance.
- ❖ Be a son amongst your brothers, and a brother amongst your children.
- ❖ The true teacher is a beautiful icon in the church. He is the image of God before all.
- ❖ The work of forgiveness which the priest announces transfers the sin to Christ's account, so He carries it from the sinner and wipes it by His blood.
- ❖ The priest is not the source of forgiveness, but he announces it.
- ❖ The grace which we take in baptism is from God, and not from the priest, who is just a servant of God. It depends on the sincerity of the promises of God and His talents, and does not depend on the background of the priest. The priest is like a postman, bringing you a joyful letter. Regardless of whether that postman is nice or bad looking, the joyful letter does not change.



## **Holy Week**

- ✦ Holy Week is the most sanctified and most spiritual week in the whole year.
- ✦ It is a week full of holy memories in the most critical stage of salvation, and most important chapter in the story of redemption.
- ✦ Holy Week is the period of reaping for the whole year. You reap enough spirituality for the whole year. And this is what we need.
- ✦ "To You is the Power, the Glory and the Blessing"; it is a prayer of praise and it is above the level of requests and petitions. We sing it in God's ear, and it is a song of love and of glory. We say to Him, in His deep suffering and endurance, "We know who You are. You have the power, the glory and the blessing forever, amen. Emmanuel our Lord and our King".

## **Intercession of the Saints**

- ✦ The intercessions of saints are mere prayers for and on our behalf. Therefore, it is a pleading intercession and not the propitiation intercession of Christ.
- If the saints ask for our prayers, shouldn't we then ask for their prayers? And if we ask for the prayers of those who are living and who are still in the period of struggle and pain like us, shouldn't we ask for the prayers of the saints who have completed their struggle and transferred to Paradise, and are living there with Christ?!
- ✦ For us, the intercession of saints is not theological research, which the verses of the Bible testify to, but rather, it is a practical reality in which we live.

## **Hades**

The first Hades the human goes through after death is the memory. He remembers all his sins, weakness, uncleanness and his falls. The memory after death is quick, comprehensive, non-voluntary and permanent.

## **The General Resurrection**

If the mind stands helpless in front of the understanding of the Resurrection and how will it be, the faith in God and His power are able to comprehend it.



### ***The Resurrection is a Wondrous Transition:***

1. It is a transmission from the limited to the unlimited.
2. It is a transmission of the seen to the unseen.
3. It is a transmission from the world of senses to the world of spirit.
4. It is a transmission of the world of vanity to the world of truth.

The Lord who took our weak, human nature and blessed it, will grant transfiguration and the glory in the resurrection to it. St. Paul said about our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." (Philippians 3:21).

### **Judgement Day: The Last Day**

- ❖ Harder than shame on earth, is shame on the last day.
- ❖ Pitiful are the people who experience shame on this day, when their deeds will be revealed and their thoughts will be examined.

### **The Kingdom of God**

- ❖ This Kingdom is God's Kingdom. He reigns in it with righteousness and peace. Therefore, it is said about God that He is King of Peace and King of Righteousness.
- ❖ This Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Saints.
- ❖ This Kingdom of God is the Holy Church.

### ***The Kingdom has three meanings:***

1. The Kingdom of God in the heart.
  2. The Kingdom of preaching.
  3. The eternal, heavenly Kingdom, in the Heavenly Jerusalem.
- ❖ God, in His Kingdom, reigns by love not by force. He reigns on those who love Him, not by forcing them to join His Kingdom. He wants people to join Him of their own free will.
  - ❖ On that day, only the hearts that are full of love will enter the Kingdom of God. No one will enter unless they loved God, loved good and loved others.
  - ❖ Do not stand back, watching those who labour. The Kingdom of God is not for spectators but for those who labour in building it.



## Eternity

- ❖ God will not grant us something to make us happy in eternity, but He gives us Himself, who makes us happy. All those who approach Him approach happiness, and those who taste Him taste happiness and love.
- ❖ If you believe in eternity, put it before you so that you do not sin. As faith in eternity gives man vigilance in his conscience.
- ❖ God, in the last day, will arrange us in an order that is different from the present order. Our order in the current world is according to our age, position, level, talents or capabilities. But in eternity, we will be arranged according to our heart, which God knows. Perhaps many who are young here, will come before those who hold positions, talents and leadership.
- ❖ Your whole life on earth is not equal to a blink of an eye in eternity. And your life on earth is just a preface or preparation for this eternity.

## The Heavens

- ❖ There is more than one Heaven:
  1. **The Heaven of the Birds** is the atmosphere, in which the birds and aeroplanes fly. The Bible says, "Birds of heaven" (Matthew 6:26).
  2. **The Heaven of the Galaxy** is where the sun, planets and stars are, which are controlled by precise laws. The Psalm states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).
  3. **The Heaven of Spirits and Angels:** St. Paul mentioned this heaven, and he called it the Paradise or Third Heaven.
  4. **Then there is the Highest and most noble Heaven of all:** The Bible called it "Heaven of Heavens" (Psalm 148:4). It is the throne of God, and the Lord Christ spoke about it in the Sermon on the Mount, saying, "Heaven is God's throne and the earth is His footstool" (Matthew 5:34-35).

## CHAPTER 15

### Miscellaneous

- ❖ *The World*
- ❖ *Knowledge and Information*
- ❖ *The Environment*
- ❖ *Time*
- ❖ *Money and Wealth*
- ❖ *Egypt*
- ❖ *Strength*

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9. Our Christian Orthodox Doctrine and Dogma.
10. My Orthodox Church.....How beautiful It Is!!!.(2).
11. Questions About the Christian Faith (1): Redemption and Salvation.
12. Pearls in words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

**“I do not want anything from the world since the world is too poor to give.”**

***Words of His Holiness Pope Shenouda***



## The World

- ❖ Our perception of the world and all that is in it stops when we concentrate on the divine.
- ❖ "I don't need anything from the world"; this is the first thing one should say to reach the release of the spirit.
- ❖ If the Lord truly fills your heart, then the whole world will be worthless and of no value to you.
- ❖ "Come and I will comfort you all"; it is a call and promise; it is a call from God and a promise for an exhausted world full of problems and difficulties of every kind.
- ❖ It is a busy world and it will be busy until eternity.
- ❖ The world requires love and tranquillity in order to solve its problems.
- ❖ As the Lord observes the world from heaven, He finds it full of business.
- ❖ Satan triggers wars of thought on the world. He offers new principles and new concepts, which serve his own purpose. In these wars, he tries to demolish values, tradition and all that was received by our fathers.
- ❖ Live in the world but don't let the world live in you. You can own the matters but don't let the matters own you.
- ❖ Our life scale has two sides: one side is God and the other side is the world. Sometimes we put too much on the side of the world and it becomes heavier than the side where God exists, which becomes lighter and goes up. When you find that the side of the world becomes heavier, then put whatever you can from the grace of God until it becomes balanced again. In this way you strengthen your will in doing good deeds.
- ❖ Our world hungers for sympathy, compassion and a gentle word during communication.
- ❖ The world leans towards non-conformity and acceptance of all things. In spite of all this, our Lord still cares for His world and is patient with sinners.

## Knowledge and Information

- ❖ Any spiritual or worldly knowledge that does not lead us to a life of humility and simplicity is vain knowledge and may trick the soul. It is an attack from the devil, by which he diverts us from asking, or knocking at the door.



- ❖ Some people are ignorant because they have never been educated. Others have been taught by people and they are even more ignorant. However, the people who are truly knowledgeable are those who have learned directly from God.
- ❖ Make sure that the knowledge which reaches you is correct and beneficial to you before you accept it.
- ❖ Choose the knowledge which will benefit you rather than knowledge for the sake of knowledge.
- ❖ Unhealthy knowledge is a person's knowledge of issues that may not benefit him or may even hurt him, but unfortunately he continues to pursue it regardless, believing that it is a kind of general information.
- ❖ Many cried bitter tears for having stored up damaging information in their minds.
- ❖ There is a big difference between a person who doesn't know and another who refuses information, and who will be judged accordingly.

## The Environment

- ❖ The corrupt environment is truly very dangerous for the weak person. Each time the love of God becomes inflamed in his heart, the corrupt surroundings may put out this flame.
- ❖ The perverted environment may accuse the spiritual person of extremism, and considers his struggle to be inflexibility and his spirituality as abnormal.

## Time

- ❖ Life is time and whoever wastes his time wastes life.
- ❖ Whoever tries to kill time actually kills his life as time is life.
- ❖ The most enjoyable time in life is the time spent with God.
- ❖ Time wasted is time which passes without any benefit, neither spiritual benefit nor physical benefit or mental benefit. Not only does it not benefit ourselves, but it doesn't benefit others either.
- ❖ A day wasted in your life, can never be recovered.
- ❖ Those who are in Hades long for just one minute of life on earth to offer repentance.
- ❖ Every fruitful day spent with God is a living day, but every day spent in sin is a dead day.



- ❖ Whoever knows the value of time and uses it wisely for his own benefit will never find spare time, because his time is used effectively.
- ❖ **Future:** We don't know what the future holds, but we do know one thing; the future is in God's hands.
- ❖ **New Year:** We want this New Year to be new in all things: new in life, new in character, new in conduct.
- ❖ **Holiday:** Make our holidays, holy days. Thus, feast days and weekends are holy days that are dedicated to God.
- ❖ **Vacation Days:** Many take days off work for special occasions or to complete their business, but how beautiful it is to take a day off just to spend it with God.
- ❖ **Night:** Indeed whoever gains the friendship of night does not become weary from the chaos of the day. It is better to meditate and contemplate at night. If the world bought your day and gave you its price in money for work, the night is still yours to spend with God.

## Money and Wealth

- ❖ There is a difference between owning money and loving money. We believe that you can own money but do not let it own you. It is for you to use and not for it to use you. So let money be your slave not your master.
- ❖ The possessor of money is, in fact, simply a trustee as God granted it to people as an honest agent of the money in their hands.
- ❖ You are the agent of the money. If you use it wisely and correctly God will bless you.
- ❖ A person can be very rich but, at the same time, still righteous and perfect like Job.

### ***Why does the Lord allow differences in the distribution of wealth?***

- ❖ Did the Lord allow this in order to test the feelings of the rich in his riches? Would wealth lead him to sin, extravagance, being away from God, pride or feelings of greatness? Or lead him to use this wealth in caring for the poor, having compassion, being gentle and doing good deeds?
- ❖ Also, how does the poor person feel in his state of poverty? Does he worry or complain, do illegal things, lie, use trickery to fulfil his needs?



## Egypt

- ✦ I look to the land of Egypt as a holy land. Her name was used often in the Holy Bible. This land has been blessed by the visitation of so many prophets and was made holy by the Lord Christ when He fled to it with Saint Mary and Saint Joseph, as a baby.
- ✦ Egypt is not a place we live in, but a place that lives in us.

## Strength

- ✦ True strength is not something exterior, which seeks to conquer others and have victory over them. But rather it is deep, inner strength that gives victory over the ego. It is better to overcome oneself than to overcome a city.
- ✦ Yes, we want to be strong, but let God be the source of our strength. He is the One who strengthens us. We should not depend on our own strength but on His. We stand before Him as weak in order to take our strength from Him.
- ✦ The strong spirit conquers the flesh, matter and the devil.
- ✦ The strong soul never worries, becomes disturbed, fears, collapses or hesitates.
- ✦ The strong person deals with problems outside himself. However, the weak person allows the problems to enter into his heart and allows his nerves to be affected.
- ✦ As a matter of fact, the real meaning of strength must be concentrated on inner strength.
- ✦ The strong person is not the one who conquers others, but conquers himself.
- ✦ The strong person bears others but the weak person humiliates others.
- ✦ The strong personality is not easily influenced by others, but follows good and spiritual advice.
- ✦ A strong personality does not mean being stubborn or strong headed but instead being easy to get along with and works in harmony with all, without being a toy in the hands of others.
- ✦ The ultimate strength in Christianity is demonstrated in the saying by the Apostle St. Paul, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthen me." (Philippians 4:13).



رَبَّنَا مُوجُودٌ  
مَسِيرَهَا تَنْتَهِي  
كُلُّهُ لِلخَيْرِ

God exists  
Eventually it will end  
All for the good



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