

Necklace

"Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26)

This verse links to the topic rejoices as it reminds us that faith without effort is dead. We must always remember that there is a job Christians are obligated to once they submit to Christ, we cannot say we believe in Him and follow His word if we are not persecuted every day and work hard to hold his name up. Christ loves those who struggle, when we put in the work and effort for his name, we gain a stronger faith. Laziness is the way of the foolish, Proverbs 13:4 states, "The soul of a lazy man desires and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." This does not mean physically alone, sure this kind of effort comes with reward, but the soul who is diligent and gives effort to Christ will have a great reward with The Father. The idea of having a necklace as our project is for us to remember our Lord whenever we look at it, it should remind us Christs death is life and through his we are saved. When making the necklace we should be reminded that although we only start with a piece of string and a few beads we can end with a beautiful necklace commemorating Christs salvation. Each component of the necklace has a deeper meaning than what may meet the eye, the black string symbolising our hearts without Christs presence and his comforting peace, the beads symbolising the fruits of the Holy Spirit that he has given us to live through his works and have a strong faith, and the knot holding the necklace together symbolises His security we find through our faith with Him when we do his works. Alone each component does not work, you cannot submit yourself to Christ if you do not first admit the dark emptiness of your heart without him, you cannot have faith and a strong relationship with Christ without the Holy Spirit in your heart guiding you and you cannot have faith if you don't trust in His security, when each component works together we learn that Faith without works is dead. The presence of prayer ropes in the Coptic Orthodox church also has a large role to play in our project, this is because even the monks in the monasteries use prayer ropes in necklaces as a way to pinpoint their focus on Christ and connect with him physically too. Using a prayer rope during prayer allows the individual to not only enhance their focus while praying but also involve their sense of touch, this has a large impact as you are more inclined to not only retain information better but also connect with what you are doing when touch is involved. Even Saint Anthony the Great had a deep involvement with prayer ropes as he used to weave during his time in the desert and how his weaving has slowly evolved into the current rosary, we have in our time now.

Prayer ropes, also known as "tesbeha" or "misbahah," hold significant importance in the Coptic Orthodox Church. These ropes are not merely accessories but rather essential tools for spiritual practice, fostering a deeper connection with God through structured prayer and meditation.

In the Coptic tradition, the prayer rope is a symbolic and tangible expression of one's commitment to a life of prayer. The rope typically consists of a specific number of knots, beads, or a combination of both, often totalling 41 or 64, each representing a

prayer or invocation. The repetitive nature of counting prayers on the rope serves as a meditative practice, encouraging believers to focus their minds on divine contemplation.

The number of knots on the prayer rope is not arbitrary; it holds theological significance. For example, the number 41 is associated with the days Christ spent on Earth after His resurrection, emphasizing the resurrection's importance in Coptic theology. Similarly, 64 is connected to the traditional age of the Virgin Mary at the time of her Assumption. These numerical values add a layer of sacred symbolism to the act of prayer using the rope.

The prayer rope is often used in conjunction with specific prayers, such as the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"). By reciting these prayers while counting the knots, believers engage in a rhythmic and focused form of meditation, aiming to attain a state of inner stillness and communion with the divine.

In addition to individual prayer, the prayer rope plays a vital role in communal worship within the Coptic Orthodox Church. During liturgical services, members of the clergy and laity alike may use prayer ropes as they chant psalms, hymns, and other prayers. This collective use of prayer ropes reinforces a sense of unity and shared devotion among the worshippers.

The tactile nature of the prayer rope adds a sensory dimension to the spiritual practice. Feeling the knots or beads in one's hands serves as a physical reminder of the commitment to prayer. This tangible connection aids in grounding individuals, helping them to overcome distractions and center their minds on the divine.

Furthermore, the use of prayer ropes aligns with the ascetic tradition within the Coptic Orthodox Church. Asceticism, the intentional pursuit of a simple and disciplined life, is regarded as a means of spiritual growth. By incorporating prayer ropes into their daily routines, believers engage in a form of ascetic discipline, fostering self-control and devotion.

The prayer rope is also a visible symbol of faith within the Coptic community. Many individuals wear the prayer rope as a bracelet or carry it discreetly in their pockets, signifying their commitment to a life of prayer and devotion. This public display serves as a constant reminder to the wearer and those around them of the importance of spiritual practices in their lives.

In conclusion, the prayer rope holds multifaceted significance in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Beyond being a simple counting tool, it serves as a powerful instrument for individual and communal prayer, a symbol of faith, and a tangible expression of ascetic discipline. Through the rhythmic repetition of prayers and the tactile experience of the rope, believers deepen their spiritual connection and strive for a closer relationship with God in their journey of faith.