

1 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him, and were not ashamed. And their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor soul cried out, and He heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 And they shall see that the Lord is good; Blessed is He who says, The Lord, you His saints! There is no lack and suffer hunger. 8 My good thing. 9 Come, you of the Lord. 10 Who is the good? 11 Keep. 12 Depart. 13 The eyes of the Lord are open to their cry. 14 The face of the Lord hears, And delivers them from all their troubles. 15 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all. 16 He guards the bones of His servants; Not one of them is broken. 17 Evil shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. 18 The soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

2016

TASTE AND SEE

MIDWEST COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCHES

ST. MARK FESTIVAL



MAHRAGAN ALKERAZA

ILLINOIS

INDIANA

IOWA

MINNESOTA

MISSOURI

NEBRASKA

WISCONSIN

"TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD"

psalm 34:8

GRADE 7-8





H. H. Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark



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INTRODUCTION Mahrangan Alkeraza 2016

As we celebrated the conclusion of last year's Mahrangan with the distribution of the trophies for the first, second and third place winners, we were grateful for God's blessings for a successful 2015 Mahrangan. His Holiness Pope Tawadros II said during the Awards Ceremony in Egypt, "I am happy to see the activities of the Youth Bishopric, I am glad that our beautiful Church that is 2000 years old is full of young youth and I am proud to see the creative work and achievements of the youth."

Last year, in addition to the usual participation from Egypt and Sudan, we had a great worldwide participation from 192 Churches representing more than 20 countries and 8 languages.

The theme for Mahrangan 2016 is **"Taste & See The Lord Is Good"** (Psalm 34:8).

This year, God is asking each one of us to grow in Christ by:

1. Rejoicing in Christ
2. Growing strong roots inside the Church
3. Building our faith through reading the Bible
4. Caring for everyone
5. Maintaining a peaceful heart

We hope that all of you will participate in the Mahrangan activities this year, and encourage everyone you know to join us in one of the greatest annual events, presented by our mother, the Coptic Orthodox Church.

May God bless Mahrangan Alkeraza this year and the efforts of all the participants and coordinators,

through the prayers of our beloved father Pope Tawadros II.

*My best wishes for a happy
Festival*
Bishop Moussa



VISION STATEMENT

St. Mark Festival envisions children, youth, and servants uniting with the Midwest Coptic Orthodox churches in order to grow closer to God and each other by having an opportunity to know Him better through spiritual lessons and activities.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is
to love one another, as Christ loved us,
and not let the competition get in the way of spiritual growth.



THE ANTHEM

The Light was there, at our old ways
And God formed His church, one and Orthodox (2)

To God we raise our eyes, who saw Him were enlightened
And if we seek our God, we will follow His footsteps

Our God is a kind Lord, caring for His flock (2)

Our Lord is sweeter than honeycomb
We tasted His beauty, love, and kindness (2)

We're His creation, saved by His will
My joy is that I'm made in His image

And when I sought Him, with love I found Him (2)

SPIRITUAL

Spiritual Lessons - Coptic Hymns - Coptic Language

ACTIVITIES

Choir - Drama - Multimedia - Video Clip

Musical - Research Paper - Creative Writing - Arts & Crafts

SPORTS

Basketball - Volleyball - Soccer - Ping Pong - Online Chess

For more information about Mahrangan activities please visit the Mahrangan website at:

<http://www.stmarkfestival.us>



IMPORTANT DATES & LOCATIONS

June 26th - July 3rd: Midterm Exam - Church Level

- Format: Online Exam (Spiritual Lessons, Coptic Language, & Memorization)
- Participant: All Grade Groups
- Type: Individual (at your church under servant supervision)
- Location: Local Church

July 17th - July 24th: Final Exam- Church Level

- Format: Online Exam (Spiritual Lessons, Coptic Language, & Memorization)
- Participant: All Grade Groups
- Type: Individual (at your church under servant supervision)
- Location: Local Church

July 31st - August 7th: Regional Exam- Regional Level

- Format: Online Exam (Spiritual Lessons, Coptic Language, & Memorization)
- Participant: All Grade Groups Up to top 5 of each grade group
- Type: Individual but Graded based on average score (at your church under servant supervision)
- Location: Local Church

July 31st: Due Dates for:

- Coptic Hymns*
- Creative Writing*
- Multimedia*
- Research Papers*

**Please refer to the guidelines for submission instructions at www.stmarkfestival.us.*

August 12th - Performances and Locations are TBD.

August 13th - Sports Day @ McCook Athletic & Exposition:

4750 Vernon Ave, McCook, IL 60525 from 10:00am-8:00pm.

August 14th - Performances and Locations are TBD.



MAHRAGAN ALKERAZA RULES

“He who heeds instruction and correction is (not only himself) in the way of life (but also) is a way of life for others.” (Proverbs 10:17)

Please remember this is a Christian competition and as such you are expected to act accordingly.

PARTICIPATION:

- Each person wishing to take part in the Mahragan must take the written Bible exam to be able to participate in other activities. There will be no exceptions to this rule.
- No electronic devices of any kind including cell phones or iPods will be allowed during the written portion of the competition.

ATTIRE:

- Modest attire is required at all times.
- Please wear appropriate clothes for the written exam, sports, and leisure activities.

BEHAVIOUR:

- No cheating
- No fighting
- No use of bad words or inappropriate language

PLEASE NOTE:

Any disorderly conduct that limits the other participants' right to enjoy a spiritual competition will be dealt with immediately.



Taste And See The Lord Is Good

In a world that keeps changing, we can trust in the word of God that never changes.

Spiritual life is about tasting and experiencing God. There's a big difference between hearing about what honey tastes like and actually tasting it! Even though Job heard a lot about the Lord, it's only when he saw Him that he said: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" Job 42:5.

That's also why David said: "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope" Psalm 16:8-9.

To truly taste and see the goodness of the Lord, we need to first believe in the Lord Jesus who resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven and will come again to take us with Him. Only then will we rejoice in God: "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" John 16:22. When the heart rejoices, the tongue also rejoices in hymns and praises. "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms" James 5:13.

This year's Mahragan theme will focus on the following:

1. Rejoice
2. Be complete
3. Be of good comfort
4. Be of one mind
5. Live in peace

1. REJOICE

The real joy of Christianity was granted through the death and resurrection of Christ and the hope of the eternal kingdom. Though we endure pain and suffering in our lifetime, this pales in comparison to the joy that we will witness in our eternal life with Him. This is why we rejoice. The Lord Himself said to His disciples: "I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" John 16:22. Also, as His Holy Spirit dwells in us, we have joy, since joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit.



2. BE COMPLETE

How can we be complete and grow spiritually without Christ? It's impossible! Our Lord is Perfect, as He Himself said: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" Matthew 5:48. This means that we should follow Christ's example of perfection. This can be done through:

1. True faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith is the bond that connects our weakness with the strength of God.
2. Baptism in which we die and resurrect with Him.
3. True and persistent repentance, striving against the world with its temptations, the body with its lust and the devil with his pressures.
4. Spiritual discipline: prayer, readings, and partaking in the Holy Communion. If we live without prayer it is as if we say we do not need God.
5. Service: Expressing our love to Him through our love for others.

3. BE OF GOOD COMFORT

The Lord was honest with us when He said "in the world you will have tribulation" John 16:33, but He also comforted us when He added "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" John 16:33. The world tribulation means what the heart cannot endure. This signifies that we will face persecution and pain during our journey on earth but we trust our Lord Jesus as He said to Peter: "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" John 13:7. Jesus asks that we follow Him not only to the mountain of Transfiguration but also to the mountain of Golgotha, to persevere during our sorrows to be worthy of eternal glory. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17. There is a big difference between light temporary affliction and the weight of eternal glory.

4. BE OF ONE MIND

As believers, our one goal is to witness for Christ and spread His kingdom in the heart of all people. St. Paul said: "for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" 1 Corinthians 9:16. Service is our duty not choice. It is our responsibility, not a privilege. Regardless of our weakness, God can use us. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." When we give God our weak and limited power, He adds to it His unlimited and glorious power.



That's why St. Paul continued his service until the time of his martyrdom with courage and honesty, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" 2 Corinthians 12:10.

5. LIVE IN PEACE

To truly live in peace, we must have peace with God, peace with others, and inner peace with ourselves.

Peace with God

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" Romans 5:1.

St. Paul explained this in details in Romans 8:28-30 when he said:

- "All things work together for good to those who love God"
- "To those who are the called according to His purpose."
- "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son"
- "whom He called, these He also justified"
- "whom He justified, these He also glorified"

Jesus restored peace between humanity and divinity through His Incarnation. He took what is ours and gave us what is His.

Peace with Others

Christianity calls all people to "live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" 2 Corinthians 13:11.

Confucius, the Chinese spiritual leader, taught his disciples saying: Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you. Our Lord Jesus teaches us to be proactive and initiate positive actions. He says, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" Matthew 7:12.

There's a huge difference between someone who does not hurt his brother so that his brother does not hurt him in return, and the one who loves all people and spreads the spirit of love and unity. "But through love serve one another" Galatians 5:13.

Our Lord Jesus says: "But I say to you, 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.

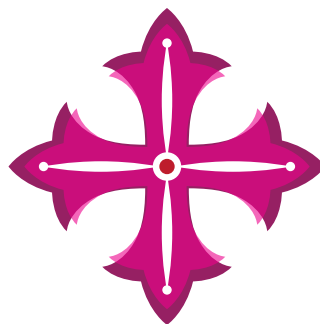
The devil seeks to separate while God seeks to unite. That is why St. Paul said: "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" Galatians 5:15.

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" Romans 12:20-21. "Love never fails" 1 Corinthians 13:8.

Inner Peace

There's always a struggle between the spirit and the body. St. Paul said: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another" Galatians 5:17. As children of God, we must "Walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the lust of the flesh" Galatians 5:16.

Walking in the spirit is a result of controlling our body! Christianity does not try to oppress the body in negative ways but rather focuses on strengthening the spirit to control the body. That's why as Christians, we fast. We control our senses which are the entrance of sin. We must train ourselves to act quietly and with chastity in all our actions. That's the key to inner peace.





The Book of John

Who is John?

- One of the 12 disciples (Matthew 10:2).
- The Beloved: the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 19:26).
- The Theologian: he declared Christ's divinity and recorded all the miracles and sermons that proved Christ's divinity.
- Author of the Gospel of John as well as 3 letters named after him and the Book of Revelation.
- His mother's name is Salome (Mark 15:40) one of the ladies that followed Jesus (Mark 16:1) (Matthew 27:56).
- His brother is James; they were fishermen as well as their father Zebedee.
- He was one of John the Baptist's disciples before he became the disciple of Jesus. (John 1:35,37).
- Jesus Christ entrusted him to take care of His mother St. Mary while on the Cross (John 19:21).
- He preached in Asia Minor especially Ephesus and was exiled to Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation.
- Some said that he died in his exile while others said he died 2 years later.
- He lived for 100 years and he is the only disciple who was not martyred.
- He wrote his Gospel in Ephesus around 95 AD.
- The symbol of the Gospel of St. John is the Eagle.

Why it was written?

The Gospel was written to prove the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ and to stand against three heresies, which denied the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Some people believed that the body of Christ was not a real body so he started his Gospel with the Eternity, Divinity and Incarnation of Christ.

The aim of the book:

The aim of the book is to believe in Jesus' divinity. Since the other Gospels discussed in detail the life of Jesus, there was no need to repeat it. The only two miracles that were mentioned in the 4 Gospels

are the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on the water (John 6:18-25). Otherwise, the miracles that were mentioned by St. John are not mentioned in the other 3 Gospels.

To whom it was written?

It was written to the whole world (John 20: 30-31)



Chapter 1

Definitions:

Cephas: solid stone (1:42)

Philip: lover of horses (1:43)

Nathanael: God has given (1:45)

Vs. 1-18: The Word became flesh

This passage is used for the Gospel of the prime hour. John explains that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; He is the only begotten Son and has the same nature as God the father.

Vs. 19-36: John the Baptist witnesses

John the Baptist was a successful servant who attracted many people including the Pharisees and the Scribes. Many went to John asking him about his mission and his character although they knew that Christ will come from the tribe of Judah and John the Baptist was from the tribe of Levi.

John the Baptist confessed openly that he was not the Christ.

"I am not the Christ." John 1:20

"Are you Elijah" – "I am not."

"Are you one of the prophets" – "No"

He said: "I am the voice" (John 1:23).

We can learn from John the Baptist that we must witness that Christ is our Lord and Saviour. If we taste and see Him, we can witness for Him. We must also be humble and not steal God's glory, but be proud that we follow Him.

Vs. 37-46: Follow me

When our Lord chose His disciples, He said to some of them: Follow me.

Andrew's response was: "We have found the Messiah" John 1: 41.

Philip's response was: "We have found the one Moses wrote in the law and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of Joseph" John 1:45.

Nathaniel's response was: "You are the son of God" John 1:49.

How do we respond to Jesus' call?



Vs. 47-51: Nathaniel & the fig tree

Jesus told Nathaniel that you are a Jew and not a Gentile. He replied: how do you know me? Jesus answered that he knew him since he was a baby under the tree. This story was not known to anyone except him and his mother. When Herod ordered that all children 2 years and under must be killed, his mother hid him under the fig tree. His mother only told him this story when he was older. While Nathaniel was the last one called to follow Jesus, he was the first one to declare Jesus' divinity.

Chapter 2: The Son of Man has authority

Vs. 1-11: Water & Wine

The first miracle was done by Jesus in Cana of Galilee. The power of this miracle shows God as the Creator, with His ability to create a new substance that did not exist before. We also see the love and care of St. Mary for other people and how she trusted that our Lord will accept her intercession on their behalf. The first miracle done by Moses was the transformation of water into blood in the land of Egypt. The first miracle done by Jesus was the transformation of water into wine.

Vs. 12-18: Jesus clears the temple

Jesus was sad and angry when He saw the courts of the temple full of animals and tables exchanging money. Jesus was very firm about respecting the temple. He cleared the temple twice, the second time being at the end of His ministry, four days before His Crucifixion (Matt 21:2). Would Jesus be pleased by how we behave in the Lord's house today?

Vs. 19-25: Jesus foretelling about his death

The Jews asked for a sign. Jesus answered, "I will destroy this temple and I will raise it again in 3 days". They were astonished by His answer, but Jesus meant the temple of His body, foreseeing His death and Resurrection.

Chapter 3: Baptism

John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus

"That joy is mine and it is now complete." John was very happy because he was successful in his ministry in preparing the bride (the people who followed Him) for her bridegroom (Jesus). He was the bridegroom's friend who brought his disciples to Jesus. He was not angry that people left him and followed Jesus. Baptism is necessary for salvation.



Chapter 4: The mystery at the well

The Samaritan woman

The church reads this Gospel on the 4th Sunday of lent. When Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, she believed that He is the true Saviour (4:29-42). The Samaritan people also believed in Him. Jesus declared in His sermon that He is the Messiah when He said: "I am He who speaks to you" (John 4:26). Jesus also declared that He is the living water. The Samaritan woman believed and her thirst was quenched. She loved Jesus so much that she became a missionary to all of Samaria.

Vs. 46-56: Jesus heals the nobleman's son

This is the second miracle done in Cana of Galilee. The first was at the wedding and the second was in a house full of tears. Our lord Jesus rejoices with the joyful, and weeps with the sorrowful to comfort them. As a result, the nobleman believed with his entire household (John 4: 51-53).

Chapter 5: The healing at the pool

The man was sick for a long time (38 years). Jesus said to him "Rise, take up your bed & walk". He is not only healed but he carries his bed and walks.

Jesus asked the man if he wants to get well to confirm his faith (John 5:60). There are two types of sinners; one who wants to repent and has faith that God will forgive him, and the other one who does not believe God can forgive him. This man's illness can be likened to a man living in sin.

This miracle was performed on the Sabbath. John also mentions other miracles done on the Sabbath: the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Chapter 6: The bread of life

This chapter talks about the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus explains that He is the bread of life that came down from heaven saying: "whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will have eternal life" (John 6:54).



Vs. 12-13: The miracle of feeding the 5000

Again we see Christ as God the Creator, because he created fish and bread from a few leftovers. This proves His divinity.

Vs. 14-21: The miracle of walking on water

First, Jesus fed his disciples, then he comforted them during the storm when He comes to save them walking on the water. We see that it's better for us to be amidst the storm and have Christ with us than to be in external calmness, but far from Him.

Chapter 7: The living water

The feast of Tabernacle

The feast of Tabernacle is one of the major Jewish feasts. The Jews celebrate it for 8 days in Jerusalem. It is called the season of the harvest, and it was a celebration commanded by God for the Israelites to:

- Remember the Exodus from Egypt: Everyone leaves their houses to remember the 40 years spent in the wilderness.
- Rejoice and give thanks: This feast marks the end of the harvest time, and thus the agricultural year in the land of Israel. The harvest begins with the Passover and ends with the feast of Tabernacle.

The Lord didn't want to go to the feast because they wanted to kill him and His hour had not come yet.

Vs 37-38: The Living Water

The lord compares the Holy Spirit with the living water. As water quenches our thirst, the Holy Spirit quenches our souls by filling us with the Word of God.

Chapter 8: Light of the world

Jesus asks the people to look at their own sins instead of judging others. They tried to catch Jesus in a trap with their question. Even though the Law was clear that the woman caught in adultery must be stoned to death, they still asked Jesus about what Moses said. They wanted to see if he would disobey the law or command them to stone her even though He has no civil authority. This is because the Roman Empire did not allow the stoning of adulterers, so that would make Him against Caesar. In turn, the Lord neither condemned her nor justified her, he asked her to repent and to sin no more. He



turned the question against them by asking “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”

Chapter 9: The Light came

This chapter also speaks about baptism. Jesus did not only heal the blind man, He created new eyes for him. Just like in the creation of Adam, Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with His saliva and put it on the man's eyes. He told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam, which represents baptism.

Chapter 10: The Good Shepherd

Jesus Christ emphasized that He is the only king and the true shepherd to His people. The watchman is the Holy Spirit who opens our hearts.

Chapter 11: The Life Giver

To Mary and Martha, Lazarus was dead, but to Jesus he was only sleeping. While the three other Gospels record two miracles of raising the dead, the miracle of raising Lazarus is only mentioned in the gospel of John. Jesus wept three times: at Lazarus' tomb, when He entered Jerusalem, and in Gethsemane.

Chapter 12: Jesus anointed at Bethany

So far, John spoke about three women that met Jesus in his Gospel. The first was the Samaritan women (Chapter 4), the second was the woman caught in adultery (Chapter 8), and in this chapter, Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Mary came with a bottle of pure Spikenard which was an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. Jesus said that she did this for His burial. This Mary is different from the sinner women who wiped Jesus' feet with her tears, mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. He then enters Jerusalem to start His journey to the cross.

Chapter 13: Washing the disciples feet

This chapter contains many important incidents on Holy Thursday:

- The disciples talked among themselves on their way to the Upper Room “who of them should be considered the greatest” Luke 22:24.
- Jesus washed the disciples' feet. According to Jewish customs, when they ate they would sit

and the servant would wash their feet. On this day, Jesus Himself washed the disciples' feet as a servant would to teach us a lesson about humility. "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13: 13-15).

- He washed their feet before giving them His body and His blood to show us the importance of repentance and confession before the Eucharist.
- Jesus told the disciples that one of them (Judas) would betray Him. St. John talks about the love in the heart of Jesus and the betrayal in Judas' heart.
- Jesus told them about St. Peter's denial. He knew Peter more than Peter himself, and told him "I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times." (John 13:38)

Chapters 14,16 and 17 are read during the first hour of the eve of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha.

Chapter 14: Jesus comforts His disciples

Our lord Jesus told His disciples that He will leave them but that they should not be worried because He is going to prepare a place for them and will send them the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) who will comfort them. Jesus also told them that they will have a strong relationship with Him and will recall His teachings through the work of the Holy Spirit in them (John 10:30-14:22-33).

Chapter 15: The vine and the branches

In the Upper Room Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples. Afterwards, they went to the Mount of Olive. He talked to them about the true vine and He told them that the branch cannot give fruit unless it is attached to the vine. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15: 4-5. We must bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit to prove to the world that we are His disciples, to glorify God and for our joy to be complete.

Chapter 16: The work of the Holy Spirit

After talking to His disciples about the Holy Spirit, He began talking to them about the persecutions and troubles they will face. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the



world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33. Our victory is through Jesus alone.

Chapter 17: Our Great High Priest

This chapter contains Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane when the disciples left Him and slept. He prays for all the believers "That they all may be one".

Chapter 18: The suffering Messiah

This chapter records Jesus' arrest and Peter's denial. Some of the points that were not mentioned in the other Gospels:

- When Jesus said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.
- The name of the chief priest's servant.
- The story of one of the officers who struck Him, and Jesus answered him "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well why do you strike Me?"

Chapter 19: The rejected King

This chapter records the events of the crucifixion and the burial. Some points that were not mentioned in the other Gospels:

- He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" John 19:26.
- The incident of the soldier who pierced Jesus' side. "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" John 19:34.
- Jesus said "I thirst".

Chapter 20: The Conqueror of death

This is the Gospel read in the Easter Liturgy as it contains some points not mentioned in the other Gospels:

- Two disciples who ran to the tomb on Sunday morning. John arrived before Peter but did not go inside. Peter arrived afterwards but went in first, followed by John (John 20:3-8).
- Mary Magdalene met Jesus. She did not recognize Him and supposed that He was the gardener (John 20:14-16).

- Jesus entered the Upper Room when the doors were shut (John 20:19).
- Jesus appearing to Thomas as he did not believe when the disciples told him, "we have seen the Lord" John 20:26-29.

Chapter 21: Events after the resurrection

Jesus did not call them to be fishermen but instead to be fishers of men (John 21:15-25). The miracle of the big catch at the Sea of Tiberias was only mentioned in the Gospel of St. John. In this miracle we see:

- Their failure when they tried to work alone (John 21: 1-2).
- Their success when they followed Jesus' instructions (John 21: 6-11).
- The fullness they received from the resurrected Christ (John 21: 21-41).

Jesus restored Peter. He asked him three times: "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" and Jesus told him "Feed My sheep" John 21: 15-19.

This chapter ends with the beautiful verse: "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen" John 21:25.





The Life of Josiah

Did you know?

- Alexander the great became a king at the age of 20 and invaded the world by the age of 33.
- Julius Caesar was a young man when he ruled 800 cities, invaded 300 nations and captured 3,000,000 from their people.
- Washington was a General at the age of 19 and an ambassador in France by the age of 21.
- Galileo was 18 years old when he started his inventions.
- St. Athanasius was only 20 years old when he was the hero of the council of Nicea.
- Josiah became king at the age of 8!!

Name: Josiah, meaning Jehovah heals.

Mother's name: Jedidah.

Father's name: Amon (king of Judas).

Number: 2 King 22, 2 Chronicles.

Tribe: Judah.

Guide: Hilkiah the high priest.

Language: Hebrew.

Although Josiah was young, he knew the importance of having godly friends and councillors. "Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" 2 Chronicles 34:1-2.

The life of Josiah

1. Josiah becomes king

Josiah became king when he was 8 years old. At that time, the kingdom was in a terrible state following the reign of two bad kings; his father Amon and his grandfather Manasseh who reigned over Judah for 55 years. Manasseh did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He built altars for the Baals in the house of the Lord. He practiced soothsaying and used witchcraft and sorcery. He killed

lots of innocent people. The king of Assyria took Manasseh captive and carried him off to Babylon. Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord, humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him. God heard his prayers and brought him back to Jerusalem and restored his kingdom. After Manasseh, his son Amon became king, and he did what was evil before God. Luckily he reigned for only two years until his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house.

Josiah became the king after his father Amon and reigned for 31 years. He followed all the instructions of Hilikiah the high priest who taught him the Law. He was influenced by Zephaniah the prophet and listened to his warnings of the bad things that would happen if they forsake God and do what is evil in His sight. His grandfather Manasseh also influenced him after his repentance. Josiah was exactly what the kingdom of Judah needed at that time.

2. Josiah seeks the God of David:

In the 8th year of his reign (when he was 16 years old), "he began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chronicles 34:3). This was the first step in the spiritual revival, which he started all by himself. "To seek God," means to resort to God and be with Him. He spent 4 years learning about God, about His laws and His commandments. He consecrated his life to God. He set a goal for himself to be serious in following God. These years had a great impact on him as he learned to trust God, to oppose evil and to return to God with all his people.

3. Destroying the idols (Removing the negative)

In the 12th year of his reign, being 20 at the time, he began a strong spiritual revival for his people and fought hard against idol worship. At that time, idol worship was widespread and was the prevalent religion in the kingdom of Judah for more than 70 years. King Josiah took on the task of cleansing the land of Judah entirely from idolatry in all shapes and forms (Asherah, the high places, altars, statues). He burned the pagan altars and statues and ground them into ashes so they would not be built again in order to eradicate idol worship from his kingdom. He resisted the idolatrous priests and executed them. He destroyed the high places originally built by king Solomon. He broke the altar at Bethel. He also destroyed all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made.

4. Restoration of the temple (Confirming the positive)

Josiah then turned to positive action, which was the restoration of the temple. The kingdom was in a very bad spiritual condition. The temple needed to be repaired and the kingdom needed restoration in terms of practices and rituals. He started to collect the tithes from the people and gave it to the workers (carpenters, builders and the mason) to purchase wood and stones to repair the temple. He ordered the Levites to watch the work to make sure it is done properly. Josiah did not deviate from God's ways.

From him we learn that we need to purify our souls before talking to others about God. Spiritual revival does not happen over night. It may take many years. We have to learn to be patient and persevere. The first step in our spiritual growth is to remove the foreign gods from our lives and stay away from customs and behaviour that are against God's commandments. We must not leave anything in our life that may take us back to them. The second step is to draw near to God through practice of the Holy Sacraments (Communion, Repentance and Confession) and other spiritual means (prayers and Bible readings etc.)

5. An encouraging message

The Lord wanted to encourage Josiah for all his good deeds. During the restoration of the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law, written by Moses. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe who then went to the king and read it before him.

When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. He commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, "Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

So they went to Huldah the prophetess and spoke with her. She said that indeed the Lord would punish the people of Israel because they did not follow His commandments, but she had an encouraging message for Josiah. She told them to tell Josiah: "because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD. "Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers,



and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.”

When he heard this message, the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Law that had been found in the house of the Lord. And all the people agreed to follow God.

After reading the Book of the Law, Josiah could have felt that these words were not for him, but instead he humbled himself and took these words personally. Many times when we read the Bible, we feel that the words we are reading are not for us so we do not act on them. We also must humble ourselves and take the word of God seriously and personally. We must also encourage our family and friends to come close to God, and pray also for their salvation as much as for ours.

6. Celebrating life with the Lord

On the 18th year of his reign, after cleansing his kingdom from all idol worship and restoring the temple, he commanded the people to keep the Feast of the Passover. Never had a Passover like this been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. He was very careful about all the rites of the Passover Feast. Josiah provided animals for the Passover offerings, a total of 30,000 lambs and goats and 3,000 oxen. He gave all of this from his own possessions. His officials also gave freely. They gave to the people, the priests and the Levites. Everyone did his part.

The Passover service was arranged. The priests stood in their places. The Levites were in their groups. The Passover lambs were killed. The priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them. The Levites skinned the animals. Those who played music were from the family line of Asaph.

Passover is a symbol of Communion:

They did not celebrate the Passover except after repenting and returning to God. It is not appropriate to celebrate the Passover in the presence of the altars of Baal and idol worship. Likewise, we must truly repent to be ready for Communion.

The Passover was celebrated in the first month of the year. The people left behind all the years spent in sin and renewed their relationship with the Lord. The Passover lamb was kept from 10th to the 14th

day of the month so the people had to prepare for it ahead of time. Everyone celebrated together and gathered around the Passover lamb as a symbol of the Communion of the believers.

7. The death of Josiah

Josiah died in battle. All the people of Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him and Jeremiah wrote songs of sadness about Josiah.

Although he was still young, Josiah wanted to have a good relation with God and when God saw his faith, He blessed him and did wonders by his hands. God is ready to use everyone young and old, sick or healthy, rich or poor. We just need to be faithful and ready to serve Him.





Book of Ruth

Introduction:

In the Bible, we find the book of Ruth between the book of Judges and the book of 1st Samuel that contains stories of wars, rebellions and punishments. But we find in the book of Ruth no mention of wars but rather a story of love, obedience and submission to God.

The transition from the book of Judges to the book of Ruth represents the transition from a troubled world full of wars to a church of love and peace from God, which surpasses all understanding. In the church, we meet Christ, the bridegroom of our souls, just as Ruth met Boaz. The book of Ruth is the book of harvest as it declares the entrance of Gentiles in the faith.

The book of Ruth is the only book named after a Gentile woman. In fact, she became the great grandmother of Jesus Christ. As a result, the genealogy of Christ included both Jews and Gentiles. There are only three women mentioned in the genealogy of Christ: Tamar the Canaanite, Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabite.

The contents of the Book:

The book of Ruth recounts the story of a family from the tribe of Judah that moved to Moab because of a famine in their homeland Bethlehem. In Moab, the husband (Elimelech) died but his wife (Naomi) did not return to Bethlehem. Her sons Mahlon and Chilion married Moabite women, the name of one was Orpah and the other Ruth. They lived there for about ten years until both Mahlon and Chilion also died. Naomi, having lost her two sons and her husband, decided to return to Bethlehem and Ruth decided to go back with her. Ruth, a Gentile widow, had no rights in the land of Israel but God had a plan for her and she married a noble rich man.

Ruth loved God not through scripture or teachings from the prophets but through the teachings of Naomi who presented to her the God of Israel in her day-to-day life. Ruth served her mother-in-law with love and became the grandmother of David son of Jesse from whose descendants came our Lord Jesus Christ. Ruth lived 10 years with her husband in Moab and did not have any offspring but when she left her gods, her people and her land and sought the Lord of Israel, God opened up her womb.



The acceptance of Ruth in the church of the Old Testament was a symbol of the acceptance of Gentiles into the Kingdom of God and the spread of the Gospel to the whole world.

The people mentioned in the book are:

Elimelech: a Hebrew name meaning God reign or my God is a king

Mahlon: a Hebrew name meaning sick

Chilion : a Hebrew meaning ruin or scanty

Naomi: a Hebrew name meaning my happiness.

Orpah: a Moabite name meaning neck

Ruth: a Moabite name meaning beautiful or truthful

Boaz: a Hebrew name means majesty.

Chapter 1: The world and the emptiness

Elimelech symbolizes the man who has a superficial spiritual life without depth, that's why Elimelech's life is unfruitful, sick and scanty so he left Bethlehem. On the other hand, Our Lord Jesus, the bread of life, was born in Bethlehem (the house of bread).

Verse 4:

God forbid His people to mix with the people of Moab because they worship idols (Deuteronomy 23:3-4, 7:3-4). But Elimelech married his sons to Moabite women, which is against the Law. Shortly afterwards, Elimelech and his two sons died.

Verse 10-13:

The Law states that if a man dies and does not have children, his brother or closest relative should marry his widow to bring offspring in his brother's name. Naomi tried to explain to her daughters-in-law that it was impossible for this to happen in their case. She did not mention the two close relatives in her land because she had not been in touch with them since she left Bethlehem long ago. She did not believe that they would agree to marry her daughters-in-law since they were Moabites. That's why she was trying to convince them to stay in Moab when she decided to go back to Bethlehem.

Naomi sought the benefits of her daughters-in-law more than her own. This is the love that does not seek its own (1 Corinthians 13:5). She loved them and addressed them as "My daughters".

Verse 19:

The whole city was moved when they saw Naomi coming back because they expected her to return with her sons and grandchildren. Instead, she came back with no one except her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

Verse 20-22:

Naomi left Bethlehem seeking earthly food, however she came back empty, even without her husband and her sons.

This is the same for anyone who leaves the Church (Bethlehem), and forsakes the true Bread of life (Jesus Christ) to go after worldly lusts. The world does not only leave them lacking, but also strips them of whatever blessings they already had, leaving them in a state of pain and need.

Naomi came back to Bethlehem at the time of the harvest where the fields were full, which is the same as when anyone returns to the church after they had left, they find an abundance of blessings for their soul.

We learn from this chapter the following:

- Not to look for fullness or satisfaction outside the church
- To witness for God by deeds not just words

Chapter 2: Christ and His fullness

Verses 1-2:

Boaz, in Hebrew meaning majesty and mighty warrior, was a wealthy man with authority. According to the Law, the Harvest leftovers was left to the poor and strangers. (Deuteronomy 22: 19-22). Ruth was not ashamed of working in the field. She worked hard and honestly.

Ruth the Moabite is a symbol of the church, which is filled with Christ. She was hungry for righteousness when she told her mother-in-law "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." Ruth 2: 2. God gives himself to every hungry soul.

Verse 3:

"And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz." This was not by mere chance but through God's careful plan for those who leave their burden to Him.



Also, Ruth never thought of going back to Moab because of the difficult times she went through, but she worked hard to feed herself and her mother-in-law.

Likewise, everyone who works in Christ's Vineyard, should not let any trouble bring him back to the world, as Christ will satisfy our needs and leave us with His comfort and fullness. We must follow Ruth's example, who left her home and her people and went to Bethlehem, to find Him who will feed her.

Verse 7:

Ruth was worthy of Boaz's good care because she worked hard in picking the leftover grains behind the reapers... "from the morning till now".

The work of Ruth in the field symbolizes the hard work of repentance, prayer and fasting. Because of her hard work, Boaz looked on her with compassion, just as Christ looks on the soul that struggles and perseveres.

Verse 8:

"My daughter"... This word shows his fatherhood and care for her. "Do not go glean in another field". Through our baptism, we became children of God and God as our Father will take care of us. Boaz's instruction tells her "do not go from here", just as Christ asks us not to leave the church until the end of the harvest (the end of the world). "Stay close to my young women"... God also asks us to have partnership with the saints and enjoy God's love and care.

Verse 9:

"Let your eyes be on the field". Boaz tells Ruth that there is no gain without work, but she is protected from harm.

Verse 10:

"She bowed down to the ground and said to him: "Why have I found favour in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" Every soul that tastes the gifts of the Holy Spirit will bow down and give thanks to God.

Verses 14-15:

"The vinegar" means fermented wine mixed with oil given for hydration and for revival. "Parched grain" means grains that are roasted in oil for taste. Christ in His love gave us His Body (grain) and His blood (vinegar) to live in Him.



"She sat beside the reapers"... The reapers symbolize the angels who will come on the harvest day and gather the faithful souls to God's kingdom.

Verse 16:

"Let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her"... Christ also gives us abundantly.

Verse 17-18:

"She beat out what she had gleaned" to separate the grain from the hay. "The ephah of barley" (about 15 kg) is the fruit of her work in Boaz's field. She worked hard then was filled with Boaz's love and compassion.

Ruth cared for her mother-in-law, she went back to her carrying many goods just as the Samaritan woman took back the words of Christ to her people in the city. We must share with our friends and family the blessings of God's word.

Verse 21-22:

Boaz asked her "You shall stay close to my young men until they have finished all my harvest". It is an invitation to have friendship with the angels and saints. If Ruth was to leave Boaz's field and protection (the church's protection), the wicked people (devil) could harm her.

Verse 23:

Barley harvest is the harvest of the Old Testament, while Wheat harvest is the harvest of the New Testament. At the end of the harvest, we will meet Christ the Bridegroom in heaven.

Chapter 3: Christ the Bridegroom

Verses 1-5:

"Wash yourself" (baptism), "anoint yourself" (Myron), "put on your best garment" (become renewed) "go down to the threshing floor" (work and struggle) "when he lies down that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go in, uncover his feet and lie down" (unite with Him and know His mysteries according to what He gives you) "He will tell you what you should do" (lead you through life) "Do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished", meaning, do not speak with him in front of the servants in the field (the private meeting with the Lord is in the inner room).

Verse 6-7:

"Boaz's heart was cheerful". He gave thanks to the Lord because he ate and was full.



Verse 8-9:

"Take your maidservant under your wing for you are a close relative". This was Ruth's request for marriage, as the Law commanded (Exodus 16:7-8). This also symbolizes how Christ protects us under His wings, but some reject this protection.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Matthew 23:37.

Verse 10:

"You showed great kindness" refers to her obedience to the God of Israel, her love and faithfulness to Naomi and her obedience to the Law by asking Boaz who is an older man to marry her to perpetuate (carry on) the name of the dead.

"At the end more than at the beginning." She preferred to redeem Naomi's inheritance rather than to marry any young man. Her bowing down to the ground is a symbol of the church which submits to Christ.

Verse 15:

"Six ephahs of barley" is a symbol of the blessings that we receive in our relationship with Christ. Boaz the mighty warrior is a symbol of Christ who redeemed us.

Chapter 4: The dilemma around Elimelech's land

Elimelech sold his land before going to Moab. Usually the land was returned to the owner or his inheritors in the year of Jubilee, and the owner must pay what is left of the price of the land. But Elimelech and his children died, so there was no one to inherit the land. In this case, the land would go to his brothers or to the closest relative. Naomi and Ruth did not own the land and did not have the money to pay the current owner to get back the land.

Therefore, the closest relative had to pay the owner to get the land. The first relative refused when he was told that in order to redeem the land he must marry Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance. He refused because in this case, the land will be Ruth's son's inheritance. This law was put in Israel so that the land does not go to strangers.



Verse 2-6:

"Redeem" the first redeemer is a symbol of the Law, which cannot save. He said, "Lest I ruin my own inheritance" as the land will go back to Ruth and her first born.

Verse 7:

"Taking off the sandal": meaning he does not have the right to step in the land as it is no longer his inheritance. The prodigal son was given a sandal by his father as a symbol of the return of his inheritance.

Verse 8-10:

Boaz declared in front of the elders that he will buy all what was Elimelech's and he will marry Ruth the Moabite. The Lord declared before the whole world that He will redeem our debts and take us as His bride. Our Lord bought His church with His blood to grant us eternal life.

Verse 11-12:

Ruth was accepted as from the people of God and was not treated as a Gentile. As Leah and Rachel are examples of God's people in the Old Testament, Ruth is an example of the Gentile church in the New Testament.

Likewise, Boaz took the blessings of the first close relative, just as the church of the New Testament took all the blessing of the church of the Old Testament and more.

Verse 13-14:

"The Lord gave her conception". In the Bible, children are attributed to the name of their fathers. But here, the child carried the name of his mother (Ruth) because as per the Law the child should be attributed to her dead husband.

Verse 16:

"Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom and became a nurse to him". Naomi's heart rejoiced, just as the heavenly host rejoices for Christ and His new bride.

Verse 17:

Obed, which means slave, will serve his grandmother. This is a symbol of Christ who became a slave for our sake. (Philippians 2:7). Obed is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Samuel the prophet is



the writer of this book. He wrote it after he anointed David to be a king to show David's genealogy. The book ends with the coming of David as a descendant of Ruth until the coming of the Son of David, Christ.

Conclusion:

The book started by a famine and ended with prosperity and fullness: "the coming of Jesus Christ".

Ruth did not have to do anything except ask Boaz to be her redeemer. It was him who arranged everything for her. All our Lord wants from us is to follow Him. He will comfort us, protect us and redeem us. Ruth found grace because she sought protection under God's wings.

Lessons from the life of Ruth:

- Courage: she left her home and her father's house and went with Naomi to bear with her all the troubles that she will face.
- Faithfulness: She decided to follow Naomi as a proof of her faithfulness.
- Obedience: She agreed to marry Boaz and did as Naomi told her.
- Noble woman: "all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11).
- God in his love has no partiality.
- God who worked in Ruth's heart is still working in everyone's heart.
- The believer's life has an effect on people and is used as a tool in the hands of God to attract the sinners. We must witness to Christ through our actions.
- God's care for us does not depend on circumstances.
- Elimelech who fled from the famine in Bethlehem died in Moab. If we leave the church to find prosperity, we will be left lacking and in need.

Tasbeha (Praises)

The word "Tasbeha" is a title given to several prayers and praises that are sung the night before the matin's raising of incense, as a part of the preparation for the Divine Liturgy.

The goal of this study is to know:

1. The importance of praises
2. Praises found in the Old and New Testament
3. Different hymns and tunes of the "Tasbeha"
4. The books and the terminology used in "Tasbeha"
5. The sequence of the "Tasbeha"

The importance of praises:

1. It is the work of angels and saints before the heavenly throne "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." Psalm 19:1 and we are the struggling church sharing with the victorious church in heaven in this work because we are all one body in Christ.
2. It has strong power to change bad desires and to sanctify the thoughts and the senses.
3. It is a way to hand down the right and perfect dogma from generation to generation.
4. It is a way to fight and overcome the devil

Praises found in the Old Testament

1. The praise of Moses and the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea.
2. The Psalms of David
3. The praise of the three Saintly Youth
4. The praise of the prophets and kings (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Elijah, Hezekiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Azariah, Manasseh, and Jonah). These praises are sung during the night of Apocalypse.



Praises in the New Testament

1. The Lord Jesus Himself was praising with His disciples Thursday eve as the bible mentions "And when they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives." Matthew 26:30
2. After the Ascension of our Lord, the disciples gathered for praises and for breaking of the bread in the upper room "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people." Acts 2:46-47
3. The praise of St. Paul and Silas while in the prison of Philippi, "but at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Acts 16:25

Different hymns and tunes of the "Tasbeha"

1. **The Kiahk tune:** This tune is used during the month of Kiahk all the way till the Nativity Baramoun.
2. **The joyful tune:**
 - a. All the major and minor feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ except Covenant Thursday.
 - b. From the Nayrouz feast (Tout 1st) until the feast of the Cross eve (Tout 16).
 - c. From Nativity (Kiahk 29) until the feast of Circumcision (Toba 6).
 - d. From the feast of Epiphany (Toba 11) until the feast of the wedding of Cana of Galilee (Toba 13).
 - e. The monthly remembrance of the feasts of Annunciation, Nativity, and Resurrection (29th of Every Coptic Month except during the month of Toba and Amshir).
3. **The fast tune:**
 - a. The Nineveh Fast.
 - b. The Great lent.
4. **Palm Sunday Tune:**
 - a. Palm Sunday Feast.
 - b. The feasts of the Cross (Tout 17-19, Baramaht 10).
 - c. The celebration of the angels, martyrs, and saints.
5. **The sad tune:**
 - a. During Holy week.
 - b. During funerals.
6. **The annual tune:** Used during the year with the exception of what is mentioned above.

The terminology of the “Tasbeha”

1. **Watus:** Coptic word that means the bush. It is the tune used on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
2. **Adam:** Coptic word that means Adam. It is the tune used on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays.
3. **Hos:** Coptic word that means Praise. In the “Tasbeha” we have four Hoses, which are praises taken from Bible passages.
4. **Lobsh:** Coptic word that means explanation. It is sung after the 1st and 2nd Hos and some of the Theotokias.
5. **Doxology:** Greek word that means glorification. It is said for the saints after the Commemoration of the Saints.
6. **Epsali:** Greek word that means song. It is sung before the Theotokia. There is a special Epsali for each day of the week as well as for the feasts and different occasions. It is sung in Watus or Adam tune depending on the day it falls on.
7. **Theotokia:** These are praises for the Mother of God Saint Mary. It comes from the Greek word “Theotokos” which means Mother of God. It is sung after the Epsali in Watus or Adam tune.





The church books used in “Tasbeha”

1. **The Psalmody:** This is a book that contains the “Tasbeha” prayers. There are two types of Psalmodies:
 - a. **Annual Psalmody**
 - b. **Kiahk Psalmody:** which includes Kiahk Tasbeha
2. **Annual Epsali:** This is a book that contains the Epsalis of each day of the week.
3. **The Epsali of the feasts and the fasts:** This is for all occasions in the Coptic year.
4. **Defnar:** This is a book that contains the stories of the saints of each day and a praise for each one of them.
5. **The Agpeya:** This is a book of prayers that contains the psalms that are prayed before the “Tasbeha”.

The segments of the “Tasbeha” and their sequence

1. **Ten Theno:** It is the first part of the midnight praise (Arise O children of the light let us praise the Lord of Hosts). In this praise the church calls all to arise from sleep and laziness to praise our Saviour who granted us life.
2. **Ten nav:** A praise for the resurrection. It is the second part after of “Ten Theno”. The church encourages us to awake from our sleep, and puts in front of us the resurrected Lord to enlighten our lives while we are still on earth. This part is sung during the Holy fifty days and the Sundays until the last Sunday of Hatour.
3. **The 1st Hos - Exodus 15:** It is the praise of Moses and his sister Miriam after they crossed the Red Sea and were saved from Pharaoh’s slavery in Egypt. It is a song of victory. The church puts it in the beginning of the “Tasbeha” because Pharaoh and his soldiers symbolize the devil, and as Moses saved his people by crossing the Red Sea, the Lord Jesus Christ saved us by His Cross. We crossed from death to life through Baptism, which is the first Sacrament and the key to heaven and eternal life.

4. The 2nd Hos - Psalm 136: It has 28 verses with the following chorus repeated each time (je pef nai shop sha eneh - which means His mercy endures forever). This resembles the 28 generations from David the prophet to Jesus Christ mentioned in the Gospel of St. Matthew chapter one. It is as if David the prophet is asking every generation to implore God's mercy until the second coming of our Lord. The joy of salvation and victory is transformed to a praise and thanksgiving for the new life and freedom that was given to us and the grace to be called children of God.

5. The 3rd Hos - Daniel 3

Deuterocanonical: After Satan was defeated by the cross, he did not stop to fight God's children. And as he tried to burn the three Saintly Youth in the fiery furnace, he continues to try to burn us with the fire of his temptation. As the Lord saved the three Saintly Youth, He is able to save us from Satan, gives us victory and help us to see the light of His salvation. The third Hos is the praise that the three Saintly Youth sang while in the fiery furnace.



6. The Epsali of the three young men

(Aripsalin): We sing to the one who was crucified, buried and rose. It is a song with verses written in the alphabetical order of the Greek alphabet. It reminds us of the work of God with the three Saintly Youth in the furnace and it is said after the 3rd Hos.



7. The praise of the three Saintly Youth (Ten o eh en sok): It is sung after Aripsalin and it is a part of Azariah's prayer (one of the three Saintly Youth) who prayed by himself in the furnace and it is mentioned in Daniel 3:24-25 (Deuterocanonical). It is said after the 3rd Hos and before the Commemoration of the Saints.

8. The Commemoration of the Saints: It is a praise for the saints, who by the power of the Lord conquered the devil and became our role models. We ask for their prayers and intercessions on our behalf before the Lord to help us until we join them in the Victorious Church.

9. The Doxology: It is a praise for St. Mary, the angels and the saints. We honour and bless them and we ask for their prayers on our behalf. The doxologies are also sung during the raising of incense. We have special ones for the fasts and the feasts, those are sung before the doxology of St. Mary and the other doxologies.

10. The 4th Hos - Psalm 148, 149, 150: Psalm 148 is a praise offered by all the creation to the Great Creator. In Psalm 149, 150 we invite all the creation to praise and glorify God.

11. The Epsali: It is a praise for the Lord Jesus Christ. In this praise we repeat the name of the Lord Jesus many times for He is a strong tower who protects us against the evil. Everyone who mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is holding a sword in his hand against Satan. Each verse begins with a letter in the alphabetical order of the Coptic Alphabet. The Epsali for the fasts and the feasts are sung before the Epsali of the day and their tunes vary according to the church occasion as previously explained.

12. The Theotokia: It is a praise that comes after the Epsali to honour St. Mary and the mystery of incarnation. We remember the prophecies about the incarnation and the symbols of St. Mary (the Mother of God). There are 7 theotokias sung in the tune of Watus or Adam.

13. The conclusion of the theotokia: It is a praise that brings forth in us the feelings of repentance and the confidence in God's mercy.

14. The prayers of (Efnoti nai nan): It is a praise asking for the Lord's mercy (41 Kyrie Eleison).



Memorization

Level 1

Lesson 1:

"If you see a man pure and humble, that is a great vision. For what is greater than such a vision, to see the invisible God in a visible man" (St. Pachomius the Great)

Lesson 2:

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15)

"All men are made in God's image; but to be in His likeness is granted only to those who through great love have brought their own freedom into subjection to God" (An Elder)

Lesson 3:

"There would be no need for sermons, if our lives were shining; there would be no need for words, if we bore witness with our deeds. There would be no pagans, if we were true Christians" (St. John Chrysostom)

Lesson 4:

"Whoever guards his mouth and tongue, keeps his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23)

Lesson 5:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27)

"God will not judge us about psalmody, nor for the neglect of prayer, but because by abandoning them we have opened our door to the demons" (St. Isaac the Syrian)



Memorization

Level 2

PRAYER OF THE NINTH HOUR

Psalm 110

Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. The works of His hands are verity and justice; All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. Alleluia.

Luke 9:10-17

And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge

and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." But He said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five



loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five

thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them. Glory be to God forever. Amen.

We worship You O Christ together with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit, for You have come and saved us.

The worshipper prays the litanies:

O You, who tasted death in the flesh in the ninth hour, for the sake of us sinners. O Saviour, put to death our carnal lusts, O Christ, our God, and deliver us. Let my supplication draw close before You, O Lord; according to Your Word give me understanding. Let my petition reach Your presence; according to Your Word give me Life.

"Zoksapatri ke Eiyoun-ke agi-you epnevmaty" (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

O You, Who commanded Your spirit into the hands of the Father, after being on the wood of the cross at the ninth hour. You guided the thief who was crucified with You to join You in Paradise; do not neglect me, O Good-One, nor reject me, I, the lost one, but sanctify my soul and enlighten my understanding. Allow me to be a partaker of the Grace of Your Life-Giving Mysteries, that when I taste of Your Goodness I may offer praise without lukewarmness, longing for Your Light above all things, O Christ our Lord, and save us.

"Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen." (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)



O You, Who for our sake was born of the Virgin, and endured crucifixion, O Good-one, and abolished death by Your death, and revealed the resurrection by Your resurrection; do not turn Your face, O God, from those whom You have created with Your own hands; but show forth Your love for mankind, O Good-One. Accept the intercession of Your Mother on our behalf, and save, O Saviour, Your humble people. Do not abandon us unto the end, and do not forsake us forever. Do not break Your covenant, and take not Your mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham Your beloved, Isaac Your servant, and Israel Your holy one.

“Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen.” (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

When the thief saw the Author of Life hanging upon the Cross, He spoke saying: “If He Who is crucified with us were not the Incarnate God, the sun would not have hidden its rays, neither would the earth have quaked in fear. But, O Almighty One, who endures all things, remember me, O Lord, when You come into Your kingdom.”

“Zoksapatri ke Eiyoun-ke agi-you epnevmaty” (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

O You, Who accepted unto Him the confession of the thief upon the Cross, accept us also unto Yourself, O Good-One, we who deserve the sentence of death because of our sins. We acknowledge our sins with the thief, confessing Your Divinity, crying out and saying: “Remember us, O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom”.

“Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen.” (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

When the Mother saw the Lamb, the Shepherd, the Saviour of the world, hanging upon the cross, she said weeping: “The world rejoices in that it has received salvation, while my heart burns as I look at Your crucifixion, which You are enduring for the sake of all, O my son and my God.”

St. Mark Festival 2016

Midwest Coptic Orthodox Churches

ILLINOIS

St. Mary - Palatine, IL
St. Mark - Burr Ridge, IL
St. George - Monee, IL
St. Mina - Champaign, IL

INDIANA

St. Mary & St. Mark – Indianapolis, IN

IOWA

St. Mary - Des Moines, IA

MINNESOTA

St. Mary - Twin Cities, MN

MISSOURI

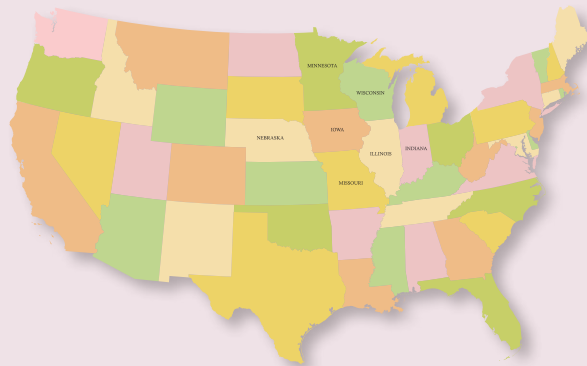
St. Mary & St. Abraam - St. Louis, MO

NEBRASKA

St. Mary & St. George - Omaha, NE

WISCONSIN

St. Mary & St. Antonious - Milwaukee, WI
St. Mary & St. Rewais - Madison, WI



If you have a question,
Or if your church would like to join the mahragan competition,
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