

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 He heard them, 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 He sent His angels and encamps all around those who fear Him, that they may see that the Lord is good; Blessed are the Lord, you His saints! There is no lack and suffer hunger. 8 Come, you who fear the Lord, let us see that the Lord is good. 9 Who is the Lord, that he may see making deceit. 10 Depart from Him, and do not pursue it. 11 Come, you who fear the Lord, let us see that the Lord is good. 12 Who is the Lord, that he may see making deceit. 13 Keep your eyes from looking at it. 14 Depart from Him, and do not pursue it. 15 The eyes of the Lord are open to their cry. 16 The face of the Lord hears, and He delivers them from all their troubles. 17 Rememberance of them from all their troubles. 18 And delivers them from all their troubles. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all. 20 He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. 22 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 5-6





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.

THE JOURNEY OF THE HOLY FIFTY DAYS

Ever wonder where the concept of Easter eggs came from? Eggs have long been a symbol of new life, and we often use eggs to symbolize the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Just like a chick comes out alive from an egg without anyone cracking the egg for it, likewise our Lord Jesus came out of the tomb while the tomb was sealed with the stone. He resurrected with the power of His divinity.

The Church celebrates the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ during the Holy Fifty days following the Feast of the Resurrection. Just like Lent is a holy journey that ends with the Feast of the Resurrection, the period of the Holy Fifty days is also a journey.

The First Sunday: Thomas Sunday - The Sunday of Faith (John 20: 19-31)

The Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room on the Sunday of the Resurrection, but Thomas was not with them. When the disciples told Thomas about the apparition of our Lord Jesus, he did not believe. So the next Sunday after the Resurrection, our Lord Jesus appeared to the disciples, this time Thomas was with them. He said to Thomas: "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." John 20: 27. And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" That is why Jesus said to him:



Memory Verse: "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

The Church calls this Sunday "Thomas Sunday" or "The Sunday of Faith".

The Second Sunday: Christ is the Bread of life - The Sunday of Satisfaction (John 6:35-45)

In the second Sunday of the Holy Fifty days, we learn how to abide in Christ by partaking in His Body and His Blood. That's why in the gospel reading of that Sunday, Our Lord Jesus tells us:

Memory Verse: "And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'" John 6:35



Our Lord Jesus Christ explains that He is the living bread when He says: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" John 6:51.

The Third Sunday: Christ is the Water of Life - The Sunday of Quenching the Thirst (John 4:1-42)

Just as the Lord fills us because He is the bread of life, He also quenches our thirst because He is the water of life. That's why the gospel read on that Sunday is about the Samaritan woman, and the conversation that she had with Our Lord Jesus, where He explains to her the source of the living water:

Memory verse: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst." John 4:13-14



Before her conversation with the Lord, she was spiritually thirsty because of her sins. After our Lord Jesus spoke to her, she believed and preached in His name. Likewise, each one of us who lives with the Lord Jesus will not thirst.



The Fourth Sunday: Christ is the Light of our Life - The Sunday of the Enlightening (John 12:35-50)

On the fourth Sunday, the Church talks to us about the light of our life, the Lord Jesus Christ. Man was living in darkness because of sin. Through His resurrection, our Lord Jesus forgave our sins, took away the sentence of death and renewed our nature. He moved us from darkness to light because He is the light of the world.

Memory verse: "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." John 12: 36



The Fifth Sunday: Christ is the Way - Sunday of the Way (John 14: 1-11)

During the entire journey of the Holy Fifty days, our goal is to reach eternal life with God. For this to happen, we have to be travelling following the correct way. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that He is the way when He says:

Memory verse: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

This Sunday is the one that precedes the Thursday of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus to heaven when the Lord ascended to prepare a place for us.



The Sixth Sunday: Christ Has Overcome the World - Sunday of Victory (John 16:23-33)

Our Lord Jesus by His Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection conquered death and had victory over Satan. He also gave us the power to conquer Satan when He says:

Memory verse: "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 faith in the Lord Jesus gives us joy and eternal victory. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:4-5

The Seventh Sunday: The Pentecost - The Descent of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26 -16:15)

Finally, Our Lord Jesus Christ promised His disciples that after His Ascension He would not leave them. He promised to send them the Holy Spirit who would comfort them and give them power to preach in His name. At the end of this week, our Church teaches us about being filled with the Holy Spirit. We received the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Baptism. A life of continuous repentance is needed in order to keep the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Our Lord Jesus promised and said:



Memory verse: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Acts 1:8

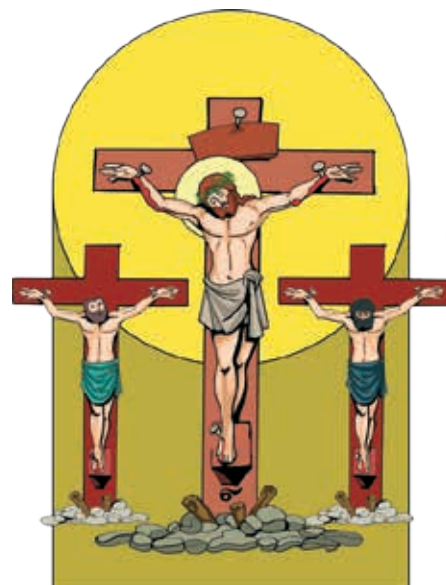
THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

After God created the world, He created man in His own image and likeness. His nature was pure and beautiful. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the death sentence came upon them and they were kicked out of the garden of Eden. They were separated from God and their nature was corrupted. As a result, all their descendants inherited the sentence of death and the corrupted nature.



But God, the loving and merciful, could not stand to leave man separated from Him. That's why He was incarnated, came down to earth and became man born of a virgin. He lived among us. He was crucified and died instead of us. He resurrected for our sake and redeemed us. He fulfilled and abolished the sentence of death. But most importantly, He renewed our nature and brought us back to the original image He intended for us.

For us to deserve this redemption, we have to be baptized, repent and confess when we sin, and partake of His Holy Body and Blood.



With baptism, we become children of God and our nature is renewed.

Throughout our life when we sin, we need to repent and confess to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Moreover, God gave us the Sacrament of The Eucharist for us to abide in Him and obtain eternal life.

The Sacrament of The Eucharist is considered the Sacrament of Sacraments. Through it, we unite with Christ and abide in Him and He in us.



Preparation for the Sacrament

Our Lord Jesus Christ prepared His disciples to understand this sacrament before its institution. This happened in the miracle of the feeding the multitude with the five loaves and the two fish. With this miracle, our Lord wanted to change their minds to seek the heavenly bread instead of the earthly bread. That's why He told them "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger" John 6:35. He also said to them:



**Memory verse: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."
John 6:56**

In the words of our Lord to His disciples, He stresses the fact that He is the true living Bread, essential for eternal life.

The Institution of the Sacrament

On the night of Holy Thursday, our Lord Jesus Christ gathered His disciples in the Upper Room at St. Mark's house. He instituted the Sacrament in front of them. He taught them the meaning of this Holy Meal that they were partaking in, and He taught them how to perform the Sacrament. Before He instituted the Sacrament of the The Eucharist, our Lord:

- Washed their feet to teach them that before they perform the Sacrament, they should be prepared.



- He took bread in His hands, blessed it and gave thanks. He broke it and gave it to them to eat and said to them "Take eat; this is My body" Matthew 26:26.
- He took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" Matthew 26:27-28.

With this, our Lord instituted the Sacrament of The Eucharist, which we also call the Sacrament of Thanksgiving. He told His disciples: "Do this in remembrance of Me" Luke 22:19.

As instructed by the Lord Himself, this Sacrament should be performed all the time, as this is the Sacrament of life. Every time they perform this sacrament, they would remember what the Lord Jesus did. This "remembrance" is a living memory. The Lord Jesus Himself is among them (and us) with His True Body and True Blood. It's important to understand that this Sacrament is not a symbol but a true transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

How to be ready for the Sacrament of The Eucharist

Before partaking in the Sacrament of the The Eucharist, we have to be prepared.

We have to be baptized and believe in the Sacrament and its importance for our eternal life.

There are two kinds of preparation

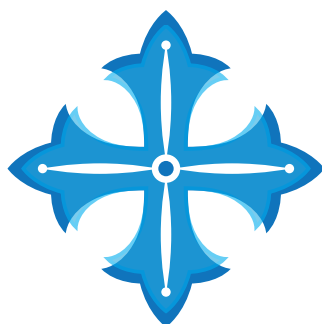
- Spiritual preparation: This means to come early to the liturgy before the reading of the Gospel. We must also come having already repented and having confessed our sins. We should be reconciled with everyone. We come with God in the centre of our thoughts, not letting our thoughts be distracted with things other than God. Finally, we come with faith, believing that what is on the altar is the true Body and Blood of Christ.
- Personal preparation: This means we come to the sacrament with a purified body and, having fasted for nine hours before communion. If we are not prepared, we must let the priest know, and with the wisdom given to him, he will decide if the person can be absolved to partake in the Holy Communion or not.



The blessings of the Sacrament of the The Eucharist:

Through the Sacrament of the The Eucharist, we receive the following blessings:

- Abiding in our Lord Jesus Christ: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56). Consequently we bear the fruits of the spirit, "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).
- Obtaining Eternal Life: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day... He who eats this bread will live forever" (Jn 6:54,58).
- Growth & Maintenance of Our Spiritual Life: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed... he who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (Jn 6:53,55,57).
- Salvation & Remission of Sins: "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28).
- Unification of Believers: "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor 10:17).



TASBEHA (PRAISES)

Praise is the heavenly language, not made with letters and words. Believe it or not, angels don't speak Coptic! Our church loves the Coptic language because it is the language of our fathers. Our fathers used the Coptic language in their daily life and in their worship. Everything about their faith is documented in this beautiful language.

Angels do not have a language like us humans, they have a heavenly language that we will learn in heaven. What we do know now is that praise is the work of the angels in heaven, and when we go to heaven, we will also be praising God, to offer Him our love and to express how joyful we are to be with Him.



Praise is a form of prayer done through hymns and psalms. It is a level of prayer in which we praise God for who He is and for all His goodness. Not all prayer is praise. The difference between regular prayer and praise is that praise has a tune that accompanies it. We sing praise to God. This is a sacrifice of love and joy. We offer ourselves to God with our voice as the verse says:

Memory verse: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

Another very important difference is that praise does not include petition. We praise God without asking for anything.

Praise can be done at any time. In the morning, before we start our day and even at night before we sleep, we praise God. Our Coptic Church set for us beautiful rites through which we can praise our Lord Jesus, such as midnight praise and prime praise.

MIDNIGHT PRAISE

The Midnight praise starts with a joyful hymn, "Arise O children of the light, let us praise the Lord of hosts." The church asks the congregation to join it on its journey. After this beautiful hymn, we start the journey to heaven.

The First Hos (Canticle) - Exodus 15: 1-21

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously!" Exodus 15:1.

The word "Hos" means praise. The first Hos is the praise of the "great salvation". It recalls the victory over the impossible in the story of the salvation of Moses the prophet and the Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt and their crossing of the Red Sea.



The crossing of the Red Sea is a symbol of baptism, which is the start of our life with Christ. This is why the first Hos is the start of our journey of praise. After the first Hos, we sing the 1st Hos Lobsh. The Lobsh is an explanation of the previous Hos, and it is a poetic piece to be sung in a long hymn and a beautiful melody. This is when we praise God for all His wonderful deeds, as He is the God of the impossible.

The 2nd Hos - Psalm 136

"Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His mercy endures forever" Psalm 136:1.

The second Hos is the praise of thanksgiving. In it, we offer thanks to God who saved us



from darkness and gave us the true light. He gave us salvation through the Cross. We thank Him for taking care of us everyday. Again, this is followed by the lobsh of the 2nd Hos, in which the Church invites all people to thank God "Let us give thanks, to Christ our God, with David the prophet, and psalmist."

The 3rd Hos (The completion of Daniel Chapter 3)

"Praise Him and exalt Him above all forever."

The third Hos is the praise of the three saintly youths in the fiery furnace where they ask all the creation to join with them in the praise of God and the blessing of His Mightiness. We sing, "Blessed are You O Lord God of our fathers, and exceedingly blessed and exalted above all forever."

Here the Church reflects about how during our journey with Christ, we will face trials and tribulations, but He will walk with us and the fire will be like cold dew. We trust that God is with us at all times to help us and comfort us, which is why we praise Him in the 3rd Hos for His great power that saves us from all tribulations. We then sing the hymn of Aripsalin, "O sing unto Him who was crucified, buried and resurrected."



The Commemoration of the Saints

"Intercede on our behalf, O the Lady of us all the Mother of God, Mary the Mother of our Savior, that He may forgive us our sins."

In the 3rd Hos, we feel the presence of God among us. When we have become involved in praising God and glorifying Him, we participate with the victorious church in heaven, with all the souls of the saints who have preceded us to the paradise of joy. We remember all the



saints and ask for their prayers and intercessions so that God may forgive us our sins. We trust that God listens to their prayers on our behalf.

The Doxologies

Doxology is a Greek word which means words of glory or praise. Doxologies are hymns of praise sung during the Tasbeha in honor of the season, St. Mary, the angels, the apostles, and the saints. We offer glorification to the saints and thank them because they support us in our petition to the Lord. We also remember their virtues and their struggles in their spiritual lives. Besides the doxologies of the saints, there are also doxologies for different Church occasions such as the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Resurrection, etc.



The 4th Hos (Psalm 148, 149 and 150)

“Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted.”

The fourth Hos is composed of three psalms that express our state of joy and victory. After we experience the joy of God’s forgiveness, the Church invites the entire creation to join us in praising the Lord.

The Psali

The Church then starts to call and bless the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psali is the Greek word for “hymn”. The Psali focuses on the name of the Lord Jesus, which is repeated in almost every verse. There is a Psali specific for each day and also for the different Church feasts, fasts and saints.

The Theotokia

Theotokia is a Greek word from the word “Theotokos” (Mother of God) in which we glorify the Virgin Mary. Pope Kyrollos the great (in the 4th century) established the Theotokias. We have



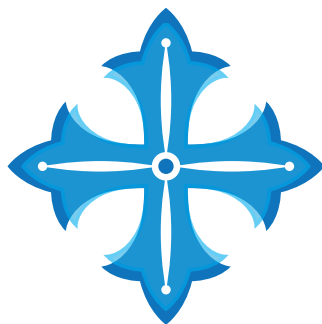
a specific Theotokia for each day. Here the Church sings about the mystery of the Incarnation, mentioning the symbols in the Old Testament about the Holy Virgin Mary and recounting the blessings that we receive as a result of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also have special Theotokias reserved for the month of Kiahk, in which we remember the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus from St. Mary and its importance for our salvation.

The Conclusion

We conclude the praise with the “Theotokia conclusion” followed by the conclusion of the Tasbeha “Kyrie Eleison... O God have mercy on us”.

Through the journey of the midnight praises, we obtain the great blessing of joining the angels in praising God in Heaven, to get a taste of what we will be doing in heaven.



THE PATRIARCH SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

(Synaxarium 2 Babba, 10 Kiahk, 14 Amshir)

St. Severus was born in the year 459 from Christian parents in a city in Asia Minor. His parents were wealthy as his father was a senator in the city. He had two brothers. After the departure of his father, his mother sent him and his brothers to Alexandria to complete their education in science, philosophy, Latin and Greek.

Afterwards, St. Severus went to Beirut to study law. He was very successful. Everyone thought highly of him and expected him to be a very successful lawyer in the future. He then returned to his country to work.



St. Severus grew in his spiritual life. He used to fast every day and spent most of his nights in the Church. He decided to go to Jerusalem to visit the Holy places. There he longed to serve God and wanted to become a monk. In the year 488, St. Severus went to the monastery of St. Leontius in Palestine and became a monk. He desired the life of solitude, so he left the monastery and lived in solitude in the desert dedicating all his time to prayer and studying the Bible.

Later on, because of his illness, he went to the monastery of St. Romanus in Palestine and stayed there.

Despite his illness, he was very active and urged the monks to give special attention to manual labor. Many predicted that he would be the protector of the true faith in the Church and that he will shepherd the people in Antioch and the world. He became well known and many priests and monks from the East and the West came to him with questions regarding dogma and Bible interpretation.



After a long time spent in the monastery of St. Romanus, he inherited a large amount of money. He donated part of it to the poor and used the rest to build a monastery near Gaza in Palestine. Many joined this monastery and became his disciples. He attracted many to the life of monasticism.

When the saint heard the hardships that the Church was going through in fighting off heresies, he left his solitude and went to defend the faith as he refused to accept any alteration to the orthodox faith that he received from his forefathers.

He wrote numerous letters to defend against wrong teachings that differed from the orthodox faith. He also opposed the wrong teachings in the council of Chalcedon that was present then.

At that time, the heretics claimed that the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ was separated from His humanity, which the Orthodox Church refuses entirely, as we believe in the one nature of the Word incarnate. This means that when our Lord Jesus Christ was incarnated, there was an absolute union between His human nature and His divine nature without confusion, without mixing and without change. Therefore, the Lord Jesus was entirely God and entirely man, possessing all the characteristics of human nature and all the characteristics of God; one nature fully human and fully divine.

When Jesus did miracles and taught the multitudes, He was doing this with the power of His divinity. When He hungered, slept and suffered, this was his human nature. When He was incarnated, He took flesh and became human like us in everything except for sin.



The two natures were united and never separated.
That's why it's called "the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos."

In the year 512, he was ordained as the Patriarch of Antioch under the name of Pope Severus.

Memory verse: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2Timothy 2:2



At the time of the ordination of Pope Severus, there was an alliance made between the two Churches, the Church in Antioch and the Church in Egypt. Both rejected the decision of the council of Chalcedon. The pope of Antioch would write a letter to the Pope of Alexandria to explain his faith and to confirm the orthodox faith that was received from the apostles. After his ordination, Pope Severus wrote a letter to the Pope of Alexandria stating his rejection of all the wrong teachings and heresies and confirming the orthodox faith. That's why both churches mention each other's names in their liturgies.

Pope Severus faced many persecutions because he defended the orthodox faith.

During this time, Emperor Justin I was the ruler of the Roman Empire. He did not believe in the orthodox faith. He issued a decree confirming the council of Chalcedon, persecuting anyone who did not believe in it. He asked Pope Severus to come and meet him. When they met, the emperor tried to convince Pope Severus to abandon the orthodox faith and to follow the council of Chalcedon. Pope Severus refused and he was persecuted to the point that he had to flee to Egypt. He stayed in Egypt for 20 years. During his stay in Egypt, Pope Severus never stopped shepherding his people by sending them letters, and praying for them.



Another emperor came after Justin I who followed his beliefs. Again, he called Pope Severus to convince him to change his faith. The emperor told him: "Are you Severus who disdains the

Church of God?" He answered him: "No, but it is you who left the true Christian orthodox belief that we received from our forefathers and in which emperor Constantine believed. You accepted the wrong belief and caused the world to be confused". The emperor failed to make St. Severus change his faith so he wanted to arrest him and cut off his tongue.



But Empress Theodora, Emperor Justinian's wife who believed in the orthodox faith, together with other believers convinced St. Severus to leave Constantinople and flee to Egypt again to strengthen his people. So he went to Egypt and stayed there until the end of his life. He was very humble. He dressed as a simple monk and went from place to place and from monastery to monastery. God performed many miracles and wonders through him.



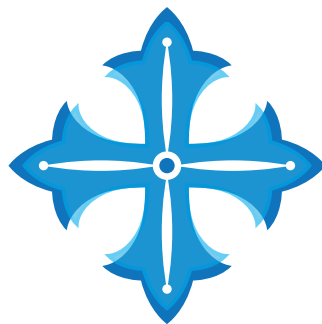
One time, he was in one of the monasteries in the form of a stranger monk and went to attend the liturgy. After the creed, as the priest was praying the prayer of reconciliation, something very strange happened.

The priest could not find the bread in the paten on the altar. The priest thought that this was because of his sins or the sins of his people and wept. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and pointed to St. Severus and told him: "You cannot pray the liturgy in the presence of the Pope". The priest went to St. Severus and took him to the altar with great honour and the bread was again found in the paten.



Pope Severus of Antioch departed in Egypt on 14 Amshir in the year 538 and was buried in the monastery of El-Zugag, North of Alexandria. Our Church celebrates 3 feasts for him. 2nd Babba to commemorate his coming to Egypt, 14th Amshir as the day of his departure and 10th Kiahk, the day of the relocation of his body to the monastery of El-Zugag.

The Church also mentions his name in the liturgy in the absolution of the servants right after St. Mark and before St. Dioscorus and St. Athanasius, because he was firm in the orthodox faith and rejected all the heresies despite all the persecutions that he faced. He preferred to be the simple monk who defends the orthodox faith rather than a patriarch who couldn't keep the faith.



THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

(2 Kings 4:8-37)

The Shunammite woman was from a city called Shunem, north of Jerusalem. The Bible did not mention her name but mentioned that she was a great woman. Her story shows how we can still have faith and spiritual life that help us to live in peace despite any trouble we go through.

The story starts in the Northern kingdom at the time of Elisha the prophet, who was Elijah's disciple. Elijah first encountered Elisha as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. Elijah asked Elisha to follow him and to become his disciple (1 Kings 19:19-21). After Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, Elisha became the prophet of God after him.

It happened that one day Elisha went to Shunem. It was on the way between Carmel, where he lived, and the place where the school of the prophets was. There, he met the Shunammite woman who persuaded him to come eat food at her house where she lived with her husband. They did not have any children.

So every time Elisha passed by, he would go to her house to eat some food. One day, she asked her husband to make a small upper room on the wall for Elisha so that whenever he comes, he can find a place to rest, for she knew that he was a holy man of God.

So they built an upper room and equipped it with everything Elisha needs. She did everything she can to take care of the man of God, which indicates the presence of God in her life. This is what made her live in peace.

One day that Elisha came and turned in to the upper room



and lay down there. He said to Gehazi his servant "Call this Shunammite woman". When he called her, she stood before him. Elisha said to Gehazi, "Say now to her, "Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" Elisha knew the king well, because when the king needed guidance during the war, Elisha helped him. However, the Shunammite woman did not ask for anything. She answered Elisha and said: "I dwell among my own people".

This shows that she did not have anything against anyone and was a loving person who lived peacefully with her people.

She was content with what she had, which is why she did not ask Elisha for anything. This gave her peace.

Elisha then asked Gehazi "What then is to be done for her?" So Gehazi told him: "She has no son and her husband is old."

He asked Gehazi to call her again. When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then Elisha told her "About this time next year you shall embrace a son".

She was rather surprised at Elisha's words and said to him: "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" But the woman conceived, and bore a son at the appointed time which Elisha had told her.

It happened one day that her son went out to his father in the field. There he felt pain in his head and told his father "My head, my head". So the father asked one of his servants to carry him to his mother. When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon and then died.

The Shunammite woman then went up, put him on Elisha's bed and shut the door. She called her husband and asked him to send her one of the young men and one of the donkeys that she may run to the man of God, Elisha.



Her husband said: "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon or the Sabbath?" These were the days when people would go to the man of God. She said: "It is well". She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Lead on; don't slow down for me unless I tell you". So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

Even amidst all her pain and mourning, she remained peaceful and went to entreat God.

When Elisha saw her coming, he sent his servant Gehazi to find out the reason of her coming to him at that time. He told him to ask her: Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child? She answered "It is well".

When she came to Elisha she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But Elisha said: "Let her alone: for her soul is in deep distress and the Lord has hidden it from me." So she said: "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say 'Do not deceive me?'" Elisha understood that her son was dead.

He said to Gehazi to take his staff and lay it on the child's face. But the Shunammite woman insisted that Elisha goes with her.

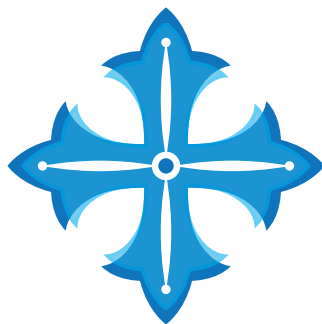
Gehazi went ahead of them and laid the staff on the child's face but nothing happened. He went back to meet Elisha to tell him that the child had not awakened.

Elisha came into the house, and saw the child lying dead on his bed. He went in and shut the door and prayed to the Lord. He laid on the child and stretched himself out on the child and the flesh of the child became warm. He returned and walked back and forth and again went and stretched himself out on him. Finally, the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. He called Gehazi and





said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came to Elisha, he said: "Pick up your son." She went in, fell at Elisha's feet and bowed to the ground to thank him. She took her son and Elisha went back to his place.





Memorization

Level 1

Lesson 1:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"

(Hebrews 11:1)

Lesson 2:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"

(Romans 6:23)

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12)

Lesson 3:

"Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name" (Psalm 18:49)

Lesson 4:

"If you would be victorious, taste the suffering of Christ in your person that you may be chosen to taste His glory" (St. Isaac the Syrian)

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7)

Lesson 5:

"Cleanse your mind from anger, remembrance of evil, and shameful thoughts, and then you will find out how Christ dwells in you" (St. Maximus the Confessor)

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26)



Memorization
Level 2

BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Books of the Law

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

Historical Books

6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. 1 Samuel
10. 2 Samuel
11. 1 Kings
12. 2 Kings
13. 1 Chronicles
14. 2 Chronicles

15. Ezra

16. Nehemiah

17. Esther

Poetic Books

18. Job
19. Psalm
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon

Major Prophets

23. Isaiah
24. Jeremiah
25. Lamentations
26. Ezekiel
27. Daniel

Minor Prophets

28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum
35. Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah
37. Haggai
38. Zechariah
39. Malachi



Memorization

Level 2

GOSPEL OF THE COMPLINE PRAYER

LUKE 2: 25-32

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Glory to God forever. Amen.

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

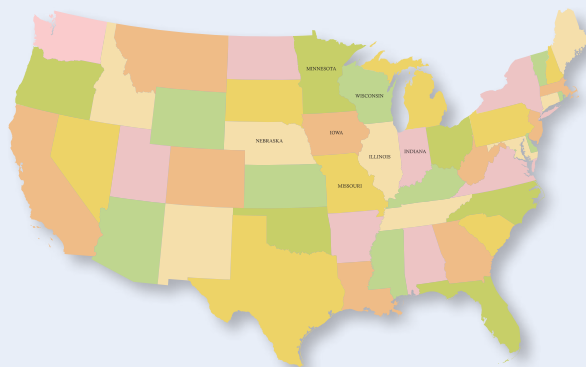
St. Mary & St. Abraam - St. Louis, MO

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,
Please contact:

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