



— THE —
LORD
— IS MY —
LIGHT



— AND MY —
SALVATION
WHOM SHALL I FEAR?
PSALM 27:1

College & Graduates

HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II



**118TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK**



The Lord is My Light and My Salvation

Table of Contents	Page
St. Mark Festival Anthem- The Lord is My Light and My Salvation	2
The Lord is My Salvation	3
The Mystery of Enlightenment- The Sacrament of Baptism	8
The Book of Tobit	10
Light in the Darkness- St. Habib Girgis	14
Predestination	19
Understanding Insecurity	23
Artificial Intelligence – Good or Evil?	26
Memorization	31
Coptic	33
Hymns & Rituals	41

Visit the St. Mark Festival's website at www.smfsus.org
to find the material for the festival and
for guidelines and information on the tests



The Lord is My Light and My Salvation

St. Mark Festival 2024 Anthem

Our God is eternal
Pantocrator, The Logos

All generations witness for Him
Tells of His might and His wonders

We're peaceful in His promises
We live by His commandments

Our Church fathers and martyrs
A life of Sacraments

My faith and my doctrine are glory
The Lord is my light and my salvation

Our God is One in Three
Redeemer and Holy x2

His creation gives Him praise
How this world His hands have made

Guided by His teachings
We seek Him and His blessings

Kept Tradition to this day
My Church unique and firm in faith

Unchanging the teachings and Holy
The Lord is my light and my salvation



The Lord is My Salvation

“**The Lord is my light and my salvation**” is this year’s theme of St. Mark Festival 2024. It is the first verse in Psalm 27, which was written by David, the prophet, while he was fleeing from King Saul.

His life was filled with the presence of the Lord and so his life was filled with light and hope. The Lord saved David many times, so he felt that the Lord was **his light and salvation**.

This Psalm is a declaration that the Lord is our light and our salvation. He guards the life of each one of us. He saves his children from enemies and enlightens them to attain eternal life with Him. Let us look at this year’s theme more closely:

The Lord:

Who is the Lord?

We believe in One God. God is a Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; three in One.

The Lord revealed to us that He is a Trinity in both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4) and the New Testament (1 John 5:7), which means that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in essence. However, each hypostasis (the three persons of the Trinity) is distinct from the others:

- The **Father** is unbegotten
- The **Son** is begotten from the Father
- The **Holy Spirit** proceeds from the Father



We learn these dogmatic facts about the Holy Trinity from our beloved Orthodox Church.

The Lord is My Light

The Lord is the True Light

- Our Lord God is light. He said: **“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”** (John 8:12)
- And in the first epistle of St. John, we read **“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”** (1 John 1:5)
- In the Book of Revelation, we read that St. John saw the Lord as **“His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”** (Revelation 1:16)
- In the Litanies of Matins prayers we say, **“O the true Light who gives light to every man coming into the world...”** and **“As the day light shines upon us, O Christ our God, the true Light, let the luminous senses and the bright thoughts shine within us...”**
- God is referred to as **“Father of lights”** (James 1:17) **“who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see”** (1 Timothy 6:16)
- The Lord is also the creator of light, He said **“Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.”** (Genesis 1:3-4)

It was His first creation for mankind, to be able to see and enjoy what God offers for him out of His love.

The Church teaches us to walk in the light of the Lord through...:

1. The Teachings of the Holy Bible:

- The Holy Bible is the word of God; His commandments, His promises. It was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When we follow the commandments of the Holy Bible we fulfill the commandments of the Lord:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

“Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you” (John 12:35)



2. The Liturgical Life of the Church

- The church is a spiritual lampstand; through her rites, we always see the church decorated with many lights and candles, which symbolize the Lord's presence.
- We see more candles lit especially during the readings.
- In the Sacrament of Baptism (the mystery of enlightenment), we are enlightened as becoming children of God.
- The father the priest says, **“Open the eyes of their heart, that they may be enlightened with the light of the Gospel of Your kingdom”** and **“make them ... purified vessels, sons of light, and heirs of Your kingdom.”**
- And In the Agpeya prayers we pray, **“enlighten our minds, our hearts, and our understanding”** and in the Midnight Prayer we say: **“enlighten our minds to understand Your life-giving words. Raise us from darkness of sin which ruins the soul.”**



3. The Life of the Saints is Light

- The Lord Jesus Christ incarnated and came to give light to the world. He then let His disciples reflect this light just like the moon reflects the light of the sun.
- He commanded us to live a life of holiness, **“Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)** the Church became filled with many faithful people whose biographies enlighten us as we read them in the Synaxarion every day.



The Lord is My Salvation

What is salvation? The origin of the word “salvation” comes from “to save.”

- When Adam sinned and transgressed the Lord’s commandment, the result of his sin was death. Therefore, he carried the sentence of death within him and all his descendants. Mankind became in dire need of a savior to save them from that sentence and restore them back to paradise.
- The process of salvation is an ongoing process that continues throughout the life of the believer.



1. Baptism



2. Confirmation



3. Repentance and Confession



4. Eucharist



Therefore, we do not agree with the notion of “I was saved on that day” or “salvation in a moment” which is adapted by non-Orthodox denominations, not for theological debate but from a true understanding of the process of salvation.

- HH Pope Shenouda III explained that as Adam’s descendants, we were in Adam when he sinned, and when he was punished and death entered his life, we were also in him. Therefore, we were born with his sin, and we carried his nature that was corrupted by sin. We received the same sentence as Adam, and we lost the divine image that man was created with. Therefore, we became in need of salvation from Adam’s sin, its consequences, and its punishment. St. Paul described this by saying: **“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.” (Romans 5:18)**



We need the Lord Jesus Christ Who:

- Saves us from Adam's sin, which we were born with.
- Saves from the corrupt nature, which is inclined to sin.
- Saves us from death:
 - **Physical death:** through the resurrection of the dead.
 - **Spiritual death:** when we have a living relationship with Him.
 - **Moral death:** when we become His children.
 - **Eternal death:** By entering the kingdom of heaven.

- Saves us from habitual sins, which can overtake our lives (thoughts, senses, relationships, etc.)
- Saves us from all sadness and worries through the work of His Holy Spirit in us according to His promise **"Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."** (John 16:33)
- Saves us from the attacks of the devil who wants our corruption, but we are confident that **"the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."** (Romans 16:20)



How are we saved?

- By the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation became possible. The Lord Jesus Christ is our savior and ransom. Therefore, there is no salvation without incarnation, and there is no incarnation without birth.
- The Lord Jesus Christ offered salvation for all sinners, all over the world, throughout all history. However, not everyone will be saved; only those who believe in Him and accept His gift of salvation.



How do we accept this gift of salvation?

1. **Faith:** Believing that salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ, our only savior.

"Nor is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12)

"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Believing that our great God was incarnated through his birth from St. Mary, was crucified on the Cross, died, and rose from the dead for our salvation. He also ascended to the heavens, sent to us the Paraclete, established the Church for us, and embedded the sacraments that are essential for our salvation.

2. **Participating in the Sacraments:**

(The first 4 sacraments are essential for salvation.)

- **Baptism:** "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16)
- **Confirmation (Myron):** "But you have an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20) to make us a temple for the Holy Spirit.
- **Repentance and Confession:** "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)
- **Eucharist:** "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (John 6:56)

- **Unction of the Sick:** “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15)
- **Matrimony:** The Holy Matrimony between one man and one woman as the Lord intended with holiness and purity to establish a family is a Holy Sacrament where the Holy Spirit comes upon the bride and groom to make the two of them one flesh “**This is a great mystery**” (Ephesians 5:32) therefore we do not accept any other form of relationship as “marriage.”
- **Priesthood:** The fathers, the bishops, and the priests are the ministers of the mysteries of salvation. The Church chooses them to pastor the people, teach them, and administer the Holy Sacraments.
“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”
(1 Corinthians 4:1)



3. **Good works:** Good works are essential for our salvation; they show the truthfulness of our faith and its fruit. **“faith without works is dead”** (James 2:20)

“Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”
(James 2:18)

We thank our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and the savior of our souls for making salvation possible and giving us power, hope, peace, and comfort.

May the Lord bless this year’s St. Mark Festival to be fruitful, fulfilling, and help us to grow in faith to become fruitful vines in the Lord’s vineyard.

May He fill our lives with goodness to dedicate our lives to Him and witness to His holy name.

The Mystery of Enlightenment

The Sacrament of Baptism

- Baptism is the mystery of enlightenment. It is one of the 'redemptive' sacraments of the Church: **Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance and Confession, and Eucharist.**
- Through it we can see the Divine Light and be saved from sin and death.
- On the sixth Sunday of the Great Fast, we read about the man born blind; the miracle of the Lord Jesus Christ healing the man born without eyes (John 9). This same Sunday is also known as 'Baptism Sunday'. Many Christians like to baptize their children on this day.
- Historically, the catechumens of the Church learn the faith and prepare to get baptized on the sixth Sunday of the Great Fast so that they can celebrate the Holy Pascha Week as members of the Body of Christ.
- Just as the man born blind couldn't see light without Christ creating eyes for him. We also cannot see spiritual light without the renewal and rebirth through baptism.



Baptism has an Essential Role in Our Salvation

1. Baptism is the Death of Our Sinful Nature:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16)

- **"The wages of sin is death."** When Adam sinned, death entered into the world. Sin corrupted Adam's nature and accordingly, we were all born with Adam's sin and its consequences of corrupt nature and the sentence of death.
- This is because we were part of Adam when his nature got corrupted.
- This corrupt nature is manifested in being inclined to sin. It is easy for us to sin, while holiness and righteousness require striving.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to grant us salvation.
- To participate in Christ's salvation: We have to 'die' **"for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)** and get 'resurrected' with a new life in Christ.
- This death and resurrection is accomplished through baptism **"therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death." (Romans 6:4)**
- In it we are submerged in the Holy Water of the baptismal font to represent our death and burial as well as the rebirth by the Holy Spirit.



2. Baptism is Rebirth:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

- Through baptism we are reborn spiritually as sons of God, we are adopted onto God as true sons, through the work of the Holy Spirit. **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)**
- We are renewed from within, and we gain victory over death.
- Baptism precedes the Sacrament of Confirmation, in which we become a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit and a Temple of God **"do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)**
- Baptism is called **'The Door of Sacraments'**, a person cannot participate in any of the sacraments without being baptized first.

3. Baptism is Renewal of Our Nature:

“According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5)



- In baptism, we are renewed. God’s image in us, which was corrupted when Adam sinned, is restored to its original image.
- During the prayers of the Baptism, the priest refers to our Lord Jesus Christ as the **“Physician of our nature”** The priest says, **“Therefore, O Lord, You have purified our nature and have delivered us through an inward personal reconciliation in mystical and real fellowship (His incarnation).”**
- This is done according to His mercy. Meaning that we do not have to work for it. It’s completely free through God’s grace.
- That’s why we allow children to receive baptism; just as children received circumcision in the Old Testament, which was a symbol of baptism.

4. Baptism Opens the Door to Righteousness:

“Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” (Romans 6:11-13)

- In baptism, we can begin to live a righteous life. Through it we are dead to the world and the world is dead to us. This righteousness, however, is not ours and cannot be accomplished by us. Rather it is Christ’s righteousness accomplished only through His blood.
- In the prayers of Baptism, the priest asks the Lord saying **“[Make them] purified vessels, sons of light, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven ... that they may strive according to the commandments of Christ.”**
- While we make the newly baptized person wear white as a symbol of purity and righteousness, we also put a red ribbon on them to represent that this can only be accomplished in Christ through His life-saving blood.

5. Baptism is a Covenant with God:

“I renounce you Satan, and all your unclean works and all your wicked angels and all your evil demons . . . I confess You, O Christ my God, and all Your saving laws, and all Your living service, and all Your life giving works.” (Rites of Baptism)

- Covenants in the Old Testament were made in blood to represent that whoever breaks them will surely die.
- In baptism, we enter into an eternal covenant with God in which He is the one who pays the price of our sins on the cross.
- In Genesis 15, we see a promise of this; God makes a covenant with Abraham, but instead of both of them walking on the blood of the sacrificed animals, God makes Abraham fall asleep and He walks alone to illustrate that He is the one Who pays the price of our failure.
- This promise is fulfilled on the Cross and this covenant is established with each one of us individually in baptism.

In summary we see that Baptism is essential as it gives us forgiveness of sins, a new birth, renews our nature, salvation, through it we received adoption, and we become members of the Body of Christ. It restores God’s image within us for the salvation of our souls.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

The Book of Tobit

Introduction:

- The Book of Tobit is one of the Deuterocanonical books, which the Orthodox church considers as part of the Old Testament.
- These books were written by the Jews in the exile after the time of Ezra and were included in the Septuagint translation of the Bible and many other early translations of the Bible, including the first Coptic translation.
- On the sixth Friday of the Great Fast, we read the entire Book of Tobit. The following Sunday, known as Enlightenment Sunday, we read the Gospel of the man born blind (John 9:1-38). Both readings speak about God healing blindness and granting us sight and enlightenment.

Author and Date:

- Tobit and his son Tobias (Tobit 12:6-7). It was written between the fourth and second centuries BC.

Major Theme:

- The Book of Tobit tells the story of a father who sends his only son into the world to find his bride, save her, and bring her back.
- It illustrates God's work in bringing humanity out of the darkness and spiritual blindness of sin and death, and into the glorious light of Christ.
- It is a story of salvation and enlightenment.

Main Characters:

- **Tobit:** The main character. The name Tobit means "The Lord is good." Tobit is a righteous individual known for his acts of burying the dead.
- **Anna:** Tobit's wife and Tobias's mother.
- **Tobias:** Tobit's son. Tobias symbolizes Christ in the story. Tobias comes to heal his father's blindness, mirroring how the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of Adam, came to heal humanity's spiritual blindness.
- **Sarah:** Symbolizes the Church and the bride of Christ. She is the only daughter of Raguel and Anna. They live in Rages.
- **Archangel Raphael:** Who disguised himself as Azariah, accompanied Tobias on his journey. Azariah's name means "God helps".



Chapter 1: Tobit's Life Before the Exile, His Early Days in Nineveh

Tobit, a devout Israelite living in Nineveh during the Assyrian exile, exemplifies several virtues.

- Despite the king's orders, he performs charitable acts like burying the dead.
- Tobit faithfully offers his first fruits and tithes. He teaches his son Tobias to fear God and avoid sin.
- Tobit serves as a model of faithfulness and virtue, reminding us to remain loyal to God even in difficult times.
 - Tobit was favored by Shalmaneser the king, who granted him freedom to practice his beliefs and gave him ten talents of silver. Tobit lent this money to Gabael. After King Shalmaneser's death, his son Sennacherib became king and persecuted the Israelites. Tobit and Anna buried the dead secretly, risking their lives. When King Sennacherib learned of their actions, Tobit and his family fled the city. They returned only after King Sennacherib's death.

Chapter 2: The Charitable Tobit Becomes Blind

- Tobit was faithful and honest in his service, which included helping, feeding, caring for others, and burying the dead. One day, while sleeping outside, bird droppings fell into his eyes, causing him to lose his sight.
 - God permits trials for a purpose and according to His own will.
 - The bird droppings that fell into Tobit's eyes caused his blindness, symbolizing the blinding effect of devilish thoughts, similar to how Adam was spiritually blinded by sin.
- Despite this trial, Tobit received it with thanksgiving to God, without complaints or discouragement. He remained steadfast in his faith before God, despite rebukes from his family and friends, keeping his eyes on God.

Chapter 3: Tobit and Sarah's Prayers

- **Tobit's prayer for help. (Tobit 3:1-7)**
 - In his prayer, Tobit acknowledges the righteousness of the Lord and reflects on His works. Tobit has faced numerous trials, including being taken captive and sent to Nineveh, persecuted by King Sennacherib, suffering from blindness, and enduring rebukes from friends and relatives for his unwavering hope and faith in God.
- **Sarah's prayer. (Tobit 3:7-25)**
 - Sarah faced her tribulations with prayer and fasting as her response.
 - In her prayer, Sarah listed three reasons why God permits tribulations: to receive a crown in heaven, to deliver us and witness His glory, and to correct and instruct us for our sins in order to receive His mercy.

Chapter 4: Tobit Instructs Tobias

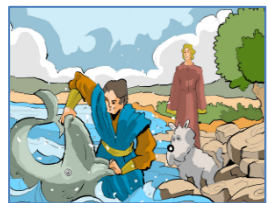
- Tobit gives his son Tobias advice on how to live a righteous life. He instructs Tobias to honor God, to be mindful of his heritage, to avoid sin, to give to the needy, and to marry a woman from their own people. Tobit emphasizes the importance of following God's commandments and living a virtuous life.
- **"Set out your bread and your wine at the burial of a just man" (Tobit 4:18)**, symbolizing the sacrament of the Eucharist. The burial of a just man represents Christ on the altar and the bread and wine represents the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5: Obedience of Tobias

- Tobit sends his son Tobias on a journey to retrieve money he had deposited in a distant land. Tobit instructs Tobias on how to find a trustworthy companion for the journey, and Tobias sets out with Archangel Raphael, who is disguised as a man named Azariah.

Chapter 6: The Journey to Rages

- Tobias and Azariah (Archangel Raphael) set out on their journey, during which Tobias is attacked by a large fish. Azariah advises Tobias to take the fish's gallbladder, heart, and liver, as they will be useful later. As they travel, they went to Raguel's house and meet Sarah, Raguel's daughter, who has been married seven times, with each husband being killed by a demon on their wedding night.
- Azariah instructs Tobias on using the fish's heart to drive away the demon and to pray for three days. The first night is to drive away demons, the second night is to unite with the righteous, and the third night is to receive blessings and children.



- The big fish in Tobias's story can be symbolically linked to Satan, representing the forces of evil. Just as Christ defeated Satan through His death and resurrection, Tobias defeated the big fish.
 - **Flesh of the fish** (for food) = Eucharist
 - **Heart and liver of the fish** (to drive away demons) = Christ restrained Satan by His death on the cross
 - **Fish's gallbladder** (for healing the blindness) = enlightening us, healing us from sin and providing salvation
- The three days (Tobit 6:19-22):
 - **First night:** Good Friday, our Lord Jesus Christ defeated Satan.
 - **Second night:** Bright Saturday, our Lord Jesus Christ descended to Hades to rescue the souls of the righteous.
 - **Third night:** Resurrection Sunday, our Lord Jesus Christ gives us new life.

Chapter 7 & 8: Tobias and Sarah are Married

- Despite fears that Tobias would die as Sarah's previous husbands died, Tobias follows Archangel Raphael's instructions and uses the fish's heart and liver to drive away the demon. Tobias and Sarah pray for God's blessing and protection for three days, and their marriage is celebrated joyously.
- After Tobias and Sarah's marriage, everyone thought Tobias died. However, they continued to pray for three nights, resembling the death of Christ and His resurrection after three days.
- Tobias' journey to Rages can be seen as a parallel to Christ's time in the world. Both journeys involve challenges and trials, but ultimately lead to redemption and salvation. Tobias's experiences mirror aspects of Christ's life, highlighting his role as a type of Christ in the story.
- Sarah is seen as a representation of the Church, symbolizing His bride. God saved the Church after **7 trials**, symbolized by His covenants with **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David**.
- In the early centuries, the Sacrament of Matrimony was conducted during the Divine Liturgy on Saturday. The married couple would then continue praying for three days by attending the Divine Liturgy on Sunday and going to the monastery on Monday. This practice mirrors the 3 days of prayer that Tobias and Sarah observed to be joined to God and on the fourth day, they could be joined together.



Chapter 9: Gabael Returns the Silver

- Tobias requested Azariah (Archangel Raphael) to find Gabael and bring him, along with the ten talents of silver, to the wedding feast. Gabael attended Tobias and Sarah's wedding and prayed for God's blessings on their marriage.



Chapter 10: Anna, Tobias' Mother's Distress

- Tobit and Anna were anxious about Tobias's delayed return. Sensing their concern, Tobias decides to return with Sarah to his parents, realizing they must be deeply worried about him.
- Sarah's parents give her important instructions: to honor her parents-in-law, love her husband, guide the family, manage the household, and conduct herself with irreproachable and blameless behavior.

Chapter 11: Tobit's Blindness is Healed

- Tobias returns home with Sarah and the wealth he acquired. Tobit, who was blind, is overjoyed that his son and daughter-in-law returned safely. Following Azariah's (Archangel Raphael's) instructions, Tobias first thanks God upon entering his house. He then uses the gall of the fish to anoint Tobias's eyes, healing his blindness.
- This act parallels the story of the man born blind, illustrating how the healing of physical blindness symbolizes the healing of spiritual blindness and enlightens us to see God. Tobit and Tobias praise God for His mercy and for reuniting them as a family.



Chapter 12: Archangel Raphael Reveals His Identity

- Archangel Raphael reveals himself as an angel sent by God to assist Tobias. He explains that God has heard Tobit's prayers and has sent him to aid and heal them. Archangel Raphael explains that his mission was driven by God's love, and Tobit's acts of charity have been pleasing to God. Tobit, Anna, Tobias, and Sarah express their gratitude and praise God for His goodness.



Chapter 13 & 14: Tobit Praises God and His Final Words to Tobias

- Tobit offers a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God and advises his son Tobias to leave Nineveh, as God will soon bring destruction upon the city due to its sins.
- Tobit prophesies that after a period of desolation, God will restore His people and show mercy to those who repent. Tobit dies peacefully, and Tobias buries him honorably. Tobias then inherits Tobit's wealth and lives a long, prosperous life, praising God for His goodness.

"Yet, for all the days of your life, have God in your mind."

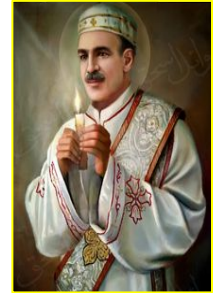
(Tobit 4:6)



Light in the Darkness

St. Habib Girgis

“The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light” and there was light... this light was Habib Girgis!



These profound words were said by the thrice blessed HH Pope Shenouda III in the 40th year commemoration of the departure of the great saint and Christian educator, and founder of the Sunday School movement, the Archdeacon St. Habib Girgis.

On June 20, 2013, the Holy Synod canonized St. Habib Girgis as a saint in the Coptic Orthodox Church based on the holiness of his life and his massive contribution to the Coptic Orthodox education.

Through direct discipleship or indirect influence, all generations following St. Habib Girgis have learned how to contribute to the revival of patristic theology and benefit from its treasures.

“If it wasn’t for Habib Girgis we wouldn’t have been here, and we wouldn’t have had knowledge or education”, said HH Pope Shenouda III remembering St. Habib Girgis.

He was an exemplary servant who dedicated his life to his calling and the service he was entrusted with. Let us review his life story and contemplate on his virtues.

Childhood and Early Life

- He was born in 1876. His father departed when he was 6 years old. His mother raised him and enrolled him in a Coptic school for high school.
- The Church recognized the dire need for a theological seminary.
- When Habib Girgis was about to graduate from high school, five students were chosen from the Coptic school as well as five priests to be the first ten students at the Theological Seminary. The first student chosen was Habib Girgis and he was the first to graduate.

The Theological Seminary

- The Church appointed Youssef Mankaryous as the first dean. Fr. Philithaos Ibrahim was asked to move from Tanta to Cairo to teach religion (the seminary's first and only class) although he was not in good health.
- While Fr. Philithaos was teaching he lost conscience and became bedbound, leaving the Seminary without a teacher. Habib was chosen to teach in his place. He was in his last year as a student and teaching in the first year at the same time.
- He became the first professor of theology and homiletics in the seminary. He excelled in preaching and teaching. He was the highest-ranking graduate of the seminary’s first graduating class of 1898.
- In 1918, he became the dean of the Theological Seminary until he departed.



Reviving the Theological Seminary

- At the young age of 22, Habib Girgis felt the responsibility to reform and rebuild the Theological Seminary so that it becomes a pillar of education in the Coptic Church.
- Reviving the Theological Seminary was not an easy task; there were no students, no teachers, and no facilities to be used.
- He raised funds to buy land and to build facilities.
- He traveled all over Egypt teaching and giving sermons. He also collected donations to rebuild the Theological Seminary.
- His focus was not only to get the Seminary up and running, but he was also concerned with advancing its level of education to receive accreditation and get recognized by the Egyptian Education Department.
- In 1946, Habib Girgis established the evening seminary for university graduates. Many leaders of Sunday Schools from the churches in Cairo and Giza enrolled.
- Then he established a program for those who had already graduated college. Pope Shenouda (Nazir Gayed) was a student of its first class - the class had only 5 students.
- He also established a branch for the cantors in the church.
- Finally in 1948, the Egyptian Ministry of Education officially recognized graduation from the Coptic Theological Seminary as equivalent to a bachelor's degree.
- He was not only concerned with the Theological Seminary, but the educational system in the Church as a whole.

The Sunday School Movement

- In 1898, the Holy Synod issued a statement about the importance of religious education for youth and children.
- In the same year, Habib established a curriculum for teaching children in churches and it was based on questions and answers.
- In the year 1900, he established the first Sunday School class. When the youth in that class graduated, they went out and began teaching Sunday School classes.
- The year 1918 was the formal establishment of the Sunday School movement with the formation of a central Sunday School committee. He then established unified curriculums for Sunday School.
- In the 1920's, the Sunday School movement gained momentum and became stronger.
- In the 1930's, the movement became widely spread throughout Egypt under the guidance of Habib Girgis. He was the general coordinator of all of Sunday School throughout Egypt.
- At the time of Pope Yoannes, he became the Deputy to the Pope, who was the Supreme Head of Sunday Schools and its General Committee.
- He was the first to utilize the idea of a picture or an icon related to the lesson with a summary of the lesson on the back.
- He established pre-servants' classes to prepare individuals to teach in Sunday School.
- He established curriculums for Sunday School servants to educate them on the characteristics of each age group.

- Habib Girgis cared for his children’s spiritual and physical health and intended for Sunday School to prepare them to become useful members of their Church and nation.



Religious Education in Public Schools

- Habib felt that Sunday School was not enough when it came to religious education.
- He noticed that students go to school daily without a spiritual message delivered to them.
- He began to communicate with the Ministry of Education to add religion to the curriculum of grade school classes in all public schools all over Egypt.
- One major challenge was the lack of teachers who can teach religion in schools, so he began to prepare teachers for the task.
- The Ministry of Education expressed that there were not enough funds in the budget to add more teachers - he found individuals who were willing to be trained to teach in schools for free as volunteers.

Books and Publications

- He also felt that more opportunities were needed to teach the Copts, so he established El Karma magazine in 1907 and it continued for over 17 years. Its deep and powerful articles and high-caliber authors distinguished the magazine. Its first issue was in 1907, and Habib Girgis assisted in its authorship.
- He wrote articles and invited many Christian writers to write in it. It was widely distributed and it became a successful magazine. It was the first publication to translate and publish church fathers' writings.
- He wrote more than 30 books (including the various curriculums)
 - “The Seven Sacraments of the Church.”
 - In Comparative Theology, “The Orthodox Rock”
 - In Church History, “St. Mark the Evangelist; and The Life of St. Paul and St. Antony.”
 - In Spirituality, he published several books, “The Mystery of Godliness” “Spiritual Views of Christian Life.”
 - For funerals he wrote “Comfort to the Faithful”



Other Services

- People loved Habib greatly because of his care for education in all areas, and because of his spiritual personality.
- He served in during the papacy of 4 patriarchs: Pope Cyril V, Pope Youannes XIX, Pope Macarius III, and Pope Youssab II.
- He accompanied Pope Youannes to his visit in Ethiopia and was awarded honorary medals by the Emperor and Empress.
- He became an archdeacon - dedicated and consecrated to his service.
- His students (children) became priests, bishops, and even popes while he remained a deacon.



St. Habib - An Exemplary Servant

Habib Girgis is a role model to all the servants. We can learn many virtues from his life and apply them in our life and service. Let us look at some of these virtues:



▪ Loyalty

- He was so loyal to his Church. He never criticized or slandered any of the church leadership.
- He was loyal to his Coptic identity. He always looked for ways to strengthen the Coptic identity of the believers through teachings, songs, and publications.
- He was loyal to his purpose. He never worked for personal gain but rather always strived to raise the status of Christian education throughout all areas in Egypt.

▪ Goal Driven, Trusting in God's Grace

Some may say "I don't want to serve in that capacity because there is a lot of work in this service". "It is hard, there are not enough servants." "I may join later when the circumstances are better."

However, Habib Girgis said he will do the service and by God's grace things will work out. Habib Girgis was the only one teaching in the whole Church at some point - he never complained but rather worked hard and the Lord crowned his effort with success.

▪ Zeal with a Positive Mindset

"Habib Girgis' zeal represented positive action in its depth. It never happened that he criticized the weakness of his time, but when he found a deficiency, he would look for how to treat it without condemning anyone" (HH Pope Shenouda III)

▪ Servant with a Vision

- At the age of 22, he was teaching in the Theological Seminary.
- At the age of 24, St. Habib Girgis started the Sunday School Movement for religious education for children in their own communities.
- Professor Habib Girgis established Sunday Schools (in 1900) and designed its curriculum.
- In 1941, he held the first Sunday School Teacher Conference where 400 teachers attended. In other words, it took 40 years to get 400 teachers to serve in Sunday School.
- As a result of this inflaming fire of love in the hearts of Sunday School servants, many dedicated their lives to Christ. Waves of youth went to the monasteries to start a dedicated monastic life or priesthood or to serve as dedicated servants. They led generations to the fullness of Christ because they were full of spiritual energy.



▪ **Seriousness**

- Almost completely self-taught, Habib lived during the period when there were no teachers at the seminary, he became devoted to the seminary's library, reading, studying, searching, summarizing, authoring, and [professionally] growing. He was chosen to teach colleagues because of his seriousness.
- Habib Girgis took this work extremely seriously. He considered every child his own and cared deeply about their salvation.
- He strove to bring unity to the Sunday School movement and among its servants by visiting every branch and holding meetings to exchange ideas.
- Although many Sunday School servants and students came from modest backgrounds, some eventually moved into the Church hierarchy, becoming monks, priests, bishops, and even popes.

Conclusion:

- St. Habib Girgis was an outstanding servant and teacher. He will always be remembered as the pioneer of religious education in the Coptic Church's modern history.
- He was not only a teacher, but a school. Most importantly, he was a symbol for positive work in the church, a symbol for the love of education, a symbol for meekness, zeal, and many virtues.
- He departed on the eve of St. Mary's Feast, on August 21, 1951. He was 75 years old.



“Teaching is neither the dictation of advice, nor of orders, nor of instruction: rather it is the participation between the teacher [and the child] in a common spirit for knowledge. Therefore, it is the teacher's duty not to dictate information or to hand out absolute orders to these children in their care, but they should provide them with the opportunity to discover everything on their own and offer sufficient assistance to enable them to make these discoveries.” – St. Habib Girgis

May the prayers of St. Habib Girgis be with us all.

Predestination

Our theme this year is “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation.” A term that is often connected to salvation is “Predestination”.

What is “Predestination”?

- “Destination” refers to the place to which someone is going. Therefore, “Predestination” refers to a destination that is pre-decided.
- We see St. Paul use the term “Predestination” **“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ...” (Romans 8:29)** and even in our liturgical prayer, we use it in the Cyrillian Fraction **“O God – Who predestined us to sonship....”**



Common Misconceptions About “Predestination”

- Some denominations believe that predestination means that God has already determined our fate even before our creation. Consequently, this belief results in man not having any choice in his outcome. This results in a conflict with whether we have free will and raises a question as to whether our salvation is earned by our actions. Some denominations try to cite Biblical support for such a belief. We will examine those verses in this topic.
 - **“The Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.” (Exodus 4:21)**
- The argument being made here by those who support the wrong understanding of predestination is that God empowers those He chooses and decides to close the eyes of those whom He does not choose.
- Even though we are all from the same creation, it is argued that perhaps God simply picks without any regard to the individual conduct of each man.

Biblical Perspective on Predestination

- The verses mentioned are not speaking to each individual’s salvation but rather as to our Lord Jesus Christ being the only One who can save humanity as a whole.
- Adopting this dogma would require that we believe that God is unfair. Such a dogma would also contradict the scriptural support for the free will of man.
 - **“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)**
 - **“Because they hated knowledge and did not choose fear of the Lord.” (Proverbs 1:29)**
 - **“If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 1:19-20)**

- “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your Name?’ and I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:21-24)



- These foregoing verses all very clearly establish that each individual has a choice. Otherwise, there would be nothing to gain from listening to our Lord’s warning to be like the wise and carefully control our actions.

The Role of Free Will in Salvation

- A more careful examination of scripture reveals that sometimes our outcome can be negative as a result of our own actions, even if God had desired something better for us.
 - “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 are not willing!” (Matthew 23:37)
 - “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.” (1 Peter 1:17)
- We can see from these examples numerous warnings throughout different parts of the Bible that we are judged according to our works. Again, this is irreconcilable with the notion of being predestined.
- For what purpose would these warnings serve if they would have no impact on man regardless of whether or not he decides to heed the warnings.

Free Will Does Not Mean Absolute Freedom

- With all of these verses in mind, it becomes necessary to understand the **distinction between what is pre-determined for us and what is in our hands to decide.**
 - For example, no one selects what country he is born in, the family he is born to, or many other factors as to the conditions that come before his life.
 - However, the big distinction here is what happens after we are born. Gradually, over life we are trained to use our free will. As children, parents guide us to teach us how to make appropriate decisions in our life. After this point, everything is according to our free will.

The Correct Understanding of Predestination

- When we consider salvation, it is important to ask whether it is earned by good works and whether we can earn it by struggling spiritually to grow.
- The verses cited as to predestination are not imposed on an individual level, but instead apply to every single person in the world.
 - God wants to save every single person, for He does not desire the death of a sinner but rather that he returns and lives.
 - The “election” is for everybody, however, only those who accept this calling will benefit from it.
 - The manner with which we accept it is by our works, not just verbally saying we accept it.
- Our works do not act as what saves us, for salvation can only come through the Blood of Jesus Christ. However, our works serve the purpose of accepting the salvation offered to us.
 - Consider the man born blind, who was instructed by our Lord to wash his eyes in the pool; what if he were to take the position that he believes our Lord could gift him with vision even if he does not wash, do you think he would be healed?
 - Additionally, even if this man was to wash his eyes one hundred times in the pool before meeting the Lord Jesus Christ, he would still not be healed. For it is not the physical act of washing that causes him to be healed under either scenario, but it is his obedience to our Lord that causes him to be healed.



Salvation Requires Both Grace and Strive

- In this same way, works alone are not what saves us, but it is our acceptance and obedience to God that saves us, as evidenced by our works.
 - The Free Gift (Grace) from our Lord is given equally to every single person.
 - Every single person has the opportunity to accept this gift, but in the end if one chooses, by their own free will, not to accept this gift, he will not be saved.
- We can further explore this in the distinction between the Free Gift and Crowns. By their very definition, a gift is given for free; however, a crown is a reward that is earned.
 - Specific examples of crowns would include the Crown of Martyrdom and the Crown of Asceticism.
 - To receive such crowns, one must discipline himself in order to earn it.
 - Salvation however is the Free Gift from God given to everyone equally.



The Balance of Predestination and Free Will

- We must also understand that God's foreknowledge does not in any way impact the will of each individual.
 - Consider for example when you watch a movie. You have the ability to watch it multiple times, skip to various parts of the movie; knowing fully well the outcome for each character. However, merely knowing the outcome does not mean that you had any impact on it.
 - This is analogous to what we saw with Pharaoh in Exodus 4:21. While God knew that Pharaoh would never repent, He did not act to stop him; that was Pharaoh's own decision. For Pharaoh, just like everyone else, was given the opportunity to decide for himself.



- The Free Gift is freely given and must be freely accepted.
 - **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)**

- Notice that there is no mention of the elect, or the predetermined in the above dialogue that our Lord had with Nicodemus. Specifically, our Lord said **“whoever believes”** – as to confirm that this requires an individual choice to be made by each person, a decision each one must make to believe.



- We see support for this throughout other verses. Specifically, that God desires all to be saved, not merely a few elected.
 - **“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3)**
 - **“‘For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God ‘Therefore turn and live!’” (Ezekiel 18:32)**

- If it was God's predestination for each man, then there would be no need to instruct men to turn and live. There would be no logic to reconcile God's repeated promise that He desires for all to earn eternal life.
- Herein we find the danger of the concept of predestination. For it essentially seeks to dull man's attempt to be saved. It seeks to rob individuals of the motivation to strive to live by God's commandments.
- Simply put, misunderstanding predestination leads to deception. It is an ideology of trickery to deceive individuals into believing that they need not do anything since God has already decided each person's outcome.



Understanding Insecurity

- Insecurity has a significant impact on our lives; it can affect our growth, success, and even hinder God's work in us.
- Insecurity is the feeling of uncertainty about oneself and often revolves around the question "am I good enough?"
- In other words, insecurity is the gap between our actual selves and what we want to be (our ideal selves) or how we perceive ourselves to be versus who we want to be.
- It can be manifested in many forms that are often troubling not only to the insecure person but also those who deal with them.



Manifestations of Insecurity

1. Controlling personality

- Those who attempt to take control of everything lack trust in those around them.

2. Comparison

- Those who constantly compare themselves with others, their achievements, and even their appearance, which often leads to disappointment.

3. Hypersensitivity

- Those who do not appreciate feedback, and are overly sensitive to any form of criticism, including constructive criticism.

4. Approval addiction

- Those who are constantly seeking to be validated and approved by others rejoicing with every word of praise.

Biblical Perspective on Insecurity

The Holy Bible addresses insecurity a lot more than you think. Let us see how God dealt with insecurity ... Let us take Moses as an example.

- Moses is a great example of spiritual leadership in strength, boldness, and courage.
- However, he struggled with insecurity and despite his age, and life experience, he had a strong feeling of being inadequate to lead God's people out of Egypt.
- Moses' encounter with the Lord (Exodus 4) portrays his insecurity. When the Lord called him to lead His people out of Egypt, he doubted his credibility, capability, and feasibility,



▪ **Credibility:**

- Then Moses answered and said, **“But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’” (Exodus 4:1)**
- Moses’ past mistakes gave him a perception that he will never be believed by the people.
- **God’s response:** He performed miracles to validate Moses’ message; He turned Moses’ staff into a serpent and back (Exodus 4:2-5)
- Be careful of ‘I know that they know’ way of thinking. One might say, “I know I should pray; but God, I know that you know that I am a bad person.”
- Do not let doubts stop you from fulfilling God’s plan for you.



▪ **Capability:**

- **“Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (Exodus 4:10)**
- Moses doubted his ability to carry on the ministry he was called for, forgetting that it is the Lord who will work through him to fulfil his ministry.
- Often insecurity clouds our minds, making us forget God’s grace and His work through our weaknesses.
- **God’s response:** He reminded Moses of His role as the Creator. **“Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?” (Exodus 4:11)**
- Put effort in what you do, including the natural talents that God has given you. Work hard, strive to always offer your best and the grace of God will carry you and crown your effort with success.

▪ **Feasibility:**

- **“But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.”” (Exodus 4:13)**
- When the Lord answered Moses regarding his credibility and capability, he finally asked the Lord to choose someone else for the task!
- **God’s response:** God challenged Moses’ reluctance and provides the solution. **“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.” (Exodus 4:14)**
- Insecurity often leads to stubbornness and insisting on one’s position.

Discussion Point: How do you think God would respond when we present our insecurities as excuses or barriers to His work in our lives?

How to address the issue of insecurity?

Here are few principles to help us overcome insecurity:

1. God sees you differently.

“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)



- The Lord often chooses those who seem an unlikely fit for his task:
 - The disciples who had simple jobs, later became teachers of the entire world, delivering the good news all over the earth.
 - David who was considered the youngest of his family, was anointed to be a king.
 - The Lord also chose Gideon, Rahab, Mary Magdaline, and many others.
 - God does not look at us according to our current state but rather who we can become by His grace. While we see "can't do" God sees "haven't done yet."

2. God has given you more than you think.

- God knows us well; He knows our weaknesses and provides partners and resources to help us fulfill His plans.

“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart” (Exodus 4:14)

 - The Lord sent Aaron as an aid for Moses, he could speak well and support him.
- God’s grace is not only manifested in the work of His Holy Spirit in us, but also in the support system He provides us with in our lives like family, servants, spiritual fathers, teachers, mentors, etc.

3. It is less about you than you think.

- Insecurity often stems from self-centeredness when we focus more on ourselves rather than the bigger picture.

“But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” (Exodus 3:11-12)

- When we surrender ourselves to the will of God, we see His marvelous work in our lives. We are instruments in His hands, and He is the Master Builder.

“as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Our role is to put effort and to respond to God's grace, recognizing that He accomplishes His plans through us shifting our focus from “Me” to “Him”.

Artificial Intelligence – Good or Evil?



In November 2022, **ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer)** was launched by OpenAI (an AI research and deployment company) and made available to the public. Although it was not the first General AI Platform (nor would it be the last), it took the world by storm; it made the technology accessible to a larger audience and for a variety of applications.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence is a field of Computer Science that aims to mimic human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. There are several fields of study within the umbrella of Artificial Intelligence.

An **AI Agent** is a system that can use information gathered from its environment (through various sensors) and reason about that information, plan based on its goals, and execute the plan. An AI Agent may use a language model to translate that plan or execution to a human-readable output.



ChatGPT and similar AI Agents use **Large Language Models (LLM)** such as OpenAI's GPT-4, Google's PaLM, and Meta's LLaMA. These models aim to achieve general-purpose language and conversation, and so they are trained on billions of lines of text. The **training** involves reading the text and establishing statistical relationships between words and sentences. The model can then be used to generate text by taking an input text and repeatedly predicting the next word or phrase based on highest probability.

Applications

Natural Language Processing (NLP): Google Translate (to translate text contextually from one language to another) and Grammarly (to analyze and adjust grammar and tone in text like an email).

Computer Vision: To quickly process images for a variety of applications.

- Surveillance Cameras (to identify humans, cars, or animals)
- Self-Driving Cars (to identify humans, cars, road signs, traffic lights and patterns, etc. as well as navigation)
- Facial Recognition (for security purposes or identification)
- Agriculture (identify defects, and sort produce by shape, size, color, ripeness, etc.)
- Healthcare (to analyze medical imaging results like X-Rays, CT scans, MRIs, and Ultrasounds to help detect conditions. To analyze large volumes of medical imagery and search for patterns among patients with similar diagnoses)



Games and Puzzles: Playing strategic games like chess, generating unique games and puzzles.

Travel: Suggesting hotels, rental cars, flights, etc. based on several factors. Navigation from point A to point B in the least amount of time, or with the least number of tolls, or to avoid traffic, or to “take the scenic route,” etc.

Personalization: Targeted Advertising (based on preferences and interests), Personalized Shopping Experiences, and Personalized Learning Experiences, etc.

Artificial Intelligence as a Tool

Technology is not inherently good or evil, it is rather a tool. A tool can be used for good or for evil.

“No one would deny that he who has learned to practice an art for right purposes can also abuse it for wrong ones, so we say that the faculty of thought and conception was implanted by God in human nature for good, but, with those who abuse it as an instrument of discovery, it frequently becomes the handmaid of pernicious inventions.” – St. Gregory of Nyssa (Answer to Eunomius’ Second Book)

To understand how to use this tool, we must first understand the tool.

What is Intelligence?

HH Pope Shenouda III, in the final chapter of his book *Ten Concepts* focuses on “The Concept of Knowledge.” HH describes several kinds of knowledge like:

Sensuous Knowledge:

Knowledge that comes through the senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing)

Knowledge from Other Sources:

Knowledge that comes from books, videos, audio, and other media.

Knowledge of God’s Words and Commandments:

St. Paul wrote to his disciple St. Timothy: **“from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:15-16)** This is the knowledge of wisdom and discernment.

Knowing Others:

This applies to friendships, family relationships, and other social interactions. You ought to know and understand that there are different personalities and characters as well as mental disabilities and illnesses in order to know how to best deal with each person.

“The fact is that all knowledge that comes to your mind will affect your senses, feelings, and relationships with others; it will affect and influence your subconscious in the form of suspicions, thoughts, dreams, and memories. It will extend within you and outside to a great extent, and you may not be able to stop it.” – HH Pope Shenouda III (Ten Concepts)



What is Artificial?

Which types of knowledge would you expect an AI Agent to have access to?

Knowledge from Other Sources: This is the primary type of knowledge in Large Language Models like ChatGPT. It is fed from multitudes of books, websites, and other media to train its models. This includes websites like the entirety of Wikipedia!

Sensuous Knowledge: An AI Agent like a self-driving car will have access to several cameras, microphones, and other types of sensors. Processing the data that comes from those sensors requires a great deal of effort on the part of the AI Agent.



An AI Agent cannot discern between good and evil or right and wrong; it does not and cannot know God; and it cannot relate to people or understand emotions. This is what makes it “Artificial.” It is incomparable to Human Intelligence.

Dangers of Artificial Intelligence

AI Can NEVER be Certain.

- AI Agents operate in the realm of probability and probability is never 100%. Some Agents may reveal their confidence level with the results they give. For example, a security camera may identify a car with 60% confidence, but the human eye can easily see that it is a car.
- Sometimes, to combat the lack of certainty, a model’s errors may be biased in a certain direction. For example, cancer tests may be biased towards false positives as opposed to false negatives (i.e. it would be better to misdiagnose than to leave a cancer untreated). Also, weather forecasting may be biased towards bad weather rather than good weather (i.e. people rarely get upset when you say it will rain and it doesn’t, but not the opposite).



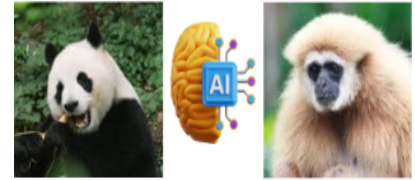
AI Can be Manipulated by the Creator or Manager of the AI

- As mentioned above, AI Agents primarily rely on knowledge from various media sources. The creator or manager of the AI Agent makes decisions regarding which sources to include in the process of training the model. So, if a model is trained using media that lean in a particular direction politically or socially, then the Agent using that model will seem to “lean” that way. An AI Agent can also be programmed to respond in a specific way to specific queries.
- In late 2017, Amazon’s Alexa product was in the news for reporting that Jesus Christ “is a fictional character” and that Mohammed is “a very wise prophet.” In 2018, Google’s Google Home product was in the news for being able to identify religious figures like Allah, Brahman, Krishna, Moses, and Joseph Smith, but not Jesus Christ (instead responding with “here are some results from the web.”)



AI Can be Manipulated by Input

- There is a field of study called “Adversarial AI” in which inputs are created to manipulate AI Agents.
- For example, an AI Agent may identify an image of a panda as a Panda. But when noise is introduced into the image, such that it still looks like a panda to the human eye, the AI will identify it as a gibbon. Or an image that is identified as a pig, but with added noise (invisible to the human eye), the AI identifies it as an airliner.
- It has been shown that modifying a Stop Sign in a specific way can fool an AI Agent into thinking it is a Speed Limit sign, or that wearing specific clothing (i.e. something with an Adversarial Patch) can fool an AI Agent into not recognizing you as a person.



AI Can (and Will) Lie to You

- In April 2023, Snapchat’s “My AI” product was famously in the news for lying about whether it had access to your location.
- In June 2023, a lawyer and his firm were issued sanctions because they used ChatGPT to find case citations and did not review them; they were all fake and fabricated by ChatGPT.

AI Can Manipulate You

- AI Virtual Assistants simulate human interaction (e.g. mimic human voice, facial expressions, body language) and can create the illusion of a personal relationship.
- Deepfake videos, images, and audio are highly realistic simulations of people saying or doing things that they never did.
- AI is used to limit what information you have access to (e.g. on social media) and can ensure that only information that reinforces certain beliefs is prevalent, creating an echo chamber. For example, Social Media Companies have been accused of using AI for these purposes to nefariously manipulate elections.

AI Has a Fingerprint

- In January 2023, some college students used ChatGPT to write their essays for a Philosophy class. The professor felt that the essays were “really well-written wrong”, and it raised a red flag for him. He ran it through OpenAI’s ChatGPT detector and the results said it was 99% likely the essay had been AI-generated. The students failed the class.



Inappropriate Uses of AI

Cheating & Plagiarism: Requesting an AI Agent to write an essay for you (even if you’re planning to edit it afterward). Asking an AI Agent to solve math or science problems for homework or requesting answers or solutions to exam questions from an AI Agent.

Cyberbullying: Using AI to harass, intimidate, or bully others online

Fabricating Data or Sources: Requesting an AI Agent to generate fake data, sources, or references to support your own material.

In the Church: A new trend has risen in the last several years of using AI Image Generators to generate images of saints, but these images go against the Spirit of the Church and Her iconography. The images feature saints depicted with inappropriate societal standards of beauty not befitting to their holiness (e.g. St. Mary without a veil, the Lord Jesus Christ with a teeth-bearing grin, saints wearing form-fitting dresses or gowns, etc.). They are also used to depict a verse from the Scripture in a literal way that is not compatible with the interpretation of the Church and Her Tradition. These images are then distributed across social media.



Appropriate Uses of AI

Educational Support: Using an AI Agent to help clarify concepts, ask questions, or seek explanations on topics you are studying. This is different from using AI to cheat or plagiarize.

Writing Assistance: An AI Agent can help fix your grammar or give you writing advice on material that you have written yourself. Note that this can be considered cheating in some contexts (e.g. a writing class).

Learning New Subjects: Ask questions about various topics for self-learning.

Finding Sources: Requesting an AI Agent for relevant sources to a certain topic, and then exploring, reading, and analyzing those sources on your own.

Language Practice: Engaging with an AI Agent to practice learning a foreign language, ask for translations, improve your proficiency, etc.

In the Church: There is high potential for the usage of AI within the Church. For example, an AI Agent may be used to transcribe audio or video sermons or lectures. Then, another Agent can take those transcriptions and translate them to a different language. The lectures and sermons of HH Pope Shenouda and other prominent figures in the Coptic Church can be made available to an English-speaking congregation!



There is also potential to develop new technologies in the field of AI for the benefit and edification of the Church and Her faithful believers. For example, some Coptic Students at Williams College developed a model for translating from Coptic (Bohairic or Sahidic dialects) to and from other languages (English, Arabic, French, German, and Dutch). A student at Saddler College, for his Capstone Project, trained a model on Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers in English and Greek. This allowed him to develop a semantic search application in English and Greek for the Fathers of the Church.

It is part of your role as a member of society to understand these technologies and how to use them. And it is part of your role as an Orthodox Christian to be faithful and honest in your usage of technology, and in “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)



Memorization

1. "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1)

II. Gospel of the First Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya Gospel according to St. Matthew 25:1-13

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; arise and go out to meet him." Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you, but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Glory to God forever. Amen.



III. Litanies of the First Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya

1. Behold, the Bridegroom is coming at midnight, blessed is the servant whom He finds watching. But he whom He finds sleeping is unworthy of going with Him. Therefore, take heed, O my soul, that you may not fall into deep sleep, and then be cast out of the kingdom. But watch and cry out, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God, for the sake of the Theotokos, have mercy on us."
2. O my soul, be mindful of that awesome day, and wake up and light your lamp with the oil of joy, for you do not know when the voice will call upon you, saying, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming." So, take heed, my soul, not to fall asleep, lest you stand outside knocking like the five foolish virgins. But watch, entreating that you may meet Christ the Lord with rich oil, and He may grant you the wedding of His true and heavenly glory.
3. You are the rampart of our salvation, O Theotokos the Virgin, the mighty and impregnable fortress. Abolish the counsel of the adversaries, and transform the sorrow of your servants into joy. Fortify our city, defend our governors, and intercede for the peace of the world, for you are our hope, O Theotokos.
4. O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the Life-Giver, graciously come, and dwell in us and purify us from all defilement, O Good One, and save our souls.
5. Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls.
6. Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven. O Theotokos, you are the gate of heaven; open for us the gate of mercy.

IV. Sayings of the Church Fathers

1. "All the saints, therefore, are lights, but they are illuminated by Him through faith;
and every one that becomes separated from Him will be enveloped in darkness."
(St. Augustine)
2. "Seek the things which are of God, and those which are of man will follow readily enough." (St. John Chrysostom)

Coptic



Our Lord spent about 4 years in Egypt as a baby. He spoke to the people in Egypt in their language, which was the Coptic language at that time.

THE COPTIC ALPHABET

	Ⲁ ⲁ Alpha A	Ⲃ ⲃ Veeta B, V	Ⲅ ⲅ Gamma G, N, Gh	Ⲇ ⲇ Delta D, Th (the)	
Ⲉ ⲉ Eyy E	Ⲋ Number 6 So-oo The number 6 <small>Not a true letter</small>	Ⲍ ⲍ Zeeta Z	Ⲏ ⲏ Eeta EE	Ⲑ ⲑ Theeta TH (think), T	ⲓ Ⲕ Yota I, Y
ⲕ Ⲗ Kappa K	Ⲙ ⲙ Lavla L	ⲗ Ⲙ Mey M	Ⲛ ⲛ Ney N	Ⲝ ⲝ Eksee KS	ⲟ Ⲡ O O
ⲡ Ⲣ Pee P	Ⲥ ⲥ ro R	Ⲧ ⲧ seema S - Z	Ⲩ ⲩ tav T	ⲫ Ⲭ Epsilon V, I, (oo)	Ⲯ ⲯ Fey F
Ⲱ ⲱ Key K, Kh, Sh	ⲳ Ⲵ Epsee PS	Ⲷ ⲷ Oo Oo	ⲹ Ⲻ Shai SH	Ⲽ ⲽ Fai F	ⲿ Ⲁ Khai KH
	Ⲹ ⲹ Hori H	Ⲳ ⲳ Ganga G, J	Ⲵ ⲵ Cheema CH	ⲷ Ⲹ Tee Tee	

The Coptic Alphabet has 32 letters

- 24 consonants
- 7 vowels (Ⲁ Ⲉ Ⲏ ⲓ ⲟ ⲫ ⲱ)
- 1 letter used only as a number (Ⲋ)



First 25 letters from Hieroglyphic through Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician and Greek Alphabets
Last 7 letters from Hieroglyphic through Hieratic and Demotic Alphabets



Pronunciation

Pronunciation of the letter Key “ϭ”

The letter is among the letters taken from the Greek Alphabet. In Greek, the sound of this letter is not among the sounds present in the Coptic pronunciation. But in Coptic words, it is always pronounced with the sound “k”.

We should first note that Greek words found in the Coptic Liturgy are two kinds:

1. Pure Greek hymns included in the Coptic Liturgy to retain non-Coptic Christians in Egypt in the Coptic Church.
2. “Loan words” that became part of the Coptic Language. Like the Greek Loan words in the English language: e.g. deacon, martyr, psychic, etc.)

When trying to pronounce the Greek loan words in English, e.g. the loan word “deacon”, it is pronounced using the English way to pronounce it and not the original Greek pronunciation.

So when we pronounce Greek loan words in Coptic, we should use the Coptic way to pronounce them.

Therefore, the Greek loan words “**ⲡⲥⲓϭⲏ**” and “**ⲈⲚϭⲏ**” would be pronounced “psikee” and “evkee”.

Tenses: Present, Past, Future I, We

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
1 st Person	I	ἴψω ληλ I pray	ἴνα ψωληλ I will pray	ἔι ψωληλ I prayed	ἔπι ψωληλ I did not pray
	We	τε ψωληλ We pray	τε ναψωληλ We will pray	ἔ ηψωληλ We prayed	ἔπε ψωληλ We did not pray

You (M., F., Pl.)

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
2 nd person	You (s.m.)	ἴ ψωληλ You pray	ἴνα ψωληλ You will pray	ἔ κψωληλ You prayed	ἔπε κψωληλ You did not pray
	You (s.f.)	τε ψωληλ You pray	τε ραψωληλ You will pray	ἔ ρεψωληλ You prayed	ἔπε ψωληλ You did not pray
	You (pl.)	τετε ψωληλ You pray	τετε ναψωληλ You will pray	ἔ ρετεψωληλ You prayed	ἔπετε ψωληλ You did not pray

He, She, They

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
3 rd person	He	ἔ ψωληλ He prays	ἔ ναψωληλ He will pray	ἔ ψωληλ He prayed	ἔπε ψωληλ He did not pray
	She	ἔ ψωληλ She prays	ἔ ναψωληλ She will pray	ἔ ψωληλ She prayed	ἔπε ψωληλ She did not pray
	They	σε ψωληλ They pray	σε ναψωληλ They will pray	ἔ ψωληλ They prayed	ἔπο ψωληλ They did not pray

Negative Present and Future tenses are formed by
ΑΝ or **Ἦ...ΑΝ**

Examples

Present **σεῦληλ** **ΑΝ** or **Ἦσεῦληλ** **ΑΝ**

Future **σενᾶῦληλ** **ΑΝ** or **Ἦσενᾶῦληλ** **ΑΝ**

Practice Present, Future and Past tenses
and their negatives with the following verbs

†**ἔβω** to teach

βί^ςβω to learn

† to give

βί to take, receive

οἴωψ to worship

ψεπῆμοτ to give thanks

ἴ to come

σω† to save, redeem

ἔμοῖ to bless, praise

ζωσ to sing, chant

σωοῖν to know

ναζ† to believe

ζεωσι to sit down

ζερζερ to snore

ωψ to read

ἔῆαι to write

οἴωω to eat

σω to drink

Conversations

νοψρι Hi

οἴχαι Bye

ψεπῆμοτ Thanks

ῶμοη ἔλαι You're welcome (for nothing)

Numbers

At the time of developing the Coptic Script, all known languages at that time were using their alphabets as numbers. (e.g. Copts, Greeks, Arabs, Hebrews)

	Coptic			Greek		Arabic		Hebrew	
1	ⲟⲩⲁⲓ	ⲁ̄	Alpha	α	Alpha	ا	Alef	א	Aleph
2	ϥⲛⲁⲩ	ⲃ̄	Veeta	β	Beta	ب	Baa	ב	Beth
3	ϣⲟⲙⲧ	Ⲅ̄	Gamma	γ	Gamma	ج	Geem	ג	Gimel
4	ϥⲧⲟⲩ	ⲅ̄	Delta	δ	Delta	د	Dal	ד	Daleth
5	ϥⲓⲟⲩ	Ⲇ̄	Ey	ε	Epsilon	ه	Haa	ה	He
6	ϥⲟⲟⲩ	Ⲉ̄	So-o	?	?	و	Waw	ו	Waw
7	ϣⲁϣϥ	ⲉ̄	Zeeta	ζ	Zeta	ز	Zayn	ז	Zayin

Later on, the current numbering system (1, 2, 3...) was developed from the system used by **the Phoenician sailors**, where the number of angles in the figure indicated the number.

Phoenician Figures					
Number of Angles	1	2	3	4	5
Phoenician Figures					
Number of Angles	6	7	8	9	0

The Coptic Numbers
(at the time of writing most Coptic manuscripts)

100	ⲡ	ϣⲉ	10	Ⲓ	ⲙⲏⲧ	1	ⲁ	ⲟⲩⲁⲓ
200	Ⲅ	ϥⲛⲁⲩ ϣⲉ	20	Ⲭ	ϫⲟⲩⲧ	2	ⲃ	ϥⲛⲁⲩ
300	Ⲇ	ϣⲟⲙⲧ ϣⲉ	30	Ⲭ	ⲙⲁⲡ	3	Ⲅ	ϣⲟⲙⲧ
400	Ⲉ	ϥⲧⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	40	Ⲙ	ϩⲙⲉ	4	Ⲭ	ϥⲧⲟⲩ
500	Ⲋ	ϥⲧⲱⲩ ϣⲉ	50	Ⲏ	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ	5	Ⲉ	ϥⲧⲱⲩ
600	Ⲍ	ϥⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	60	Ⲛ	ϥⲉ	6	Ⲋ	ϥⲟⲟⲩ
700	Ⲏ	ϣⲁⲣⲥ ϣⲉ	70	Ⲑ	ϣⲃⲉ	7	Ⲍ	ϣⲁⲣⲥ
800	Ⲑ	ϣⲙⲏⲏ ϣⲉ	80	Ⲓ	ϩⲁⲙⲛⲉ	8	Ⲏ	ϣⲙⲏⲏ
900	Ⲓ	ϣⲓⲧ ϣⲉ	90	Ⲕ	ⲡⲓϥⲧⲁⲩ	9	Ⲑ	ϣⲓⲧ

How to say the numbers in Coptic

100	ϣⲉ	10	ⲙⲏⲧ	1	ⲟⲩⲁⲓ
200	ϥⲛⲁⲩ ϣⲉ	20	ϫⲟⲩⲧ	2	ϥⲛⲁⲩ
300	ϣⲟⲙⲧ ϣⲉ	30	ⲙⲁⲡ	3	ϣⲟⲙⲧ
400	ϥⲧⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	40	ϩⲙⲉ	4	ϥⲧⲟⲩ
500	ϥⲧⲱⲩ ϣⲉ	50	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ	5	ϥⲧⲱⲩ
600	ϥⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	60	ϥⲉ	6	ϥⲟⲟⲩ
700	ϣⲁⲣⲥ ϣⲉ	70	ϣⲃⲉ	7	ϣⲁⲣⲥ
800	ϣⲙⲏⲏ ϣⲉ	80	ϩⲁⲙⲛⲉ	8	ϣⲙⲏⲏ
900	ϣⲓⲧ ϣⲉ	90	ⲡⲓϥⲧⲁⲩ	9	ϣⲓⲧ

How to write and read numbers

12	ⲙⲏⲧ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ	ⲓⲃ
24	ϫⲟⲩⲧ ϣⲧⲟⲩ	ⲕⲁ
49	ϩⲙⲉ ϣⲓⲧ	ⲙⲑ
50	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ	ⲛ
72	ϣⲃⲉ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ	ⲟⲃ
100	ϣⲉ	ⲑ̄
111	ϣⲉ ⲙⲏⲧ ⲟⲩⲁⲓ	ⲑ̄ⲓⲁ
318	ϣⲟⲙⲧ ϣⲉ ⲙⲏⲧ ϣⲙⲏⲛ	ⲧⲓⲏ
200	ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ϣⲉ	ϥ̄
666	ϥⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲉ ϥⲉ ϥⲟⲟⲩ	ϫⲗϫ̄
969	ϣⲓⲧ ϣⲉ ϥⲉ ϣⲓⲧ	ϣⲗⲑ

The Days of the week

Day	Coptic	Other names
Sunday	ⲑⲓⲟⲩⲁⲓ	ⲑⲓⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲉ ⲏⲃⲟⲓϥ (Coptic) ⲕⲣⲣⲓⲁⲕⲏ (Greek) (means the day of the Lord.)
Monday	ⲑⲓⲥⲛⲁⲩ	
Tuesday	ⲑⲓϣⲟⲙⲧ	
Wednesday	ⲑⲓϣⲧⲟⲩ	
Thursday	ⲑⲓⲧⲓⲟⲩ	
Friday	ⲑⲓϥⲟⲟⲩ	ⲑⲓⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲉ ⲑⲓϥⲟⲃⲧ (Coptic) ⲑⲁⲣⲁϥⲕⲉⲩⲏ (Greek) (means the day of preparation.)
Saturday	ⲑⲓϣⲁⲩⲣⲥ	ⲑⲓϥⲁⲃⲃⲁⲧⲟⲛ (in Hebrew means rest).

ἸΝ ΤΩ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΤΟΥ

In the Name of the Father

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ

and the Son

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ

and the Holy Spirit

ΟΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ

One God Amen



ΠΑΤΗΡ ΗΜΩΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩΝ

Our Father who art in Heaven

ἌΓΙΣΤΕ ΝΕΜΠΩΣ ἸΣΧΟΣ ἸΝ ΤΟΙΣ

Make us worthy to say thankfully

ἸΝ ΤΩ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΤΟΥ

Our father who art in heaven

ΜΑΡΕΥΤΟΥ ΒΟ ἸΣΧΟΣ ΚΕΚΡΑΝ

Hallowed be Thy name

ΜΑΡΕΣΙ ἸΣΧΟΣ ΤΕΚΜΕΤΟΥΡΟ

Thy kingdom come

ΠΕΤΕΘΝΑΚ ΜΑΡΕΥΩΠΙ

Thy will be done

ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ ΝΕΜ

On earth as it is in heaven

ΠΕΝΩΙΚ ἸΝ ΤΗ ΡΑΣΤ ΜΗΙΝ

Give us this day our daily bread

ΟΥΡΑ ΧΑ ΝΗΕΤΕΡΟΝ ΝΑΝ

And forgive us our trespasses

ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ

As we forgive

ἵΝΑ ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ

those who trespass against us

ΟΥΡΑ ὡΣΤΕ ὡΣΤΕ

And lead us not into temptation

ΑΛΛΑ ΝΑΘΜΕΝ

But deliver us from the evil one

ἸΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ

In Christ Jesus our Lord

ὡΣΤΕ

For Thine is

ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΤΟΥ

the kingdom, the power and the glory,

ὡΣΤΕ

forever, Amen

Hymns & Rituals



Distribution Melody for the Feast of Nayrouz

The Feast of Nayrouz is the celebration of the Coptic New Year and the beginning of a new Year of the Martyrs. This year is the year 1740 AM. The Feast of Nayrouz is celebrated for 16 days from Thout 1 until Thout 16 in the Joyful tune and is followed by the Feast of the Cross.

This hymn is the Distribution Melody chanted during the Distribution of the Mysteries (i.e. Communion) in the Divine Liturgy during the period of Nayrouz.

This hymn was originally composed by Cantor Farag Abdelmessih.

Glory to God in the highest
Who of His own will came to us
To restore Adam from his exile
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

O God, have compassion upon us
With Your aid surround us
Shine Your light upon us
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Bless the crown of this year
Forgive all our sins
Renew our hearts and minds
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

O Lord, teach us Your ways
Make us worthy to fulfill Your laws
Show Your justice to all men
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

We thank You for Your goodness
We acknowledge it upon us
And we glorify Your majesty and greatness
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

We rejoice in Your dwelling in us
We praise You in our churches
For You are our Lord and Redeemer
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Your judgment is just and right, O Merciful
You promised the repentant forgiveness
For You are merciful at all times
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

We cry to You at all times:
"Lead us not into temptation,
And forgive us our trespasses."
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

We implore You with supplication
Incline Your ears and hear us
That we may praise You day and night
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Forgive all our iniquities
Have compassion and mercy upon us
We all ask Your forgiveness
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Purify us from all mistakes
Deliver us not unto our enemies
Let the sinners repent to You
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Deliver us from wars and inflations
Fill the poor with surplus
Grant us our requests
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Care for widows and orphans
Heal all our sicknesses
For You are our hope forever
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

End the pains and afflictions
Be our support in distress
Multiply Your fruits among the needy
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Remove the debts of Your people
Save us from all afflictions
Save all those who are captives
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Comfort the mourning hearts
Let us hear Your joyful voice
Strengthen those who are in trouble
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Confirm us in the faith
Accept us through the prayers of Your saints
Remove from us the devil's thoughts
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

You are always worthy of thanksgiving
Our lips offer You praises
Let us enjoy Your goodness
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

All blessings come from You
Fill us with Your blessing on earth
All creation praises You
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

You produce fruit from trees
And grant them as food for us
We praise You day and night
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

O Lord, fill us with Your blessings
In Your Church, gather us
Make us worthy of Your service
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

The patriarch of our generation
Through his prayers, O Lord, help us
Keep Him from temptation and grief
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Our Lord blesses us at all times
Heals our sicknesses and pains
He fills the hungry and the needy
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Grant us blessing from above
Please Lord do not forsake us
Fill our homes with Your blessings
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Bless all the Christians
Those who are present and absent
Have mercy on us on Judgment Day
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.

Let Your name be feared and blessed
O our God, Your glory is to all nations
Let us live in Your goodness in heaven
O Lord, take away Your wrath from us.





Visit the St. Mark Festival's website at

www.smfsus.org

to find the material for the festival and for guidelines
and information on the tests

Copyright © 2024 by St. Mark Festival of the Southern United States. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, printing, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher "help.smfsus@gmail.com"



SMFCollege & Graduates Book 2024