



# BE *Faithful*



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# **HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II**



**118<sup>TH</sup> POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND  
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK**



# *Be Faithful*

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



## *Be Faithful*

### St. Mark's Festival 2021 Anthem

**God wants us to be always faithful  
He came to us and showed the way  
Firm in faith and in church graceful  
Living His words everyday**

**We praise Him with all our senses  
Focus on the eternal goal  
Partake of the sacraments  
Giving life to our souls**

**We hold on to our Lord's promise  
He will give us the crown of life**



# Faithful All the Time

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10)

Faithfulness is a virtue most beloved by people of various denominations and religions, to the extent that it is used as a measure of moral behavior by people of different nations and cultures. If the world values faithfulness and relies on it to determine the competency of others, how much more should we as Christians value faithfulness? As Christians, we must be faithful in all aspects of our lives. This is one of the many ways that we thank God and show our gratitude, by being honest in what we are given.

St. Polycarp was faithful to the Lord until the end of his life. He rejected the emperor’s promises and threats to deny his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and said, “I lived 86 years with Christ in joy and love; how do you expect me to forsake Him now?”

## 1. Faithful in Your Spirituality

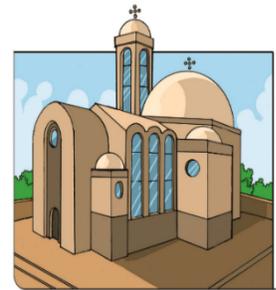
**We must be faithful in our spiritual life and relationship with God. This means participating in the means of salvation regularly.**

- **Participate in the Church Sacraments:** Holy Eucharist and Repentance and Confession.
- **Attend the Liturgical Prayers:** This is not only the Holy Liturgy, but also Vespers Praise, Vespers, Midnight Prayers and Praises, and Matins. We praise and glorify God’s name, thanking Him for everything He has given up and we offer our supplications.
- **Read the Holy Bible:** To grow in our relationship with God we need to listen to His word. Knowing what God wants us to do allows us to know Him better.
- **Pray and Fast:** Prayers are the second half of the communication duo. We learn what God wants from us by reading His word and we speak to Him and ask for His help through prayer. Daniel was faithful in his usual prayers even though he knew he would be put into the lions’ den. Our Lord taught us that prayers are accompanied by fasting when He said, **“That kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:29)**
- **Attend Spiritual Meetings:** By attending Sunday School and Youth Meetings you are allowing yourself to grow in the knowledge of God under guidance from a servant and with your friends. Using this to encourage others and to ask questions will help in your spiritual life.
- **Read Spiritual Books:** When we read spiritual books written by the Church Fathers and holy men of God, we are able to better understand the scriptures and the mysteries of the Church.

**By constantly striving to grow spiritually, you are being faithful with your spiritual life.**

## 2. Faithful in Your Church

Our Church is filled with a rich history in the Coptic language, hymns, saints, rites, and Traditions. We must be faithful in this great gift we were given by keeping it alive.



- **Participate in Church Activities:**

Partake of the rites and unique aspects of the Coptic Church.

- Learn the Coptic language
- Learn the hymns of the Church
- Read about the lives of the saints and learn from their virtues
- Participate in the Church fasting periods
- Attend special occasions in the Church like Holy Pascha Week, Koiahk, etc.

- **Being Steadfast in the Church Doctrine:**

We must know and abide by our faith and teach it to those coming after us. Defending our faith against wrong teachings allows the faith to continue unchanged for generations to come. This is how we are faithful in our church, by keeping it orthodox.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic teaches us to defend our faith and be steadfast in it even if the whole world is against us. He defended the Orthodox faith against the Arian Heresy. Because of St. Athanasius and many saints of our Church, we can live the faith that was given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We must continue to do the same for the future church.



### **3. Faithful in Your Talents**

God created each one of us and gave us a mission on earth. It is our responsibility to figure out our role to benefit ourselves, our families, our church, and our community. Use the talents given to you by God for the glory of His name. Talents can be anything: time, school, work, art, music, sports, etc. An important idea to keep in mind is that we must use our talents for the benefit of ourselves and others.

**“Do not neglect the gift that is in you.” (1 Timothy 4:14).**

King David was a musician who was faithful with his talents. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the psalms that we still use today in our prayers and that includes many prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ.



### **4. Faithful in Your Relationships**

The Holy Bible gives us many commandments to love and respect our family and friends. We are also commanded to keep healthy relationships that bring us closer to God. We should be faithful in our family by obeying our parents and being kind to our siblings. St. Demiana gave us a great example of faithfulness in the family when she prevented her father from leaving the faith and convinced him to repent and return to Christ.

Being faithful to your friends means you strive to be a good influence on your friends, encouraging each other to attend church and to have Godly fun together.

**“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”  
(Proverbs 13:20).**

When we surround ourselves with friends who, like yourself, are striving to grow in their relationship with God, you are challenging and leading each other on a good path. We must also do that for others.



# Coptic Monasticism

One of the Coptic Church's greatest contributions to the Christian civilization is Monasticism. Founded in Egypt, on Egyptian land, by Egyptian men and women who loved the Lord so much they decided to forsake everything for His sake, they became an inspiration to the whole Christian world and a seed for the monastic life all over the world.

## Historical Background

'Monasticism' (Greek Monachos, Monos, alone) is a life of asceticism which consists of **solitude, poverty, worship, contemplation, and purity of heart with elements of manual labor.**

The monastic movement started in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in a solitude form and developed during the 4<sup>th</sup> century into communal life following the example of St. Anthony (251-356 AD).

Monasticism is not a goal in itself and does not guarantee salvation. However, it is a response to the divine love, a calling to a life of consecration and dedication, and a venue by which one can exercise and grow in self-control. **"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:27)**

Undoubtedly, the various monastic forms were not planned by the Church! But rather, it was initiated by individuals who longed to the life of solitude for the sake of the Lord. Some documented asceticism practices were as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century in Egypt. Men preferred to leave their homes and live in simple huts or tombs outside the cities. Women lived together in houses to assist one another spiritually. St. Anthony started the life of solitude in a tomb and then in a mountain cave for 20 years. Later, that area became the first location for the monastic movement.

## Principles of Monasticism

**Christian monasticism was founded based on the following Biblical principles:**

**Celibacy:** The monastic must live a life of purity and celibacy. The ascetic life looks to the human body as a sacred temple. Having chosen to live a celibate lifestyle does not contradict recognizing marriage as a sacred sacrament. **"But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;"(1 Corinthians 7:8)**

**"But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:32-33)**

**Poverty (by choice):** **"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)**

**Obedience:** **"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)**

**Solitude:** **"And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray." (Mark 6:46)**

**The life of our Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect example for implementing these principles!**



## Flourishment of Monasticism

Later, the monastic movement flourished in many parts of Egypt. Many of the areas visited by the Holy Family were locations for monastic communities.

- 3 main communities in Western desert (Wadi El-Natron)
- Scetis: Under St. Macarius (4<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Nitrea and Kellia: Under St. Amoun (4<sup>th</sup> – mid 5<sup>th</sup> centuries)
- 5 monastic communities in Upper Egypt



## The Monastic Movement's Support Throughout the Church's History

These monastic communities had great influence on the history of the universal Church generally and the Coptic Church in particular due to the following factors:

- Many of the monastic communities were close to Alexandria, attracting many visitors and pilgrims. The pilgrims who visited the monasteries learned the Coptic canons, wrote about their experience, and delivered them to their countries which helped establish monastic movements in many other regions outside of Egypt (i.e. St. John Cassian, Peladius).
- The fathers the monks had a role in theological discussions and defended the faith during the ecumenical councils in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries (i.e. St. Anthony and St. Shenouda the Archimandrite).
- The monastic communities also offered shelter for the patriarchs at times of persecution.
- Many of the bishops and patriarchs were chosen from among the fathers the monks.
- The Holy Myron is prepared in the monasteries.

## Schools of Monasticism

**1. Antonian system:** This system is the earliest system used in the monastic era. Inspired by the life of **St. Anthony** and the anchorites who were before him, the anchorites or hermits live in complete seclusion under the guidance of a spiritual father. They only go to a nearby monastery or community to get food or water.

**2. Coenobitic system:** [*pronounced se-no-bait-ic*] Established by **St. Pachomius** (290 – 348 A.D.)

When he established the first monastery (320 A.D.), St. Pachomius established a monastery where the monks live, pray, and work together; living a communal lifestyle. He established various constitutions and guidelines for the monks to live by under the guidance of an abbot. Hundreds of monks lived in his monastery. This system is also called **Koinonia**, the Greek word meaning communal.

- Later, St. Pachomius established more monasteries and nunneries for women. According to Palladius, by the time of St. Pachomius' departure, these monasteries had over 3,000 monks!
- These constitutions were translated by Palladius to Greek and by St. Jerome to Latin.
- By 420 A.D. this number grew to 7,000 monks and nuns and moved out of Egypt into Palestine, Judea, Syria, North Africa, and eventually Western Europe. St. Basil visited his monasteries and was profoundly impressed.
- St. Basil and St. Benedict drew from the Pachomian Rules in setting forth their own monastic canons.

**3. Anchoritism system:** Adapted by **St. Shenouda the Archimandrite** (333-451 A.D.) and **St. Macarius** combining both the Antonian and Pachomian systems.

- Through this system, the monk population increased and the monasteries were also helping the surrounding communities within the monastery; there were churches, schools, cells, storehouses, etc.
- Coenobitism was not mandatory and solitude was encouraged in this system.



### Women's Monastic Movement

The monastic movement was not exclusive to men only; women also were drawn to the ascetic life and the monastic lifestyle. The women's monastic movement started early in Church history and passed through many stages:



**1. Living ascetic life at home:** As we see in 1 Corinthians 7

**2. 'House of virgins' under the Church supervision:** Started by **Pope Demetrius's wife** and later lead by many other prominent women (i.e. St. Anthony's sister, St. Amoun's wife, etc).

**3. Nunneries (Convents) under monastic rules:** The first monastic community in the world for women was founded by **St. Syncletica**. Later, a nunnery was established by **St. Pachomius** in upper Egypt. Many foreign abbesses went to Egypt like St. Melania the Great (374 A.D.) and St. Melania (418 A.D.).

### Coptic Monasticism Abroad

The Coptic monastic movement did not stop at the borders of Egypt but rather spread out to the whole world through the following means:

**1. St. Anthony's Biography:**

'Vita Antoni' which was written by St. Athanasius, rapidly spread all over the world.

**2. Pilgrims and Ascetics:**

Those who travelled across the world to visit Egypt, visited the monasteries, met with the hermit fathers, and documented their experiences to deliver it.

- Palladius wrote "Paradise of the Holy Fathers"
- St. John Cassian wrote "Institutes" and "Conferences".
- St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory the Wonderworker, and St. Hilary of Poitier also documented their experiences.



**3. Coptic Monks:**

Many monks were sent by their Abbots to establish monasteries abroad.

## Influence of Monasticism

Monasticism has a multitude of positive influences on the Church generally and the believers specifically.

1. **Spiritual influence:** Our fathers and mothers, the monks and nuns give us a good example in faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, virtues, etc. They also pray day and night for the Church, community, and the whole world.
2. **Doctrinal influence:** By defending the faith against heresies through their participation in the ecumenical councils and other theological dialogues. Monks were tortured or killed protecting the faith like St. Samuel the Confessor, and the martyrs, the forty-nine elder priests of Shiheet. Many of the monks travelled abroad to preach Christianity and serve various communities.
3. **Religious studies:** The monasteries are home to thousands of ancient manuscripts which we learn from and provide a living proof of the authenticity and soundness of our faith. They are also home of many theologians, researchers, and scholars who continue to educate and enrich our knowledge.
4. **Social influence:** Many monasteries offer various services to their surrounding communities.



## Coptic Monasticism Then and Now

- The Coptic Church now includes thousands of monks and nuns, including those who live in monasteries outside of Egypt, such as North America, Europe, and Africa.
- In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the number of monks and nuns increased significantly. Sadly, the number began to decline during the Persian invasion and demolition of monasteries as well as the poor conditions in the country due to political unrest. Most of the monasteries were destroyed and their inhabitants deserted, except for only a few. In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, conditions improved slightly. Then, in the dark ages between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, monasticism suffered a setback; the number of monks fell to only a few dozen in the entire church.
- Monasticism began again during the days of Pope Cyril IV, until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their number reached about 150 monks in the Wadi al-Natrun region.
- Then the Coptic monasticism finally witnessed a great renaissance in the days of the departed Pope Cyril VI and flourished in the days of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, who remained predominantly monastic in his teachings and behavior, despite leaving his life at the monastery for his pastoral work for more than 40 years.

## Choosing the Monastic Life

The idea begins when one is concerned about their own salvation more than anything. Their own salvation is the most important and pressing issue in their life. They find themselves unable to live an exemplary life according to God's commandments while living among others in the world, they then head towards one of the monasteries to live a life of solitude. The guidance of the father of confession is essential during the initial period of evaluation whether the monastic life is suitable for an individual or not. This experience is also supported by experienced spiritual guides who can guide the individual seeking the monastic life. The monastic life also must include some sort of work; therefore, the work of the hand was a fundamental pillar of the monk's actions from the beginning.



# Faithful in Your Spirituality

## Praying with the Agpeya

The Agpeya is the book of hourly prayers used by our beloved Coptic Orthodox Church. The name “Agpeya” comes from the Coptic word “Ti Agp” which means “the hour”, as we call it the book of hours. The Agpeya contains a collection of hourly and other various prayers for different occasions. Handed down to us through Holy Tradition, almost every branch of the Orthodox Church family has a similar book which contains a selection of prayers for hourly prayer.

The idea behind the book of hourly prayer is inspired by the beautiful prayers found in the Holy Bible and the great Biblical examples of men of prayers in their relationship with God.

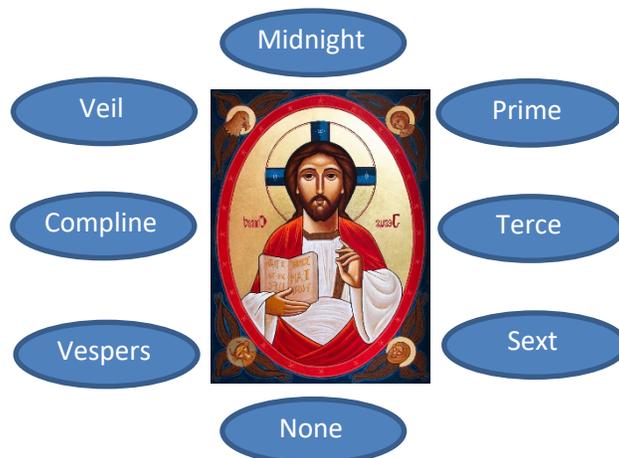
**“Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments.” Psalm 119:164**

### Why memorized (standardized) prayer?

The concept of memorized prayers was introduced to us by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself when His disciples asked Him **“Lord, teach us to pray”** he taught us ‘The Lord’s prayer’ (Luke 11 :1-4). As our Lord wanted to **“give us an example, that we should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21)** since then the first Church prayed with psalms in a unity in their prayers as St. Paul said, **“Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm.” (1 Corinthians 14:26)**

The Fathers of the Church continued in what they received from the Apostles and put for us many liturgical prayers which allowed the believers to pray with one accord both individually and as a community.

The Agpeya is structured to cover the whole day with prayers; Matins (Morning), Third, Sixth, Ninth, Vespers (Eleventh), Compline (Twelfth), Midnight (First, Second, and Third Watches), and the Veil Prayer (in the monasteries). This structure has its roots in the Old Testaments where prayers were put to give an opportunity for the individual to pray and communicate with God at least once every three hours.



The Fathers also arranged a commemoration for every hour in the Agpeya where all the prayers and litanies are inspired by the events that happened during the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Therefore, it brings the life of the Lord Jesus Christ before us every day to contemplate and learn from.



**First hour (Prime):** In "Matins" or the First hour of the daylight, we commemorate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we pray in the morning giving thanks to God for the beginning of the new day, and to glorify Him for His Resurrection.



**Third hour (Terce):** In the Third hour, we commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, asking God to fill us with His Holy Spirit for the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13).



**Sixth hour (Sext):** In the Sixth hour, we commemorate the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.



**Ninth hour (None):** In the Ninth hour, we commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross and we also commemorate the acceptance of the thief on the right.



**Eleventh hour (Vespers):** In the Eleventh hour, we commemorate the hour in which the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ was taken down from the Cross and anointed with spices and wrapped in linen. We also remember the eleventh hour laborers who received a full wage for their labor (Matthew 20:12) so that we may have hope in God's mercy. During this hour we give thanks for the end of the day, asking Him that we might spend the night in peace.



**Twelfth hour (Compline):** In the Twelfth hour, we commemorate the laying of our Lord Jesus Christ in the tomb watching for the end of our sojourn on earth.



**Veil Prayer:** This prayer concerns monks, yet it is suitable for individual meditation. It is prayed daily in monasteries.



**Midnight Prayer:** During the Midnight prayer, we commemorate the three times our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in Gethsemane. In this hour, we remember the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and we pray for our watchfulness and readiness for His second coming.

## Benefits of praying with the Agpeya:

### 1. It provides prayers according to God's will.

Inspired by the Holy Bible, the Agpeya provide us with prayers according to God's will.

**“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14)**



### 2. It extends our presence before God.

Praying with the Agpeya gives us the chance to talk to God longer than we usually do; it extends the time we set for prayer and keeps us in the blessed company of our Lord.

**“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”  
(Psalms 37:4)**

### 3. It includes all factors of prayer.

When we pray with the Agpeya, we pray a balanced prayer as it provides us with all kinds of prayers (thanksgiving, repentance, praising the Lord, supplications, self-reminders, promises, etc.).

**“Let us give thanks to the beneficent ...”  
“Have mercy upon us and have mercy ...”  
“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Hosts ...”  
“The Lord shall hear you in the day of your trouble...”**



### 4. It unifies the believers.

The Agpeya prayers - like all liturgical prayers- unify the community of the believers through its prayers. We stand in the morning, praying knowing that our brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world are praying the same prayers in unity with one accord.

### 5. It teaches us how to pray.

Sometimes when we pray, we find ourselves at a loss for words. The Agpeya teaches us what to say when we pray, how to stand before God, and it trains our tongues and hearts to speak to the Lord.

### 6. It keeps our mind engaged with God.

There is a prayer every 3 hours dedicated for that time. This helps us raise our hearts to the Lord every so often which keeps our connection with God as we pray day and night.

**“always ought to pray and not lose heart.” (Luke 18:1)**

### 7. It helps us memorize God's words.

Praying with the Agpeya helps us memorize many parts from the Holy Bible (the Gospels and psalms). When you get in the habit of praying with the Agpeya you will be able to memorize many parts and verses from the Holy Bible that will enrich your spiritual life.

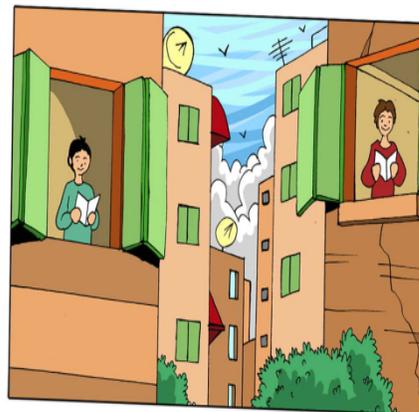
## How can I enjoy praying with the Agpeya?

### 1. Have your own Agpeya:

Have a personal Agpeya where you can underline and highlight your favorite parts of every prayer, and your own personal prayers and contemplations.

### 2. Always read, even if you have the prayers memorized:

It is advised to read from the Agpeya while praying even if you memorize certain prayers. Reading while praying also helps you focus. Reading also help us memorize the Agpeya prayers.



### 3. Involve your senses:

- Now that your eyes are involved in your prayers, pray also with your voice not only by reading with your eyes. When you verbalize the prayers, you involve more senses, and it helps you more and feel the words of your prayers.
- Raise up your hands, your eyes, and your heart, especially at verses like:  
    **“I will lift up my hands in Your name”** (1<sup>st</sup> hour)  
    **“My hands also I will lift up to your commandments”** (Midnight prayer).

**If you get distracted during your time of prayer, bring your distractions into your prayers, pray for what is distracting you, and pray asking for focus in your prayers.**

### 4. Sing the psalms:

When praying psalms and litanies, use a quite slow melody and sing them, which will help you enjoy the prayer and set your mind and heart into talking to God.

### 5. Don't rush your prayer:

When we rush our prayers, we do not benefit from them; we may confuse words or meanings. Take your time and enjoy being in the presence of the Lord.

### 6. Repeat when needed:

When you find a verse or a prayer that matches your current feeling, repeat! If you feel sad, lonely, angry, happy, thankful, and/or repentant, repeat the part or the psalm that describes your state.

### 7. Abide by your canon:

Discuss an Agpeya praying canon with your Father of Confession and abide by the canon despite daily schedule challenges. Consistency with your prayer canon help you build the habit of praying with the Agpeya.



# Spiritual Service

Spiritual service is not merely a job, the servant is not a teacher, an administrator, a supervisor, or a manager. Not understanding the nature of the service turns the service into a job-like task. So, what is true spiritual service?

## The Spiritual Service is Love:

The spiritual person turns to service out of their love for God, their love for others and their care for the salvation of others. If a service lacks love, it becomes a dry routine, void of Spirit. It turns into another task of teaching, managing, or social work.



Our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry on earth and His work for salvation was driven by love.

**“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)**

A servant cannot have a spiritual effect on a person unless there is common love between them; through this love, trust is built, advice is accepted, and the servant can understand the spiritual needs of those whom they serve and can lead them to the heavenly kingdom.

## The Spiritual Service is an Act of Giving:

The true servant must have a giving nature, giving without partiality or favoritism. He/she is like their Master, **“who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38)**, whether it is at home, work, school, gym, or church. They try - even in an indirect way - to work with others to bring them closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

## The Spiritual Service is out of Holy Zeal:

The spiritual servant is inflamed with fiery love and active pursuit of salvation for themselves and everyone as St. Paul said: **“Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?” (2 Corinthians 11:29)**

When the servant loves everyone, they are filled with holy zeal towards the salvation of others and are willing to do whatever it takes to help in their spiritual struggle as St. Paul said: **“to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22)**



Out of their holy zeal, the servant recognizes that service is nothing but working with the Holy Spirit; **“for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” (Matthew 10:20)**

### **The Spiritual Service is Driven by Gratitude and Duty:**

A great spiritual motive to service is a sense of gratitude to our mother, the Church which taught, cared for, and guided us through our spiritual journey. The servant also feels indebted to God, He who loved us to the end and granted us His knowledge and showed us His ways. We love Him and care for His children the same way we were loved and cared for.

It is a spiritual duty for us to serve others; if you love God and others you must serve. No one can see others perish and do nothing or experience divine love and not find it compelling to share that love with others. When the Samaritan woman knew Christ, she went and told everyone. **“Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (John 4:29)** Not only was she transformed from a sinner into a repentant, but also to an evangelist, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and told people about Him.

Everyone can serve according to their abilities and talents; whether it is serving the poor, the needy, the sick, cleaning, cooking or serving food, supportive services, counseling, deaconship or education as long as they are called to that specific service through the Church. Generally, however, at the very least, everyone can serve through being a good example.

### **The Service is Stewardship, a Talent, and a Responsibility:**

The individuals whom the Church entrusted you to serve are your responsibility in which we will give an account for. Ask yourself, what did I do for the spiritual growth of those whom I serve?



Not only is it a responsibility before the Church and the priest who called you to the service but also before God who entrusted you in the first place and called you through the authority of the Church, represented by the father the priest.

You may be the only source for them to know God; they may not have a proper religious education. If the children and youth of the Church could not find the proper spiritual nourishment inside the Church through their servants, they may lose their lives! The spiritual future of the coming generation is in the hands of the current servants. So, how are you handling your service? One day the Lord will ask each of us saying: **“Give an account of your stewardship.” (Luke 16:2)**

We must stand before the Lord in fear asking to give us wisdom and honesty to perform our service in faithfulness, purity, and righteousness.

### **The Spiritual Service is Fullness and Overflow:**

The spiritual service is not merely words and action **but life**. The words we say must turn into living words in order to bring life to others.

**“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)**

Our words in the ministry are only effective if we live by them. How can someone give something he does not have? One must have life with Christ and have communion with Him first in order to deliver Him to others. One must have experiential knowledge with Him first in order to pass down this knowledge to others. **One must be filled first in order to overflow.**

The Lord Jesus Christ prepared the fathers the Apostles for the ministry; He spent 3 years with them teaching and filling them. They learned from His example, from His teachings, from His practical application, His way of service, and from every miracle they witnessed. They received power on the day of Pentecost, then they started their service filled by the Holy Spirit and overflowing to others. **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**



Being filled by the Spirit was also a prerequisite for choosing the seven deacons. **“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” (Acts 6:3)**

We must ask ourselves then, are we filled by the Holy Spirit to be able to carry the responsibility of the service on our shoulders? We know if we are filled by the Spirit when our actions are wrapped by the fruit of the Spirit. **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23)**

#### **The Service is a Spiritual Mean for Growth:**

The true spiritual service leads to spiritual growth, not only for those who are being served but also the servant. Those who are being served must see the lesson in the servant’s life first before they hear it from them. Also, a Sunday school lesson that does not affect the life of the servant who prepares it cannot affect the children or youth who listen to it.

The servant must pay close attention for their own salvation first before looking after the salvation of others as St. Paul said: **“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27)** One of the many spiritual attacks against the servants is the war of busyness and distraction, where the servant is always busy in their service and overwhelmed with multiple tasks and many activities forgetting their own prayers, fasting, Bible and spiritual reading and meditation. Therefore, a strong measure to the soundness of one’s service is growing alongside those whom they serve.

#### **God is in the Center of the True Spiritual Ministry:**

God is the center of any service, the reason for the service and the One Who calls for the service. He is also the One Who works through the service. He is both the destiny and the goal for any service.



It is important to always point to God in any service, lesson, topic, sermon, or activity. To encourage people to live a life of repentance. To bring people to the altar where they can abide in Christ and He abides in them. Any service that does not put Christ before the eyes of those being served is void and lacking the true spiritual goal.

For God to be in the center of our service we need to review the following fundamentals:

- **It is from God's humility to allow us to serve:**

God is able to do all the work of the ministry by Himself. His Holy Spirit is He who changes the hearts of people and leads the sinners to repentance. However, it is from God's humility that He allows us to serve with Him and to cooperate with Him to produce a fruitful ministry. He does all the work, and He allows us to be recognized for the success of the service that He performed in the first place. When we recognize this great humility, how can we forget God in our service?

- **The Ministry is a calling from God:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples: **“you did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” (John 15:16)** Those **“whom He foreknew, He also predestined.” (Romans 8:29)** God is the One who calls individuals to the service and chooses them. Whether it is for the Apostleship, the priesthood, consecration, or any service in the Church. **“And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.” (Hebrews 5:4)**



- **God is the One who speaks in the ministry:**

The true servant never speaks on their own. When God chose Moses for His ministry, 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)** The Lord assured him saying: **“Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.” (Exodus 4:12)** Our Lord Jesus also said to His disciples: **“for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” (Matthew 10:20)**

The spiritual servant's duty is to be an honest messenger. They are a steward of the word; delivering God's message, not their own opinions and ideologies. The servant prays asking God to put His edifying and life changing words on his/her tongue.

- **God is the One who gives power and effect to the word:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ asked His disciples to: **“tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)** He also said to them: **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)** Our fathers the Apostles did not start their service until they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is the One who strengthens the servants in their ministry. He gives wisdom and endurance to carry on and to face any challenges in the ministry. The Holy Spirit takes our ordinary words and makes them heart-moving, comforting, and encouraging. The servant says the words and the Holy Spirit imparts them into the heart of the listener. What we teach in the ministry will have no effect on others without the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The true spiritual servant humiliates themselves to allow the Holy Spirit to work through them giving them power in their ministry.

# St. Shenoute the Archimandrite

St. Shenoute (Shenouda) is one of the most prominent figures of Coptic Monastic history. He lived towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and was contemporary to St. Cyril the Great, the pillar of faith.

## Childhood and Early Life

St. Shenoute was born in the year 333 A.D., in Shenalolet near Akhmim. His father was a farmer who owned cattle and he was a shepherd. From his youth he loved to pray and worship God. At the age of nine, his parents sent him to Abba Pigol, his uncle, who was the abbot of a monastery where he studied and learned the scriptures. He got exceedingly busy with prayer, fasting, and meditating and took to the desert where he had spent five continuous years in prayers and meditations.



## His Monastic Leadership

St. Shenoute returned to the monastery again in 383 A.D., to become the abbot after the death of his uncle, Abba Pigol. St. Shenoute presided over the monastery for 66 years in piety and peace and the number of monks multiplied and the activities therein increased. He is called Archimandrite (the head of anchorites) because he used to practice the hermetic (isolated) life from time to time and he also used to encourage some of his monks to withdraw to the desert after a few years of coenobitic life (monastic communal life). It is believed that there were 2,200 monks and 1,800 nuns in another location. Such a large number required a special care and order for a better spiritual guidance and a quality assurance of equal treatment among all. These celibates practiced communal life according to St. Pachomius coenobitic monasticism to which St. Shenouda added more cannons of worship and self-denial.

St. Shenoute was greatly concerned about organizing the monastic life. He devised a system that was in fact a combination of St. Anthony's hermetic life and St. Pachomius coenobitic monasticism. He used to retreat to a remote cell and spend some time in seclusion, then return to the monastery and participate in the monastic community.

St. Shenoute's monastic order was distinguished by strictness and firmness. He instituted meticulous conditions for acceptance into the monastery, which were chastity, obedience, and poverty. He insisted these conditions were to be strictly adhered to by all the monks. St. Shenoute placed great importance on Bible studies for both the monks and laity, which he delivered himself.

### **His Service to the Community**

St. Shenoute valued the importance of handicrafts; he maintained that each monk uses his talents and abilities in this area, especially for the service of the church and people.

The monks were also encouraged to use their past professions to serve each other and the surrounding villagers. Monks who had been doctors ministered to the sick; those who had been teachers taught the illiterate locals; they assisted in setting up farms, building churches and schools and many other services. The monastery became a living example of Christian community and charity.

### **His Spiritual Leadership**

The doors of his monastery were opened to the villagers every Saturday evening. Thousands participated in the Vespers prayers, spent the night in the monastery, and shared in the celebration of the divine liturgy the next morning. After the liturgy, they were invited to share a meal, which the monks prepared and served. St. Shenoute took advantage of the presence of those people in the monastery to teach them the true faith.

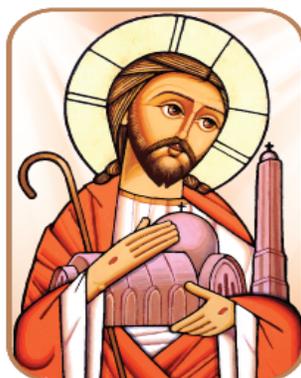
St. Shenouda became a shining light to all the world with his sermons, discourses, and canons that he put for the good of the monks, hierarchies, and laity, men, and women. Many were inspired by his teachings and later became his disciples, and his monastery was a lighthouse for spiritual guidance and enlightenment.

### **St. Shenoute Defending the Faith**

St. Shenoute was not only concerned about the spiritual welfare of his people but also about the doctrinal issues among the Coptic nation. He composed deep writings in theology with which he confronted the heresies that threatened the life of the Church and the peace of the congregation.

One of the most important steps St. Shenouda took in defending the faith was going to Constantinople to expose the heresy of Nestorius. He then accompanied St. Cyril of Alexandria the Pillar of Faith to attend the third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus in 431 A.D.

St. Shenoute's zeal for the faith encouraged the Council to exile Nestorius in Akhmim, near the monastery, where they felt he would be unable to lead anyone astray with his heresy until his earthly departure.



## St. Shenoute's Patriotism

Besides his deep spirituality, St. Shenoute was a political and a social reformer.

- He created Egyptian nationalism or Coptism.
- He resisted every Hellenistic (Greek) culture from the Coptic literature in Egypt.
- He encouraged the revival of the traditional Coptic culture in all aspects of the lives of the Egyptian people.
- He revived the Coptic language, using it in all his writings and sermons.
- He became a spokesperson for the simple peasants in front of their harsh Greek landlords, encouraging the Egyptians not to accept the oppression of their landlords.
- His writings reveal his great concern about the problems of the Copts, specifically the rights of the poor people in a society dominated by the rich Greeks and Romans who constituted a power similar to that of the ancient pagan religions.



This explains his refusal to receive any non-Egyptian candidate in his monastery and subsequently the absence of his writings in the Greek language. For this reason, for a long time his literary works remained unknown in both the Greek and Roman worlds.

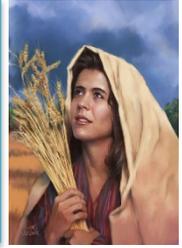
## His Departure

At his deathbed, he asked his disciples to assist him to bow down before God and he did. Then, he asked them to follow his footsteps bidding them “farewell” and reposed in peace on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Coptic month of Epep (July 14), 167 A.M. (451 A.D.) at the age of 118 years.



# The Book of Ruth

The book of Ruth is a beautiful story that starts in the land of Moab and is completed in Bethlehem of Judah. It tells the story of a young Moabite girl who desired to belong to the Lord and His people, and she was honored for her strive and faithfulness, not only by belonging to God's nation, but also in becoming the great-grandmother of King David.



## Introduction

Traditionally it is believed to be written in the time of the Judges, around 1300 B.C. The main events of the story happened between the harvest of barley and the harvest of wheat.

This is the only book named after a Gentile woman. She was honored by being the ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ and by having her name written in the Book of Life. The book of Ruth is filled with beautiful symbolism of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church of the New Testament. In the book, Boaz is a type (symbol) of Christ and Ruth is a type of the Church of the New Testament.

One major theme in the book of Ruth is **redemption**. Boaz acts as a redeemer by buying back Naomi's land, marrying Ruth, a Moabite, and fathering a son to keep the family line alive. Being a "kinsman-redeemer" is symbolic of the redeeming work of Christ. Ruth's position as a Gentile in the ancestry of David (and hence of Christ) signifies that all nations will be represented in the Kingdom of God.

## Chapter 1

### **Elimelech and his family (v. 1-5):**

The era of Judges was characterized by a bitter spiritual decline as the new generation, which came after Joshua. They did not know the Lord or remember His marvelous works with Israel, and they ran after strange gods. **"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17: 6)**

God often allowed the Gentiles to enslave the Israelites from time to time to humiliate them in order to realize their inner humiliation and return to the true God. What the Lord permitted on the apparent pain outside was nothing other than a reflection of what was internal in their hearts during their deviation from the true faith.

The chapter starts with the time of famine, and although Moab was considered an enemy of Israel, and the Israelites were not allowed to deal with them, Elimelech and his family left their land to Moab for food. Symbolically the fathers interpreted Elimelech's action as those who see living according to God's commandments as deprivation from their freedom, so they decide to live away seeking the world to fulfill their needs which often leads to losing oneself.

**Return to the land of Judah (v. 6-7):** Elimelech, which means my God is King, unfortunately did not live up to this name. Elimelech exemplifies the lack of faith of the Israelites. In his heart, he did not rely on his King, but went out to Moab to live under the shadow of an earthly king.

His sons, Mahlon and Chilion, married two Moabites, which was against the law which shows the consequences of the father leaving his homeland. Elimelech and his sons died without leaving offspring in Israel.

His wife, Naomi, means pleasantness. She represents the faithful Jews who will accept redemption in Christ. She returned from the country of Moab to receive the Lord's bread (Bethlehem). Therefore, when she went back, she wanted to have an opposite name, calling herself "the bitter one" because her soul was bitter.

**Naomi pities her daughters-in-law (v. 8-14):** Naomi was kind and gentle to her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. She advised them to leave her and start their own families. Her daughters-in-law clung to her; they put in their hearts to leave their people and their families and go with her to wherever she goes without asking anything in return.



**Ruth's determination to return with her (v. 15-18):** Orpah declared her intention to follow Naomi to the Lord, but when confronted with the realities of life, she returns to her people and her gods.

Ruth however went above and beyond with her love and loyalty towards Naomi. With a leap of faith, she went to Bethlehem with Naomi, similar to Abraham's faith which encouraged him to leave Haran heading to Canaan according to the Lord's promise. Her leap of faith however leads her to worship the true God and eventually becomes the ancestor of the incarnate King of kings Himself!

**St. Ambrose of Milan said, "Ruth entered the church and was made an Israelite, and [she] deserved to be counted among God's greatest servants; chosen on account of the kinship of her soul, not of her body."**

**Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem (v. 19-22):** Naomi's entrance to Bethlehem moved the whole town; everyone expected Naomi to enter with her children and grandchildren along with many riches and cattle. However, she returned empty, except for her Moabite daughter-in-law. Thus, Naomi became a striking example of a person who seeks fulfillment from the world and therefore loses everything including his/her contentment and inner peace.

She declares that what happened to her was not a coincidence or abstract disaster, but the hand of the Almighty God extended to her life exposing her weakness for the sake of her edification. Despite the tone of bitterness Naomi's words carried for her fall under divine discipline, she presented a tone of thanksgiving to God who brought her back to her home, even though she returned empty.

## Chapter 2

**Boaz the mighty man (v. 1):** The name Boaz means in him is glory or power. He is described as a mighty man, not merely in physical strength, but rather as a man of authority and prestige. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ is a mighty man, not in the physical sense but rather, He gives the lost souls support in Him, raising them above distress and pain, granting them a life of victory.



As Ruth enters Bethlehem, she finds Boaz as a relative. Similarly, are those who enter the faith and become members of God's family through the Sacrament of Baptism. Ruth entered Boaz's field to glean heads of grain representing the Gentiles who entered the faith in the New Testament, not relying on the law but on the grace of God blessing their labor and hard work.

**Ruth in the field of Boaz (v. 2-7):** According to the law, the fallen harvest stems were left behind for the reapers, the stranger, and the needy (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22). Ruth, the stranger in the land, asked her mother-in-law's permission to go out and glean heads of grain.

Boaz addressing his workers (and later addressing Ruth) shows that he is a man of God, who deals with others in righteousness. Ruth represented the Gentiles who spiritually accepted the law, while the men of the law (Naomi) remained without work. Ruth was a hard worker who left the easy life in the country of Moab among her people and her gods and came in maturity and struggle working in the field of Boaz.

**A dialogue of love in the field (v. 8-16):** Ruth worked hard gleaning until she was recognized by Boaz. He talked with her, inviting her to rest and quench her thirst. Similarly, when we enter the Church, the Lord welcomes us and gives us rest and quenches our thirst for Him. She, who is a stranger, was called "my daughter" and was asked to follow his young women; giving her a sense of family. Overwhelmed with Boaz's love and kindness, Ruth acknowledges that she does not deserve Boaz's favor because she is a stranger. Like Christ, Boaz blesses her with his favor and protection.

Boaz again recognizes her sacrificial love she has towards her mother-in-law seeking refuge under the wings of the true God, the God of Israel. She begins to see the reward of her love and belongingness to God's flock. Ruth is rewarded for her dedication by an invitation to eat with Boaz, not as a stranger, but as a daughter and a family member. This meal prefigures the Eucharistic Supper. He feeds her with bread as our Lord Jesus Christ feeds us with His Holy Body and Precious Blood.

Boaz orders that Ruth is given equal treatment and an equal share of grain. In Christ, Gentiles are grafted to the tree of salvation, and they share equally in the reception of grace. This love dialogue between Boaz and Ruth shows the marvelous love of Christ for His bride (the Church). As for her, she met her supreme love with humility and feeling of unworthiness of these divine blessings.

**Ruth in Naomi's house (v. 17-23):** Ruth worked all day without resting, she gathered what she could collect. For Ruth, the day was joyful; meeting Boaz and enjoying his good conversation and kind deeds. She was like a striving soul in her worldly exile who does not feel the comfort until she meets her Bridegroom and gets to know Him, listens to His words, and accepts His divine promises. Naomi's heart rejoiced as Ruth told her about her day, and she realized that she had received a blessing. Naomi blesses Boaz with words applicable to Christ advising Ruth to listen to Boaz and accompany his young women, as we are commanded to follow the saints footsteps in obeying God's commandments.

## Chapter 3

### Naomi's instructions to Ruth (v. 1-5):

Ruth brought Naomi an ephah of barley on the first day of her work, and her gleaning increased daily. Naomi's advice to Ruth revealed to her the path the soul would go to the Bridegroom to unite with Him. She advised her to:



- **"Wash"**: There is no access to the Bridegroom except through **Baptism**, where we enjoy the inner washing of our consciences and enjoy the power of the resurrection of our Bridegroom.
- **"Anoint"**: Having been washed with baptismal water, now she accepts the oil of **Chrismation** so that she has His Holy Spirit dwelling in her, sanctifying her, and preparing her for the eternal wedding.
- **"Put on your best garment"**: As she was washed from her sins and accepted His spirit in her, the soul gets prepared to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as a **robe of righteousness** that conceals all her weaknesses, so that she appears to the Father, and bearing His attributes. As St. Paul said: **"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** (Galatians 3:27)
- **"Go down to the threshing floor"**: In the threshing floor, the crop is scattered to sort the grain from the hay. It refers to **the final judgment**, where the righteous are separated from the wicked, so it is appropriate for us to "descend" in a spirit of humility until we meet the Lord the Judge.
- **"Go in, uncover his feet and lie down"**: Entering into the presence of the Lord carries with it an exit from the love of this world. To get out of the world's concerns and temptations and enter the circle of God's love, there we expose His feet; that is, we get to know **His divine mysteries** as much as we can as human beings. As long as we are in the world, we can only reveal His feet, until one day when we see Him, we know deeper mysteries, and realize things that we could not understand before.
- **As for her lying down**: It means her **acceptance of His suffering**, death and burial with Him. There is no acceptance of the crucified Bridegroom except through the Cross, and there is no resurrection for us with Him except by burial also with Him.

### Ruth meets Boaz (v. 6-13):

The uncovering of Boaz's feet was a message of asking for his protection as a relative. **"Take your maidservant under your wing"**: Ruth wants to be accepted as Boaz's wife and prophesizes the acceptance of the Gentiles by Christ. The Lord answered Ruth's voice and Boaz blessed her wisdom and love.



Boaz praised Ruth for her faithfulness to Elimelech, as she did not go after young men, which is to say she did not pursue the desires of the flesh, but she came to her second guardian because of her faithfulness, everyone testified about her. Boaz promised to fulfill the law by being her husband. The first guardian represents the Old Testament Law, which was incapable of redeeming mankind. Boaz will allow this kinsman the first opportunity to redeem Ruth; if he will not do it, Boaz will. For in Jewish tradition, the brother or closest relative marries his deceased brother's widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In the same way, God Himself redeemed His people when the Law had failed.

**Ruth returns to her mother-in-law (v. 14-18)**: Boaz sent Ruth to her mother-in-law with six ephahs of barley. Her mother-in-law asked her, **"Is that you, my daughter?"** Perhaps she could not recognize her, as her features had changed because of joy. How beautiful it would be when we meet our Lord Jesus Christ, and our features would change through our joy in Him, and our belonging to Him.

## Chapter 4

### **Boaz acquires what is Elimelech's (v. 1-8):**

Boaz wanted Ruth as a wife to establish an offspring for her late husband. It was necessary for him to ask the closest relative to release his right to Boaz as her second guardian. He called for a council of elders to manage this matter. The first guardian, (whose name is not mentioned as he was not worthy of to be mentioned in the Book of Life) wanted to acquire the field of Elimelech and pay the mortgage to add it to his inheritance. However, when he found that he would be obliged to marry Ruth to have an offspring for her late husband he refused, as he calculated it as a losing bargain. Therefore, he said: **"I cannot redeem it for myself,... You redeem my right of redemption for yourself."**

Just as the first guardian could not redeem the right of the dead. The law also, although having authority over man, could not save mankind, but rather the law surrendered the authority to the divine grace, where Christ could save and untie man from sin.

### **Boaz acquires Ruth (v. 9-12):**

Boaz's concern was to fulfil the law and have children for her late husband in order to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance. Everyone blessed this sacrificial and loving spirit and asked the Lord to bless him...

- in Ruth, like Rachel and Leah, so that she would be a mother of kings (David and his descendants) until the King of Kings would incarnate from her descendant St. Mary.
- in his name would **"prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem."** What name is greater than becoming a symbol of Christ Himself?!
- in his house to be like the house of Perez that Tamar bore, who broke into his brother Zerah and stole his birthright from him (Genesis 28:29-30). Thus, Boaz broke into his first guardian and took the blessing away from him.

### **Ruth gives birth to Obed (v. 13-17):**

Obed which means servant refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake became a bondservant (Philippians 2: 7). Children are often attributed to their fathers in scriptures, but here it is attributed to Ruth. **"The Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son."** This son is the fruit of her faith in God, who is able to grant life after death, so the women said: **"may he be to you a restorer of life"** because he returned a name to his dead father, as if he was alive.

### **Ruth the ancestor of David (v. 18-22):**

The book ends with the genealogy of the coming of David as one of the fruits of his great-grandmother Ruth. The royal root in the Jewish nation began to grow the tree and bear the unique fruit, 'the Son of David', the true spiritual king.



**This beautiful story of Ruth began with the famine that Elimelech and his family had to leave Judah to Moab and ended with true fulfillment, where the whole world is blessed with the son of David, 'the desire of the nations' our Lord Jesus Christ.**

# Memorization

## I. Verses on Faithfulness:

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 2:10

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers”

3 John 1:5

## II. First Watch of the Midnight Hour of the Agpeya The Gospel according to St. Matthew (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 Fathers:

- “Let us honor One only, and everyone will honor us; for if we despise One, that is God, everyone will despise us, and we will be lost.” – **St. John the Short**
- “If you desire salvation, do everything that leads you to it.” - **Abba Isidore the Priest**
- “These three things God requires of all the baptized: right faith in the heart, truth on the tongue, temperance in the body.” - **St. Gregory the Theologian**
- “Vigilance, self-knowledge and discernment; these are the guides of the soul.” – **Abba Poemen**
- “It is the wisdom of the saints to recognize the will of God. Indeed, in obeying the truth, man passes everything else, for he becomes the image and likeness of God.” - **Abba Isidore the Priest**
- “If a man's deeds are not in harmony with his prayer, he labors in vain.” – **St. Moses the Strong**



# Coptic



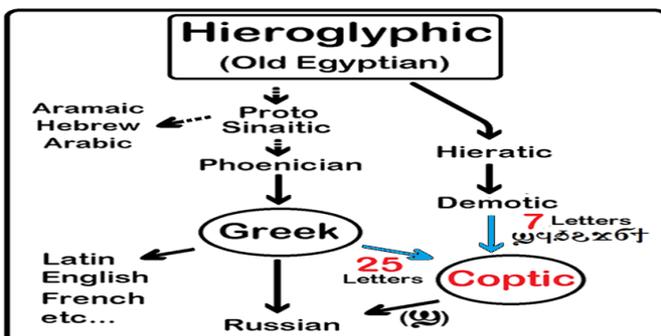
Our Lord spent about four years in Egypt as a baby. He spoke to the people of Egypt in their language, which was Coptic at that time.

## THE COPTIC ALPHABET

	<b>Α α</b> Alpha A	<b>Β β</b> Veeta B, V	<b>Γ γ</b> Gamma G, N, Gh	<b>Δ δ</b> Delta D, Th (the)	
<b>Ε ε</b> Eyy E	<b>Ϝ ϝ</b> Number 6 So-oo <small>Not a true letter</small> The number 6	<b>Ζ ζ</b> Zeeta Z	<b>Η η</b> Eeta EE	<b>Θ θ</b> Theeta TH (think), T	<b>Ι ι</b> Yota I, Y
<b>Κ κ</b> Kappa K	<b>Λ λ</b> Lavla L	<b>Μ μ</b> Mey M	<b>Ν ν</b> Ney N	<b>Ξ ξ</b> Eksee KS	<b>Ο ο</b> O O
<b>Π π</b> Pee P	<b>Ρ ρ</b> ro R	<b>Ϛ ϛ</b> seema S-Z	<b>Τ τ</b> tav T	<b>Υ υ</b> Epsilon V, I, (oo)	<b>Φ φ</b> Fey F
<b>Χ χ</b> Key K, Kh, Sh	<b>Ψ ψ</b> Epsee PS	<b>Ω ω</b> Oo Oo	<b>Ϡ ϡ</b> Shai SH	<b>ϣ ϛ</b> Fai F	<b>ϣ ϛ</b> Khai KH
	<b>Ϟ ϟ</b> Hori H	<b>Ϡ ϡ</b> Ganga G, J	<b>Ϣ ϣ</b> Cheema CH	<b>Ϥ ϥ</b> Tee Tee	

The Coptic Alphabet has 32 letters

- 24 consonants
- 7 vowels (**Α Ε Η Ι Ο Υ Ω**)
- 1 letter used only as a number (**Ϝ**)



First **25** letters from Hieroglyphic through Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician and **Greek** Alphabets

Last **7** letters from Hieroglyphic through Hieratic and **Demotic**

ⲛⲟϥⲣⲓ	hi
ⲛⲟϥⲣⲓ ⲡⲈⲘⲘⲏⲃ	Hi Sayedna
ⲛⲟϥⲣⲓ ⲡⲈⲘⲓⲱⲧ	Hi Abouna
ⲟϣⲭⲁⲓ	Bye (in the Lord)
ⲟϣⲭⲁⲓ ⲃⲈⲘ ⲡⲓⲃⲟⲓⲥ	



## Pronunciation

### Pronunciation of the letter Key “ϫ”

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 “**ⲡⲓⲣϫⲏ**” and “**Ⲉⲩϫⲏ**” would be pronounced “psikee” and “evkee”.

## Tenses: Present, Past, Future

### I, We

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
1st Person	I	<b>ἄ</b> ψάλλω I pray	<b>ἄ</b> ναψάλλω I will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω I prayed	<b>οὐ</b> ψάλλω I did not pray
	We	<b>τε</b> ψάλλω We pray	<b>τε</b> ναψάλλω We will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω We prayed	<b>οὐ</b> τεψάλλω We did not pray

### You (M., F., Pl.)

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
2nd person	You (s.m.)	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω You pray	<b>ἔ</b> ναψάλλω You will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω You prayed	<b>οὐ</b> εψάλλω You did not pray
	You (s.f.)	<b>τε</b> ψάλλω You pray	<b>τε</b> ραψάλλω You will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ρεψάλλω You prayed	<b>οὐ</b> τεψάλλω You did not pray
	You (pl.)	<b>τε</b> τεψάλλω You pray	<b>τε</b> τεναψάλλω You will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ρετεψάλλω You prayed	<b>οὐ</b> τετεψάλλω You did not pray

### He, She, They

		Present Tense	Future Tense	Past Tense	Negative Past Tense
3rd person	He	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω He prays	<b>ἔ</b> ναψάλλω He will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω He prayed	<b>οὐ</b> εψάλλω He did not pray
	She	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω She prays	<b>ἔ</b> ναψάλλω She will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω She prayed	<b>οὐ</b> εψάλλω She did not pray
	They	<b>ε</b> ψάλλω They pray	<b>ε</b> ναψάλλω They will pray	<b>ἔ</b> ψάλλω They prayed	<b>οὐ</b> ποψάλλω They did not pray

Negative Present and Future tenses are formed by

**ἄΝ** or **ἢ...ἄΝ**

Examples

Present **οὐκ ἐβόλησεν ἄΝ** or **ἢ οὐκ ἐβόλησεν ἄΝ**

Future **οὐκ ἐβόλησεν ἄΝ** or **ἢ οὐκ ἐβόλησεν ἄΝ**

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

†**δίδωμι** to teach

**μαρτυροῦμαι** to learn

† to give

**λαμβάνω** to take, receive

**προσκύπτω** to worship

**εὐχαριστέω** to give thanks

ἵ to come

**σωτήριος** to save, redeem

**εὐλογέω** to bless, praise

**ὕμνος** to sing, chant

**γινώσκω** to know

**πίστεύω** to believe

**καθίστημι** to sit down

**βραβύλλω** to snore

**ἀναγινώσκω** to read

**γράφω** to write

**φάγω** to eat

**πίνω** to drink

## Conversations

**Χαίρει** Hi

**Αὔριο** Bye

**εὐχαριστέω** Thanks

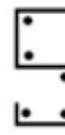
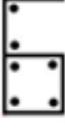
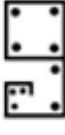
**Ὅχι ἔστι** You're welcome (for nothing)

# 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	ⲟⲣⲁⲓ	ⲁ̅	Alpha	α	Alpha	ا	Alef	א	Aleph
2	ϥⲛⲁⲣ	ⲃ̅	Veeta	β	Beta	ب	Baa	ב	Beth
3	ϣⲟⲙⲧ	Ⲅ̅	Gamma	γ	Gamma	ج	Geem	ג	Gimel
4	ϥⲧⲟⲣ	ⲅ̅	Delta	δ	Delta	د	Dal	ד	Daleth
5	ϥⲓⲟⲣ	Ⲇ̅	Ey	ε	Epsilon	ه	Haa	ה	He
6	ϥⲟⲟⲣ	Ⲉ̅	So-o	?	?	و	Waw	ו	Waw
7	ϣⲁⲣⲣ	ⲉ̅	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	Ⲭ	ϩⲙⲉ	4	Ⲇ	ϥⲧⲟⲩ
500	Ⲋ	ϥⲧⲓⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	50	Ⲭ	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ	5	Ⲉ	ϥⲧⲓⲟⲩ
600	Ⲍ	ϥϫⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	60	Ⲭ	ϥⲉ	6	Ⲋ	ϥϫⲟⲟⲩ
700	Ⲏ	ϣⲁⲣⲥ ϣⲉ	70	Ⲭ	ϣⲃⲉ	7	Ⲍ	ϣⲁⲣⲥ
800	Ⲑ	ϣⲙⲏⲏ ϣⲉ	80	Ⲭ	ϩⲁⲙⲛⲉ	8	Ⲏ	ϣⲙⲏⲏ
900	Ⲓ	ϣⲓⲧ ϣⲉ	90	Ⲭ	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	ϥⲧⲓⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	50	ⲧⲉⲃⲓ	5	ϥⲧⲓⲟⲩ
600	ϥϫⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲉ	60	ϥⲉ	6	ϥϫⲟⲟⲩ
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	ⲕⲗ
49	Ϸⲙⲉ ϣⲓⲧ	ⲙⲑ
50	ⲧⲉβⲓ	ⲛ
72	ϣⲓⲃⲉ 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	ϫⲗϨ
969	ϣⲓⲧ ϣⲉ ϥⲉ ϣⲓⲧ	ϣⲗⲑ

The Days of the week		
Day	Coptic	Other names
Sunday	ⲑⲓⲟⲩⲁⲓ	ⲑⲓⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲉ ⲏ̄ⲃⲟⲓϥ (Coptic) ⲕⲣⲓⲁⲕⲏ (Greek) (means the day of the Lord.)
Monday	ⲑⲓⲥⲛⲁⲩ	
Tuesday	ⲑⲓϣⲟⲙⲧ	
Wednesday	ⲑⲓϣⲧⲟⲩ	
Thursday	ⲑⲓⲧⲓⲟⲩ	
Friday	ⲑⲓϥⲟⲟⲩ	ⲑⲓⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲏⲧⲉ ⲑⲓϥⲟⲃⲧⲓ (Coptic) ⲑⲁⲣⲁⲥⲕⲉⲩⲏ (Greek) (means the day of preparation.)
Saturday	ⲑⲓϣⲁⲩⲣⲥ	ⲑⲓϥⲁⲃⲃⲁⲧⲟⲛ (in Hebrew means rest).

ἸΝ ΤΟ ὄΝΟΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΕΡΟΣ

In the Name of the Father

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ

and the Son

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ἉΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ

and the Holy Spirit

ΜΟΝΟΘΕΟΥ ἈΜΗΝ

One God Amen



ΠΑΤΕΡ ἡΜΩΝ Ὁ ὢΝ ΤΟΝ ΟὐΡΑΝΟΝ  
Our Father who art in Heaven

Ἄξιόν ἡμῶν εἶπαι ὁμοθυμαδόν

Make us worthy to say thankfully

ΠΑΤΕΡ ἡΜΩΝ Ὁ ὢΝ ΤΟΝ ΟὐΡΑΝΟΝ

Our father who art in heaven

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομα σου

Hallowed be Thy name

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ κράτος σου

Thy kingdom come

ἔστω βούλησί σου

Thy will be done

ὡς ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ ἔτσι ὡς ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ

On earth as it is in heaven

δός ἡμῖν σήμερον τὸ ἄρτον ἡμῶν

Give us this day our daily bread

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῶν τὰ ἑσθλά

And forgive us our trespasses

ὡς ἡμεῖς ἀφίμεθα τοῖς ἄλλοις

As we forgive

τοῖς ἁμαρτοῦργοις ἡμῶν

those who trespass against us

καὶ μὴ ἐπιβρομήσῃς ἡμᾶς

And lead us not into temptation

ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐπιβρομητοῦ

But deliver us from the evil one

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν

In Christ Jesus our Lord

ὡς ἔστιν

For Thine is

τὸ κράτος καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα

the kingdom, the power and the glory,

εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα Ἀμήν

forever, Amen

# Hymns & Rituals



## ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΕΝ (Last part of the Sunday Theotokia)

**Rites:** The hymn **ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΕΝ** (*Through Mary...*) is the last part of the Sunday Theotokia. It follows the hymn of **ΑΥΕΝ ΠΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ** (*They likened the archpriest...*). It has a long (melismatic) tune, and a shorter tune. The ending of the hymn is different if the hymn **ΜΙΩ ΣΑΡ** (*Who is likened unto You...*) will be chanted; this happens during the Holy 50 Days and then on every Sunday from Pentecost until the end of the Coptic month of Hathor.

Through Mary,  
the daughter of Joachim,  
we learned of the true sacrifice,  
for the forgiveness of sins.

**ΕΒΟΛΖΙΤΕΝ ΜΑΡΙΑ:**  
**ἘΠΕΡΙ ἸΩΑΚΙΜ:**  
**ΔΗΚΟΥΕΝ ΠΙΨΟΥΨΩΟΥ ἸΜΗΙ:**  
**ἸΧΑΝΟΒΙ ἘΒΟΛ.**

And we also pray,  
that we may win mercy,  
through your intercessions,  
with the Lover of Mankind.

**ΔΝΟΝ ΖΩΝ ΤΕΝΤΩΒΕ:**  
**ΕΘΡΕΝΨΑΨΝΙ ΕΥΝΑΙ:**  
**ΖΙΤΕΝ ΝΕΠΡΕΣΒΙΑ:**  
**ἸΤΟΥΤΥ ἸΠΙΜΑΙΡΩΜΙ.**



## Group Hymn

### Conclusion of the Adam Theotokia

Rites: The Conclusion of the Adam Theotokia is chanted after the Sunday, Monday or Tuesday Theotokia in the Vespers Praise and Midnight Praise. It is also chanted after the Adam Morning Doxology every morning. The word Theotokia means a hymn for St Mary, the Theotokos. The three aforementioned Theotokia are considered Adam because their verses consist of four lines per stanza and 5-6 syllables per line (in Coptic).

Your mercies O my God: are countless: and exceedingly plenteous: are Your compassions.	Μεκναι ὦ Πανου†: ζανατβ ἰηπι ἕμων: σεω ἔμαω: ἦχε νεκμετγενζητ.
All the raindrops: are counted by You: and the sand of the sea: is before Your eyes.	Μιτελτιλη ἕμονηωω: σενπ ἦτοτκ τηρον: πικεω ἦτε φιομ: σεχη ναρρεν νεκβαλ.
How much more are: the sins of my soul: manifest before You: O my Lord.	Ιε ανηρ μαλλον: νινοβι ἦτε ταψυχη: ναι εθουωη εβολ: ἕπεκἕθο Παβ οις.
The sins that I have committed: do not remember my Lord: and do not count: my iniquities.	Μινοβι ἔταιδιτογ: Παβ οις ἠνεκερπομενι: ογδε ἕπερ†θῆκ: ἐναἰνομια.
For You have chosen the publican: and the adulteress You have saved: and the right hand thief: My Lord You have remembered.	Χε πιτελωνησ ακσοτπη: †πορη ακω† ἕμοσ: πισοι ετσαοῖναμ: Παβ οις ακερπεμενι.
And I too: the sinner: teach me O my Lord: to offer repentance.	Δνοκ ζω Παβ οις: ζα πιρεφερνοβι: μα†σαβοι ἦταῖρι: ἠογμεταἰνοια.
For You do not desire: the death of a sinner: but rather that he returns: and that his soul may live.	Χε χουωω ἕφμον αν: ἕπιρεφερνοβι: ἕφρη† ἦτεετασθοσ: ἦτεσωνζ ἦχε τεεψυχη.
Restore us O God: to Your salvation: and deal with us: according to Your goodness.	Ματασθον Φνογ†: ἔζογν ἕπεκογχαῖ: ἀριοῖνι νεμαν: κατα τεκμετασθαθοσ.

For You are good: and merciful: let Your compassions: speedily come to us.	<b>Χε ἠθoκ οὐάσθεoς: οὐoε ἠνἀητ: μἀρoντἀεoн ἠχωλεμ: ἠχε νεκμετϖενεητ.</b>
Have compassion upon us all: O Lord God our Savior: and have mercy upon us: according to Your great mercy.	<b>ϖενεητ εἀρoνн τηρεн: Πῶοο ϖноу† Πενсωτηр: οὐoε нαι нαιн: κατἀ πεκнιϖ† ἠнαι.</b>
Remember those: O Christ our Master: be among us: and proclaim and say.	<b>Наи кῑρι ἠπονηεῖн: ὠ πεнннв Πιχῑςтoс: εκεϖωπн εен теημη†: εκωϖ εῖολ εκχω ἠμoс.</b>
My peace I: give to You: the peace of My Father: I leave with you.	<b>Χε τἀεиρннн ἠноκ: †† ἠμoс нωтен: †εиρннн ἠΠαιωт: †χω ἠμoс неμωтен.</b>
O King of peace: grant us Your peace, establish for us Your peace: and forgive us our sins.	<b>Πoнρo ἠτε †εиρннн: μoи нαιн ἠτεкεиρннн: сеμнн нαιн ἠτεкεиρннн: χα неηнови нαιн εῖολ.</b>
Disperse the enemies: of the Church: and fortify her: that she may not be shaken forever.	<b>Χωρ εῖολ ἠннιχαχι: ἠτε †εκκῶηсиἀ: ἀρисoв† ερoс: ἠнескнм ϖἀ εнеε.</b>
Immanuel our God: is now in our midst: with the glory of His Father: and the Holy Spirit.	<b>εμμἀноυηλ Πенноу†: εен теημη† †ноу: εен ἠὠoн ἠτε Περιωт: неμ Πнпнеυμα εθoυαв.</b>
May He bless us all: and purify our hearts: and heal the sicknesses: of our souls and bodies.	<b>ἠτερῑμοу εрон τηρεн: ἠτερτοуво ἠнеηεηт: ἠτερτἀλῶo ἠннιϖωнн: ἠτε неηψυχη неμ неηсωμἀ.</b>
We worship You, O Christ: with Your good Father: and the Holy Spirit: for You have come and saved us.	<b>†εноуωϖ† ἠμoк ὠ Πιχῑςтoс: неμ Πεκнωт ἠάσθεoс: неμ Πнпнеυμα εθoυαв: χε ἀкн ἀкω† ἠμoн.</b>





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