



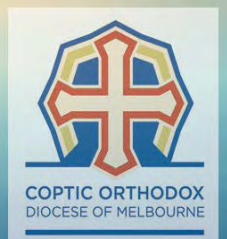
Summer Festival | 2024 / 2025

The Lord is My Light and



Gr 10-12 | English Edition

My Salvation (Psalm 27:1)



His Holiness Pope Tawadros II



118th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of The See of Saint Mark

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“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

Topic 1 “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation;” (Psalm 27:1)

- By the grace of God, this is the theme of the Summer Festival in the year 2024, and it is the first verse of Psalm 27 of our teacher David the Prophet, which he prayed when he was in a time of distress persecuted by King Saul, and the Lord brought light into the life of David. He did not despair in the darkness as his life was filled with the presence of the Lord, and for this reason his life was filled with light and hope.

- For whoever has the Lord as a light will see God’s strength and God’s salvation from the fear and sorrows of this world and its worries, as well as from sin.

- This Psalm is a declaration about God because He is our light, our salvation, and our fortress on a personal level. In it, the believer is saved from their spiritual enemies and their inner insight is enlightened to behold the heavenly glories. It is therefore a Psalm of confidence and victory, as the Lord is our light and our salvation.

These are the main topics of this year’s theme:

1. The Lord
 2. The Lord is my light
 3. The Lord is my salvation
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Firstly: Who is the Lord?

We believe in one Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Meaning that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. There are not three gods but one God, and this is our faith regarding the Holy Trinity.

God has revealed to us that He is one God in three Hypostasis in both the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 John 5:7). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in essence, but the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit. Each Hypostasis has an attribute (characteristic) that distinguishes Him from the other Hypostases. That is, they are different in terms of hypostatic properties.

The Father is the origin or source. The Son is He who is born of the Father. The Holy Spirit is He who proceeds from the Father.

These truths of faith are the teachings of our Coptic Orthodox Church about the Holy Trinity, who is able to give us grace so that we are ready to answer everyone who asks us about the reason for the hope that is in us.

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (John 1:18). The Holy Bible said: “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh,” (1 Timothy 3:16). Some believe in God who is in heaven - and this is good and true – and others reject the existence of God, or deny Him entirely because of the darkness and weakness of their poor hearts! Therefore, our belief in the incarnation is the solution for all human problems, for it is through the incarnation that the Almighty God, the

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Loving One, and the Wise Teacher, descended to illuminate the way for humans and to save them, as He washes them from the filth of sin, and raises them to heavenly immortality. So, let us ask: who God is?

1. God is eternal

God has no beginning and no end. He is eternal. “Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” (Psalm 90:2)

God alone is eternal, who has no beginning, and is everlasting and has no end. There is no other being who is eternal and everlasting, because all beings have a beginning and an end. Its beginning is the day it was created, the day it came to be, the day it was born. Before that, none of these creatures existed.

This whole universe is created, including all that is in it, and it has a beginning and an end as well, so nothing in it is characterized by eternity. As for God, He is different. “I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth... Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth;” (Proverbs 8:23,25). Therefore, God did not have a time where He began, and will have no end. He is eternal. “But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.” (Psalm 102:27).

2. God the Creator

He alone created everything. The phrase “created” means that He made everything from nothing. So God is the one who created the universe with a word of His mouth: “Be, and it was.” And God did not only create matter and the material things, but He also created the spirit and the mind. He created the angels who are spirits. God also created life, and as the Creator, He alone can also recall this spirit to whom He gave life. He is the one in whose hands are life and death.

He is also the one who created nature, for “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) and He can destroy them. We are talking here about the beginning of creation: the creation of the earth, the firmament, the sun, the moon, the stars, plants, and animals, and finally the human being. All of this happened inside time, wherefore God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. Whoever denies the existence of God is blind and cannot see.

3. God must exist

One of the unique characteristics of God is that His existence is necessary; meaning that necessity necessitates His existence. This is because all existence necessitates the existence of a Supreme All-powerful being. He is the One who created them, and He is the original cause of the creation of all existence. There is no being other than God whose existence can be described as necessary. “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself;” (John 5:26).

4. God is unlimited and His power is unlimited (Almighty)

God is unlimited in terms of space and time: He exists in every place and time, in heaven and on earth. No place is devoid of Him and no place can contain Him, nor can any place restrict Him. He is always present in every place, “who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:23), throughout time and

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beyond. He is unlimited in all things, and capable of all things. His strength is unlimited and no one shares this characteristic with Him, neither angels nor humans.

5. God is all-knowing (Omniscient)

God is the only one who knows all things about everything. At all times and in any place, He is also the one who knows things before they exist, that is, He knows the future, the unseen, and the hidden knowledge. He knows the past, the present, and the future, all of which are present in front of him at once. He knows the hidden and the manifest. His knowledge is complete, consistent, and certain. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13).

6. God is the Pantocrator

It is not possible for something to happen in the universe, whether great or small, except with God’s permission. Everything that happens in the universe is according to the divine providence. “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matthew 10:30).

7. God is unchanging

God’s scales are fixed and unchanging, “with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). God doesn’t change at all. He does not increase, for there is nothing that can be added to Him, since He is infinite and perfect in everything. He is not lacking in anything because deficiency is not consistent with His Divinity. He does not change because there is no better state than the one He is in for Him to change to.

8. God is all-Holy

The holiness of God is His infallibility; meaning the inability to make mistakes, which does not exist except in God alone because “No one is holy like the Lord,” (1 Samuel 2:2). It is one of the most important proofs that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Logos (Word of God) Who appeared in the flesh. “Him who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). He also challenged the Jews, saying: “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46).

9. God who was incarnate for our salvation

Some people think that incarnation is something inconceivable to attribute to God, but the truth is that incarnation:

1. Does not contradict God’s holiness,
2. Does not contradict God’s power,
3. Does not contradict God’s wisdom,
4. Does not contradict God’s honour.

Rather, the incarnation is the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation, which the fathers prophesied about in the Old Testament and which He promised to us through the arrival of the Redeemer: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14). “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6).

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Because it was necessary for there to be a Redeemer, and the following specifications must be met in this Redeemer:

1. He must be a human, to represent the fallen humanity.
2. He must die since the wages of sin are death.
3. He must be unlimited because Adam’s sin was unlimited, since it was directed to God, who is unlimited. The Redeemer must be unlimited, to atone for the sins of all humanity across all ages.
4. He must be sinless, because the one who lacks something cannot give it to others.
5. He must be a creator to renew the human creation.

The only one in whom all these specifications can be met is God: who can be incarnated in the form of a human being subject to death, while being unlimited, holy and without sin, and the Creator who is able to renew mankind and return them to their first form.

10. God is immortal

He is life itself, so can life die?! Should the Giver of life die? Heavens forbid! For He said: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). After He died for us in the flesh and redeemed us through the cross, He raised Himself by Himself, and rose again and did not die, and He will never die, for He is God “who lives forever and ever,” (Revelation 4:9, 10:6, 15:7).

11. God dwells in us

Emmanuel = God is with us Christianity = God is in us

This is a mighty shift from the Most High God who resides in the heavens, and who humbled Himself and appeared to us in the form of “Emmanuel” and became God who humbled Himself, “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:6-7). Then came another shift, as Emmanuel dwelt among us!! This is the essence of Christianity! When the Spirit of God resides in us, we became holy temples inhabited by the Holy Spirit, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27).

Secondly: The Lord is my light

1. God is the true Light, and its source

“God is light, He abides in light, and the angels of light, sing unto Him” (The Monday Theotokia – 9th Part)

God is light, and He is the source and creator of light:

a. God is light, and it is He who said “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12).

- “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)

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- In the Book of Revelation Saint John the Beloved described Jesus by saying “His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.” (Revelation 1:16).

- In the litanies of the First Hour, we say “O True Light who enlightens every man that comes into the world... when the morning hour approaches O Christ our God the True Light let the senses of light shine upon us...”

- God is the Father and source of lights (James 1:17), and is “dwelling in unapproachable light,” (1 Timothy 6:16).

b. God is the source of light, for it is He who 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). These are the first works of God for us, through which we are able to see, realize, and enjoy what divine love offers us. The Church teaches us to walk in this divine light through...

2. The teachings of the Holy Bible

Our Holy Bible, with its two Testaments, is the Word of God: His commandments and His promises. It was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and it is the constitution of our life. We have received it by tradition, and we preserve it and live by its commandments; for:

- “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;” (Psalm 19:8)

- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

- “For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light;” (Proverbs 6:23)

And so we are able to distinguish between richness and emptiness. The Lord Christ has commanded us:

- “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works” (Matthew 5:16)

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

3. The Church and the Liturgy

a. The church is a beacon of ritual spirituality. It resembles the sky with its stars and angels, for it is always illuminated with many lights, like heaven on earth, an indication of the presence of God who dwells in the light. Light is an indication of the glory and splendour of the church. Was not the lampstand always lit in the Tabernacle of Meeting? Therefore the church is illuminated, especially when reading the chapters of the divine scripture. Because we cannot imagine the sky being dark, for in it “He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3).

This is apparent in the liturgical prayers:

b. In the prayers of the Baptism (the sacrament of enlightenment), we are been baptized and so have become enlightened, and since we have become enlightened we have become children of God, and when we have become children we become perfected.

The priest prays and asks for the one being baptized: “Call your servants to your pure light” - “Open the eyes of their hearts so that they may be illuminated by the light of the Gospel of your Kingdom” - “Make them pure vessels, children of light.”

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c. In the prayers of fraction in the Divine Liturgy, we pray: “O God, the Father of Light, and the Prince of Life... Who raised us from the depth to light... Who enlightened the darkness of error within us by the coming of your only Son in the flesh.”

“You are the merciful God... who has given us light, the sinners.” “O you who opened the eyes of the blind, open the eyes of our hearts.”

d. And in the Agpia prayers: In the absolution of the First Hour, we ask: “Illuminate our minds, our hearts, and our understanding, O Master of all... may Your light shine upon us, and may You enlighten us with the light of Your divine knowledge. Make us children of light, children of daytime, that we may complete this day in righteousness, purity, and good order.”

In the absolution of the Midnight Prayer, we say “enlighten our minds to understand Your life giving words. Raise us from the darkness of mortal sin.”

e. The glorious history of the Church through the ages is also a light for us along the path, with the heritage of the fathers through laws, decisions, and canons established by the ecumenical councils, which cannot be changed or ignored. Likewise, the lives and sayings of the church fathers and their interpretations of the Holy Bible are lights along the path towards eternity. Therefore, the Coptic Orthodox Church strives to preserve the treasure of upright faith, sound education, and established doctrine as we have received it from the great fathers such as Saint Athanasius the Apostolic, Saint Cyril the Great, Saint Dioscorus and others.

4. The light of the lives of the saints

- The Lord Christ came to illuminate the world, and His disciples reflect His light just as 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), so the church was filled with saints who became a light for us. We listen to their lives in the Synaxarium daily.

- During Holy Week, when we finish reading any homily of one of the fathers, we say: “Let us conclude the homily of our father (.....) who enlightened our minds and the eyes of our hearts,” so we follow in their footsteps according to the commandment: “whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” (Hebrews 13:7).

5. The lives of the righteous are light

The first prayer of the midnight praise is “Arise O children of the light”. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

A symbol of the radiance that comes from the believers are their words, their silence, their actions, their behaviours, and all their activities; as the light of Christ residing within them shines through them to all, defeating the remnants of darkness and guiding the steps of the people around them.

6. The light of eternal life

The beginning of the Bible talks about the creation of the light that God created on the first day. The end of the Holy Bible also speaks of the luminous heavenly Jerusalem, in which it says: “the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.” (Revelation 21:23), and in the resurrection the righteous will rise with bodies which are luminous, spiritual, and elevated, sanctified to eternal life with the Lord Jesus and the saints. Let us be the shining light in the world, which is necessarily:

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- a. Shining and reflecting the light of Christ: just as the light of the moon reflects the light of the sun.
- b. The indwelling of God’s light within us. This is why the Lord Christ likened His bride to the pure sun (Song of Solomon 6:10).

Let us thank the Lord who made us a light to the world, for He resides within us and He shines through us with His divine image. He is able to illuminate our lives from within and without, and lead our path to the Kingdom.

Thirdly: The Lord is my salvation

1. What is the meaning of salvation?

Salvation in our Coptic Orthodox understanding is based on the Holy Bible and the teachings of the fathers:

The word ‘salvation’ comes from the word ‘save’

Man sinned and transgressed the commandment, and the punishment for sin was death, so he and his children (all of humanity) were sentenced to death, and his nature was corrupted as a result of the action of sin. Man became in dire need of a Savior to save him from all of this so that he can return once again to Paradise to dwell with God.

This salvation is a process that continues throughout life. It begins in the church through practicing the church sacraments necessary for salvation: baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist, and is completed by repentance and confession, and concludes with changing the body into a spiritual, heavenly body! Therefore, we reject the phrase “I am saved!” and the idea of “instantaneous salvation,” not out of a desire for doctrinal debate, but rather out of an understanding of the dimensions of the “process” of salvation.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III says in the book ‘The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment’: “You, my brother, were in the loins of Adam when he sinned, and when he was punished and death entered into him. So you inherited all of this from him, and you received with him the sentence of death as part of it and sin entered your nature, so you lost the image and likeness of God, and became in need of salvation from this serious original sin, and from all its consequences, and this punishment. Our teacher Paul the Apostle said about this: “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 are in need of our Lord Christ, who:

1. Saves us from the original sin which we inherited from Adam and Eve.
2. Saves us from the corruption of our human nature, which became inclined to sin after the fall.
3. Saves us from all types of death:
 - a. Bodily death, through His resurrection
 - b. Spiritual death, when we enter into a relationship with Him and have Him dwell in us.
 - c. Death of our minds, when we become His children and partakers of the divine nature.
 - d. Eternal death, when we inherit the eternal life.

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4. Saves us from the actual sins that dominate us due to our frequent falls: sins of the thought, senses, feelings, body, relationships, etc.
5. Saves us from the sorrows and toils of this world by the work of His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, as He promised us “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33).
6. Saves us from the body of weakness which continually falls until the last breath, until it is changed (by the power of resurrection) into a luminous, glorified body.
7. Saves us from the wars of the devils and his temptations, he who only wants our destruction. And we trust that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” (Romans 16:20).

2. The pillars of salvation (how can we be saved?):

- Through the birth of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour was born, or rather Salvation was born. The Lord Jesus is the Redeemer, and He is the ransom at the same time.
- There is no salvation without redemption. There is no redemption without incarnation. There is no incarnation without a birth.

The Lord Christ provided salvation for that covers sinners in all parts of the world for all ages. However not everyone was saved, but everyone who believed in him was saved. And salvation is accepted through certain criteria, which are:

1. Faith in the Lord Christ, the only Saviour: That is why St Peter the Apostle said: “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).

In the annunciation of the birth of the Lord Christ, it was said: “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21), and when the angels announced his birth, they announced that “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” will be born (Luke 2:11). Therefore Christ is the Savior, and there is no salvation for anyone except through faith in Christ the Savior.

We cannot be saved from our sins by simply believing in the existence of God alone. Even Akhenaten believed in the existence of God. But salvation occurs when we believe that our great God was incarnated in human form from the Virgin Mary, and was crucified on the cross. He died and rose for our salvation. Then He ascended in his luminous body to heaven, sent us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and established for us the Holy Church. He placed in it the salvific sacraments, without which there is no salvation for man.

It is clear that faith in Jesus Christ is essential for salvation, as the Lord says: “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).

Again He says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16). “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5).

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2. Practicing the Sacraments, for the Bible teaches us about the importance of the sacraments for salvation:

1. Baptism: “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). ““He who believes and is baptized will be saved;” (Mark 16:16).

2. Chrismation: “But you have an anointing from the Holy One,” (1 John 2:20) so we may be holy temples where the Spirit of God dwells.

3. Repentance and confession: “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3).

4. Holy Communion: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (John 6:56). These first four sacraments are necessary for salvation.

5. 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).

6. Marriage: Holy marriage is a union between one man and one woman (as the Lord desired) with chastity and purity for their whole life, with the aim of establishing a family. It is a holy sacrament in which the Holy Spirit descends on the newlyweds (bride and bridegroom) and unites them so that they become one heart and one body, since from the beginning, God created Eve to be to Adam “a helper comparable to him.” (Genesis 2:18).

The Bible says about the sacrament of marriage: “This is a great mystery,” (Ephesians 5:32). Our church taught us to live a life of purity, therefore we reject the so-called ‘same-sex marriage’ that is contrary to Scripture.

7. Priesthood: Priests are servants of the mystery of salvation appointed by the Church to care, teach, and practice the holy sacraments.

“A bishop then must be... able to teach;” (1 Timothy 3:2).

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:16).

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

3. Good deeds. For “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).

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10). Therefore, good deeds are essential for salvation because they prove the sincerity of faith as one of its fruits.

4. Transfiguration of the body. What is meant by this is that our bodies with which we live on earth are contaminated by sinfulness, which makes us sin from time to time. Although the Christian person strives not to sin, they, because of the sinful bodies in which they live, become weak and makes mistakes. But they quickly rise up with remorse, and in the spirit of repentance

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and with honesty in confession say to the sin: “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise;” (Micah 7:8).

As long as we are in the body of sin, the heavy body that is susceptible to falling, sickness, and death, our salvation will not be complete. Rather, we must take off this earthy body, the body of disgrace and weakness, in order to put on the luminous, heavenly, glorified body, which is not susceptible to sickness, falling, or death.

We get rid of this body of sin in resurrection! That is, when we rise in the Second Coming. We will rise in new bodies: spiritual, luminous, heavenly, and glorified; just like the body of the Lord Christ with which He rose from the dead.

This is what is known as ‘transfiguration’ (‘trans’ = change, ‘figure’ = shape). So then the shape of our bodies will change to that same luminous and spiritual image, and it is the body in which we will be raised when the Lord Christ comes in the Second Coming to take us on the clouds, and all who believe in Him will rise with luminous bodies.

- “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,” (Philippians 3:20-21).

- “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Therefore, these are the four pillars of salvation:

1. Faith in Christ. Let us live for Him, believing in His incarnation and His redemption for us.
2. The holy sacraments. Let us practice them faithfully to sanctify us.
3. Good deeds. As evidence and fruit of the sincerity of our faith.
4. The transfiguration of the body. This is what the Lord will give us in His second coming.

Thanks be to our God the Lord Jesus, the light of our lives, the Saviour of our souls, the giver of strength, hope, solace, peace, and steadfastness. Therefore:

- We are not afraid of any hardships, whatever they may be. The Church has survived many wars, doubts, and religious and doctrinal heresies throughout history. All of these have faded, and the Church has remained strong, unique, alone, steadfast, a light to the world, a shining sun, and a feared army, that every demon dreads. “And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18).

- We do not fear because we are united with the Lord within us. Through partaking of the holy sacraments, we abide in Him and He in us. Therefore we have acquired God’s grace that preserves us, gives us peace and reassurance, defeats the remnants of evil, and illuminates the path for us.

- We are not afraid because we are children of God: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14). He gives us victory through the power of His victorious Cross, and therefore we take pride in the cross, for He is the power of God for our salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18). This was the faith of all the righteous martyrs of the Church throughout the ages, and what the world saw at the martyrdom of the 21 martyrs in Libya.

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- We are not afraid because we have hope in eternal life. “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”
(Revelation 3:21).

May the Lord grant us a festival that satisfies our souls, grows our spiritual life, and is filled with peace, so that we may become fruitful branches in the Lord’s vineyard and fill our lives with goodness, and so that we may live for Him and bear witness to His holy name all our days.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

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Topic 2 “The First Epistle of St John”

Aim of the Epistle:

At the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd, some heresies appeared that revolved around the person of Jesus Christ, stating that he did not have a real body and his body was a vision; because matter in their view was evil and therefore God could take on a material body. This thought corrupts man’s view of matter and the body. Our teacher John wrote this epistle in response to this thought. The beloved John was the last of the disciples to pass away, and he bears witness here to the eternal God who was incarnate at the fullness of time whom he saw, heard, and touched, along with the rest of the disciples and the people. He is an eyewitness to the incarnation of Christ, His teachings, and His redemption. This opening of the epistle gives it strength, as it is from a reliable source, that is, correct teachings taken from God Himself, who humbled Himself and was incarnate in order to come near to us, so we can feel His love as He raises us to him.

The aim of the Epistle can be found in 1 John 1:3-4.

Chapter 1

Witness to Christ (v. 1-4):

Christ is the Word of the living God. Rather, He is the source of life for all human beings. He is the one who gives life to creation and renews the creation that was corrupted and dead. He came so that we may have spiritual life, and eternal life in particular. Christ was incarnated to unite us to Him, and give us life.

“The life was manifested”: Christ who is Life appeared in the flesh, and we saw Him and we bear witness to you. Christ was incarnated so that we could enjoy the life that He revealed.

The Son took a body for himself so that we could see Him and realize that He is life for our souls and a Saviour for us from our spiritual death. He was incarnated to unite with us and give us His eternal life.

The purpose of the good news and fellowship with God is joy, or complete joy, as we are saved from the power of sin and death and enjoy a continuing relationship with God in this life and forever.

Senses and numbers

List the verses in which each of the five senses is mentioned, and how many times it was mentioned in the chapter:

Hearing	Sight	Smell	Tasting/Uses of the tongue	Touching

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

What is the difference between hearing, seeing, looking and touching?

Discussion question:

Is this experience limited to John the Apostle, who spent years with Him on earth? Are we able to touch Him after His ascension to heaven?

Application:

Which we have heard... which we have seen with our eyes... which we have looked upon... and our hands have handled. John's knowledge is through lived experience, since he lived with Christ for three and a half years.

Every day, think about Christ's love for you so that you can talk to Him and enjoy His company. He alone is the source of life and joy in the world. He is close to you and wants to unite with you in His holy mysteries. He lives in you to stir up your longing with love for Him, embrace your life, comfort your heart, and support you in all your steps.

That which we have seen and heard we tell you. Everyone who has experienced the eternal life of Christ would like to tell everyone about it so that every person may experience and live eternal life. This is the subject of John's letter.

John means by this that Christ was truly incarnated, especially when he said, “our hands have handled,” to respond to the heretics who said that the body of Christ was an imaginary body (the heresy of Docetism). What John said here means that the body of Christ was a real body that was identical to our bodies, except for sin alone.

You can recall biblical characters from the New Testament who enjoyed the touch of Christ, with mention of the reference.

“*So that you may have a share with us*”: “Share” means a familiarity / friendship / affection / love / company with one goal through love. What Adam has failed in, Christ was incarnate to fulfil and to restore creation to its intended state. God created one Adam, and from him He made Eve, and from them came the children. The meaning is unity, for all (Eve and the children) are from Adam, meaning they were in Adam, and Adam in the Son, and the Son in the Father.

Adam, Eve, and their children were supposed to live in unity and love, then sin entered to corrupt creation and caused a man to kill his brother. Christ came to restore this unity or communion between us as human beings and Himself, as the new head of this body, thus becoming the second Adam.

“**and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**” (1 John 1:3). He calls the listeners to have fellowship with John and his church. John writes to us and to everyone who reads his epistle so that we may have this fellowship with him, with the Father and the Son. The word “communion” indicates that we cannot enjoy the fruits of this communion, meaning complete joy, except through the church. In the church we are born of water and the Spirit, in it we confess, in it we pray the Liturgy and we receive participation in the body of Christ through Holy Communion.

Summary:

Life without Christ is a life free of any interest, so people create innovations and inventions, and even these after a time lose their lustre and become boring. As for life with Christ, it has another

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flavour, and even pain with Christ has another flavour. Communion with Christ has its own pleasure, whether in joys or pains.

Application:

What is meant by ‘one body’?

My talent is different from yours, and my personality is different from yours, so that the church is united as the parts of the body are united. Therefore, I cannot live without you, nor can you live without me. This is the meaning of communion, unity, and one body.

“That your joy may be full”: that is, so that there is no trace of sadness within you. It is clear that in order for this to be accomplished, there must be first and foremost love for all. There cannot be true joy if there is no love. The love of God is firstly a love for every human, even if they are hostile to us. Whoever loves God will love every human being.



The conditions for complete joy are:

1. Fellowship. Meaning the love amongst each other.
2. Communion with God and abiding in Him, and the condition for this is to act without sin.

How can we include God in all aspects of our life?

We must include God in every great and small part of our lives, and this is through prayer and the feeling that He is our partner in everything, and that without Him we are unable to do anything. **There are two ways to confront problems:**

- a) We think about a solution alone, and become depressed because there is no solution.
- b) We pray and ask for God to participate with us so that we can rejoice. Whoever lifts their heart to God with the confidence of a child asking their Father, will hear God saying, “Do not be afraid, My child, I am with you.” Depression and sadness will end even before the problem is solved, and in this we will be consoled.

A sacrament in a verse: What is the sacrament in this picture? Which verse from the first chapter of I John refers to this sacrament?	This points to...: Which verse refers to the following images? What does the verse refer to?	This points to...: Which verses refer to the hypostasis of the Son?
		

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

2. Communion with God is light (v. 5-7):

Our beloved teacher John announces the establishment of a branch of a company whose original location is in..... (fill in the blank).

You must know Who the head of the company is and what His characteristics and purpose are in establishing this company, as well as the conditions for joining it (mention the verse only).

In order to have fellowship with God, we must know:

1. Whom we are entering into fellowship with, and what His nature is.
2. What the requirements are to enter into communion with Him.

The first revelation about God is that He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Light is a sign of complete goodness and complete knowledge, therefore light indicates complete wisdom.

Through Christ, the True Light, we receive the Holy Spirit and He dwells in us. By the Holy Spirit we know the truth. Through Christ the Light, we have known the Father and see Him. Christ is the True Light born from Light “light out of light.” As for darkness, it refers to sin. In spiritual darkness the sinner does not see God, does not know Him, does not see the truth, does not realize it, and does not see himself. We are darkness ourselves, but whoever approaches God is enlightened, and whoever clings to Him becomes light. “They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed.” (Psalm 34:5).

Walking in the light is the condition for communion with Him. Whoever does, will have their joy complete.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” (1 John 1:6).

- This is a response to the Gnostics who care about knowledge and do not care about moral behaviour. Rather, they incite frivolity by claiming that the body is evil and will not be harmed by walking in sin.

- “If we say, ‘We have fellowship with Him,’” our old nature must change, and this will appear in our daily life and behaviour. Truth is not intellectual knowledge, but rather a life that a person lives based on the life of Christ in him. We begin by staying away from all evil and sin, rather, the likeness of evil, for there is no fellowship of light with darkness. If we fall, let us quickly repent and confess, and the **blood** of Jesus Christ will purify us.

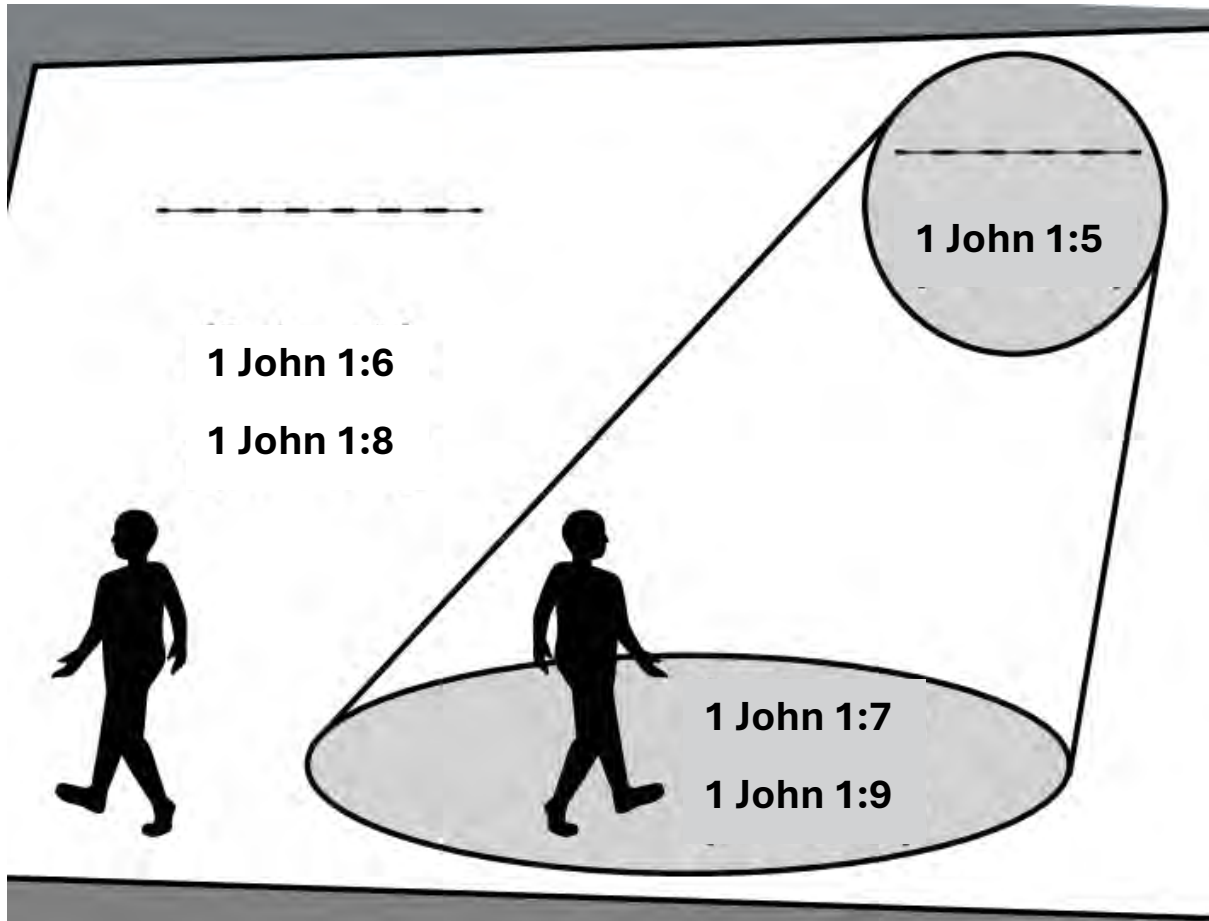
Notice that the word 'blood' refers to:

1. The fact that Christ has a true body, not just an apparition
2. The truth of the suffering of Christ, and His death
3. Justification: for it changes, covers, sanctifies, and purifies us.

Application:

What is the practical application from the first chapter which we can apply to our lives?

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God offers us forgiveness (v. 8-10)

What are the three lies to which St John refers to in verses 8 to 10?

- Whoever walks in the light sees his faults and sins and will not be able to deny them. As long as we are in the body, we have our weaknesses and downfalls. Whoever says that they are without sin does not live in the light and does not walk in the light. As for whoever has the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, dwells in them, He will enlighten them and show them the sins that are present in them. A sign that the Holy Spirit lives within us is that we feel our sins, see them, and abhor them. This is like if someone lit a dirty room in which there are insects, they will be disgusted by them.

- “We deceive ourselves”: Whoever says that he is without sin is either lying or blind. The truth is that there is no one who is without sin. The sick person who says that they are healthy and does not go to the doctor will die, because they have misled themselves.

- God knows our weaknesses, so He provided us with a method for the forgiveness of our sins, which is repentance and confession; to cleanse us of our sins. We notice that the verb to purify us in verse 7 is in the continuous form. Christ did not purify us only once, but rather His work of purification and sanctification continues. He forgives our past, purifies our present, and sanctifies our future in Christ.

- Those who do not confess their sins not only deprive themselves of God’s forgiveness and go astray from the truth, but also attribute a lie to God, since Christ was crucified to take away the sins of mankind. This person’s claim that he/she is without sin makes the redemption of Christ unnecessary and God’s call to us to repent become false words.

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There are those who ask whether it is necessary to confess before a priest. Through these verses, determine the answer. (John 20:22-23, Matthew 18:18, Acts 19:18, James 5:16, John 11:44, John 9:10).

Chapter 2

Christ is our Advocate, we should be steadfast in Him (v. 1-6)

In the first chapter, St John says that: “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7), and here he does not say this as an excuse for sin, so do not take sin lightly. If someone sins, he must not continue for a long time, but rather act immediately with repentance and confession. The Apostle here warns against misusing the doctrine of salvation and the blood of Christ by saying “let us sin as long as the blood of Christ will atone and forgive.” No! We must strive not to make mistakes. But who can live without stumbling in this life?

What are the types of intercession according to our Orthodox faith?

You can find the types of intercession in these verses. (1 John 2:1-2, 1 Timothy 2:5, James 5:16, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Ephesians 6:18)

What are the examples of intercession presented in these verses? (Genesis 20:1-7, Job 42:7-8, Genesis 18:26-32).

"We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus". St John reassures us, so that we may not despair, that Christ is our Advocate with the Father.

'Advocate' comes from the Greek word 'Paraclete' (παράκλητος) which has two meanings:

1. Mediator or defender
2. Comforter. Therefore, if it is used to describe Christ, it means Mediator or Advocate. If it used to describe the Holy Spirit, it means Comforter.

- "Jesus": meaning the Saviour who out of His love came to sanctify, justify, and save us.

- "Christ": meaning He who is anointed for Salvation.

- "The righteous": If He were not righteous and had sin, how could He die for others? He would have died for Himself, not for us. The Father looks at us through His righteous Son. As long as we abide in Him, He sees us as righteous and without blame, and we are considered perfect. That is why Christ tells us: “Abide in me...” (John 4:15) and we will abide in Him if we do not sin or if we repent quickly when we sin. Then Christ will advocate for us and our sin will be forgiven.

Salvation does not only mean that the blood forgives, but rather that Christ gives us strength to walk in righteousness, and if we do not do righteousness, the Spirit convicts us.

- “We have an Advocate”: Note that Saint John placed himself with us, so there is no one who does not sin.

The blood of Christ, the Son of the infinite God, has unlimited power to forgive the sins of all who accept it and believe in Him from all over the world, and all human beings who will believe in Him throughout the ages and in every place.

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1. The Love of Christ is the way to keeping the commandments

Knowledge is not superficial knowledge, as when one person knows another, but it is unity with Christ. He gives us His life, and if we unite with Him, our knowledge of Him becomes knowledge through union, and this knowledge is incomparably stronger than external knowledge. Thus we know Him truly, and whoever knows Him will certainly love Him, for He is worthy of love.

The sure sign of love is obedience to His commandments (John 14:23). That is why Christ said: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:10).

As for us, whoever keeps the commandments abides in Christ. Everyone who abides in Christ is filled with the Spirit, and by being filled with the Spirit they are given strength and assistance to carry out the commandments; this is grace. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit who pours out love for God “in our hearts” (Romans 5:5), love grows (Romans 5:5) and the commandment becomes easy.

By this we know that keeping the commandments becomes easy when:

- 1 - We know Jesus, and therefore love Him.
 - 2- We run to fulfill the commandments while believing and knowing that Christ will keep His promise to grant us strength and support (grace).
-

1 John 2:5 – “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

"The love of God is perfected": Is the love of God incomplete so that it will be perfected? Certainly not, for the love of God is perfect. What is lacking is the person who is ready to receive it. The television transmitter sends signals through waves excellently, but in order for the work to be complete, there must be a television set in a good condition to receive these waves and convert them into an image.

"The love of God is perfected"

This means:

1. Understanding how much God loves me
 2. The love of God burns in my heart.
-

How do we know that we are in Him? By the growth of love, and the increase in the desire to keep the commandments. He who is steadfast in Christ will have the life of Christ and by the life of Christ that is him, he will walk as Christ walked. We must imitate Christ by always ask ourselves, “What would Christ do if He were in my place?” By disciplining myself to walk as Christ did, I become more steadfast in Him, and Christ will give me the strength to obey the commandment (John 15:4). This strength is the work of grace.

Application:

Let us push ourselves to obey the commandments, love others, and forgive those who hurt us, and let us not love the world or any of its desires. Then we will be firm in Christ.

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Loving our bretheren (v. 7-11)

St John the Apostle did not reveal the old and new commandment at the same time, but we can understand that this is the commandment of love (1 John 4:21). It is old, since humans have known it since ancient times. The epistle is summarized in loving the Lord your God, and loving your neighbour (Luke 10:27-28). It is new for the following reasons:

This love from God is not possible except through the Holy Spirit, who will pour out the love of God "in our hearts" (Romans 5:5).

2. It is a giving love, just like the love of Christ.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34).

In the New Testament, love could be seen through new dimensions that became known because Christ sacrificed Himself for sinners. Love is not an emotion or feeling but rather it is sacrifice, even for the enemies who hate us.

"You have heard from the beginning": This is the teaching of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:5).

- "He who says he is in the light": that is, united with Christ, and in Christ. This one cannot hate his brother because as Christ is light, he is also love by nature. Hatred is darkness, so how can light and darkness dwell together inside a person?

- "Whoever loves his brother": his brother includes even enemies, and whoever is hostile to me. The one who loves everyone is steadfast in Christ, because there is no union with Christ except through the brotherly love first, and whoever is steadfast in the light of the world, Christ will illuminate the way for them, so that they will not stumble on the path and will not cause anyone to stumble. His saying "there is no stumbling block in him" means:

1 - The person does not stumble on their way, for the light shows them the way, so that they do not stumble. Their judgments are correct, and they grow spiritually.

2 - They are not a stumbling block to anyone. For if someone speaks about love and does not love others, they offend the people.

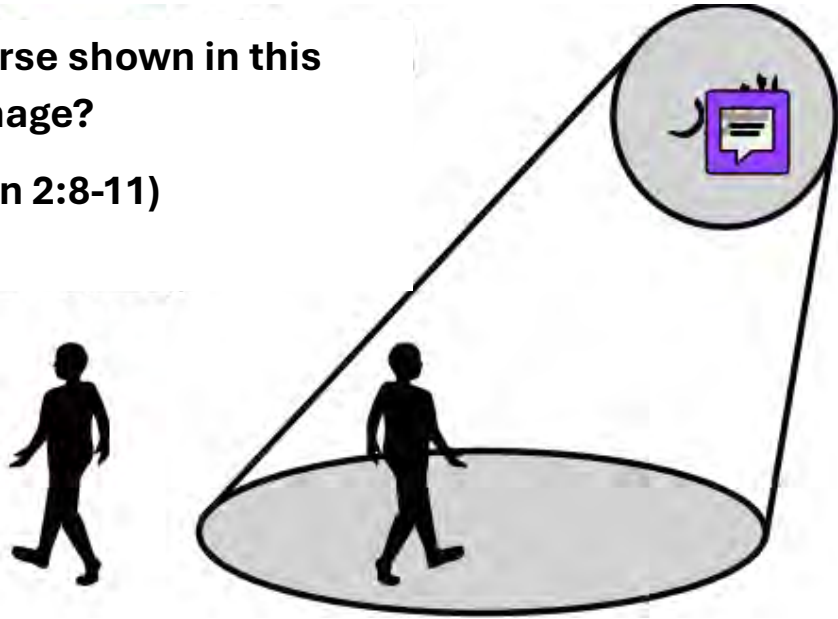
Application

In chapter 2, what can we apply to our lives? Discuss this with your servant.

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

What is the verse shown in this image?

(1 John 2:8-11)



Commandments to children and fathers (v. 12-14):

What is the message directed to each of the following:

“I write to you:”

- Children
- Fathers
- Young men

The Apostle writes to three groups:

- 1 - Little children, that is those who are young in age
- 2 - Fathers, that is those who are old in age
- 3 - Young men, that is the youth

The three stages can also be understood in a spiritual way:

Little children:

Spiritual beginners or new believers who became children of God through baptism. Through baptism sins are forgiven. But those who are young or new believers are often prone to error, so he speaks to them about forgiveness of sins, which comes through repentance.

Fathers:

They are those who have spiritual depth and responsibility, advanced in faith. He speaks to them about the knowledge of Christ, that is, the experience of union with Christ.

Young men:

They have entered the faith and have some experiences. They have tested the strength that God gives them, by which they overcome evil and the evil one. They are not weak, for they are still

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young. Rather, God gives them strength in proportion to the evil temptations they are exposed to. They are strong for their youth.

Three gifts were mentioned here for children, parents and youth. What are they? Why does the Apostle write in the past tense once and in the present tense once? Sometimes we find him saying I write, and sometimes we find him saying I wrote?

Do not love the world (v. 15-17):

"Do not love the world" does not mean that we do not love people, as this is against what the Bible calls for. Nor does it mean that we do not love the beautiful nature that we praise God for, as this beautiful creation declares the greatness and glory of God.

But what is meant is:

- 1 - The evil world that is devoid of God, with its stumbling blocks and sinful desires.
- 2 - That we do not love anyone more than God "nor the things in the world":

God created the world and the things in it for us to use. Whoever is attached to the things in the world but has a heart that has no love for God, is like a wife who is attached to her husband's gifts and does not love him as a person.

A verse in the liturgy:

Mention the verse in this chapter which corresponds to the Divine Liturgy? Which part of the Divine Liturgy does it correspond to?

Application

Can we believe or imagine a person who says, "I love God," while they do not spend any time with God in prayer, at church, etc., but is busy with the pleasures of the world or work?

God created the world for us to use, not to worship or for it to be our goal. We grieve if we lose it and become puffed up if we get too much of it. Whoever loves the world in this way will not have room in their heart to love God, therefore it is said that "friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). Rather, a person cannot love truth (God) and falsehood (the world) together: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Explain, using the verses, why we should not love the world.

Steadfastness against the heretics (v. 18-29):

- "Little children" you were born into the church on the basis of sound faith, do not abandon it. It is the last hour: it may mean that our days are near, so we do not abandon the faith that was handed down to us.

- The apostles knew from Christ that at the end of days this antichrist will come, and false teachings will spread, so St John warns of the heretics who appear at the end of days as a sign of the approaching second coming which Christ mentioned in His words at the end of the world.

- "They were of us": baptized and living in the church, steadfast in Christ.

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- "They were not of us": in the deception of their hearts, they were elsewhere. They were not steadfast in Christ. As for those who left the church for a period and returned repentant, they are from us, that is, from the body of the church.

He encourages the believers that the Holy Spirit dwelling within them through the anointing of the Myron, whom they received from the Holy God, is guiding them and establishing them in the right faith, and exposing before them the error of the heretics so that they do not follow them but rather obey the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

The question here is: do we give ourselves the opportunity to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? This requires prayer, study, and sitting quietly to meditate on the Bible. It also requires being filled with the Holy Spirit, through prayer, praise, and steadfastness in Christ.

- The apostle says that he does not accuse them of not knowing the truth, but they know it. He writes to them so that they may stand firm in the truth they have learned. And we are not in need of new teachings from outside our church, but we are in need of the work of the Holy Spirit who gives us the discernment by which we reject lies and accept only the truth.

- The apostle attacks the heresies of the first century that denied the truth of the incarnation. Here we see the apostle talking about the liar, who is Satan (John 8:44). Satan wants to abolish the incarnation, for it is the mystery of godliness and without it there is no salvation.

"Who is the liar": He is Satan. This is in contrast to the truth, who is Christ. Whoever submits to the lying Satan repeats his lies. Whoever abides in Christ knows the truth.

- "He who denies the Son does not have the Father either", for the Son is the image of the Father, that is, the radiance of the Father's glory and the imprint of His essence, and whoever does not know the Son, this is because he does not know the Father. And whoever denies that God the Father gave His only Son when He sent Him to save humanity = "this is the antichrist".

- Whoever confesses Christ the Son and believes in Him and His redemption and saving work and is baptized, will unite with the Son and thus become a son of God the Father.

There are some now who say that we do not need Christ, because we can live with high morals and do our work honestly and that is enough. This is greatly encouraged by Satan, because he wants to sever all relationship with Christ, and he will not even have to fight these people. These people are spiritually dead. How can someone who has no relationship with Christ live eternally when Christ is life?

- "What you have heard": meaning the message of the Gospel that you have heard generation after generation. "

- "Let it abide in you": meaning take its root in your depths.

- Steadfastness in faith means steadfastness in God and enjoying His work in us. By steadfastness in faith, we receive God's promise of eternal life with Him.

- I write this to you so that you will not be deceived by the heresies of the antichrists.

Sacrament in a verse:

Which sacrament is seen in the image?

Which verse from 1 John 3 points to this image?

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The Holy Spirit teaches and gives enlightenment, St John reminds them of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them through the anointing of the Sacrament of Myron, Who taught them the faith and helped them to remain steadfast in it and gave them all the knowledge they need about Christ. They do not need new, strange, false teachings like those promoted by heretics, because the anointing of the Holy Spirit is true and teaches them the truth and not lies like those heretics.

- When the children of God are established in His word and faith, they will rejoice at His coming, and even long for Him, to rejoice with Him forever. As for the unsteady, they will say to the mountains, “Cover us” (Rev. 6:16).

“When He shall appear”: This indicates that the time of His appearance is not known. So you must always be prepared.

- “That He is righteous...” “Everyone who does righteousness is born of Him”: the one who is born resembles their father. We are born of Him in baptism by uniting with His Son, so we become His children. The one who unites with Christ has His life, and Christ uses their members as instruments of righteousness to do righteousness. If they do not walk in righteousness, the Holy Spirit will convict them (John 16:8), and if their abilities are weak, the Holy Spirit will help them (Romans 8:26).

Here He gives us the sign that will make us unashamed at His appearing; to live working righteousness like Him. We notice that Christ gave us strength to walk in righteousness, and He even gave everyone who was baptized His own life so they can live in righteousness, with the life of the righteous Christ dwelling in them. He uses their members as instruments of righteousness, and so works righteousness. And so, because Christ is righteous, He gave his life for many.

Chapter Three

- In this chapter, he talks about two spiritual families living in this world, a family belonging to God and a family belonging to Satan. Each of us is either a child of God or a child of Satan, and we should not stray between the two groups. Whoever behaves in a manner befitting the children of God is truly a child of God, and vice versa, whoever does the works of Satan is a child of Satan. Therefore, in every situation, I have to stand and ask myself, “Is this behaviour befitting of me as a child of God?”, and “What would Christ have done if he were in my place?” I should behave as Christ would if He had been in my place.

- The world does not know us, and it does not accept our behaviour. It does not know Him, and it does not believe in Him.

- “He shows Himself”. This confirms our role through our behaviour. Indeed, God helps, but He helps those who strive, and our striving is full of hope for a glory which has been prepared, not the striving of a desperate and depressed person.

- Sin is when a person sins, whether out of ignorance or knowledge. Whoever sins now transgresses the law of God and the voice of the Holy Spirit within him. We say again that as long as we are in the flesh we will sin, but the children of God strive as much as they can not to sin. If they do sin they quickly return, repentant and confessing, and do not continue immersed in sin.

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- “He”: that is Christ. He appeared, meaning became incarnate, and united with us so that we may abide in Him and not sin.

Ask your servant:

What does it mean when St John says that his seed remains in him? What is the link between this and the spiritual person?

- Here St John responds to the Gnostics: " let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." (1 John 3:7). If we have taken His life as a permanent seed in us, then just as He is righteous, we must necessarily live in righteousness. Therefore, the one who does righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

- But this does not mean that the old person dies a final death, for God has not abolished our freedom but has given us the ability to struggle. As long as we are in the flesh we may fall, but if the children of God fall, they rise quickly.

- “Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” (1 John 3:6). Here we see a clear relationship between knowledge and steadfastness. Knowledge means a union with Christ through whom we have steadfastness and life. And by saying, “Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him,” St John means that the person is not completely steadfast in Him. The life that Christ gives is for those who unite with Him, so He asks us to abide in Him.

- "And he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:9). We understand that when our will aligns with the will of Christ, a powerful force is generated within us that makes us unable to sin, so we refrain from sinning. We enjoy this power here and experience it often, but it will take its final form in heaven.

Ask your servant:

Does 1 John 3:9 oppose 1 John 1:8,10?

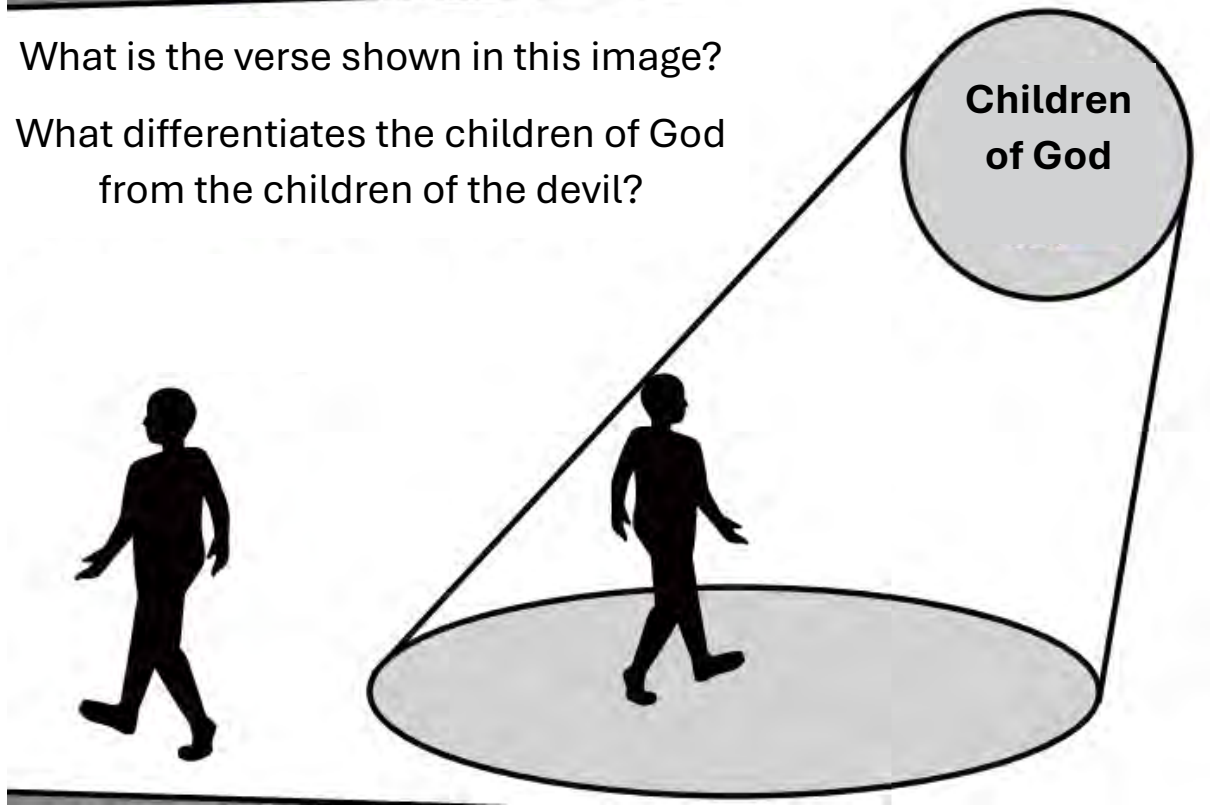
Application

Using the chapter, what is the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil?

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

What is the verse shown in this image?

What differentiates the children of God from the children of the devil?



What are the signs of the children of Satan? Everyone who does not do righteousness and whoever does not love his brother. God is righteous and God is love, so He imprints His characteristics on His children, which are righteousness and love. Christ gave us His life and Christ uses whoever is steadfast in Him to do righteousness.

- The sign of the children of God is the presence of love in their hearts, for the nature of God is love and so is the nature of His children because they are in His image. The sign of the children of Satan is the presence of hatred in their hearts.

Which verse points to the following image? Where does this incident take place in the Bible? What are the outcomes of the incident?



- "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). If hatred is death, then everyone who has hatred in their heart is dead, meaning they have killed themselves and have condemned themselves to death. As long as hatred remains within a person's soul they are dead, and no murderer has eternal life established in themselves.

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- "Whoever has this world's goods" (1 John 3:17), meaning whoever is rich or has much, but does not have compassion and tenderness in their heart. Such a person does not have the love of God established in themselves. The sign of true love is toil and service to all people, and what is required is practical love.

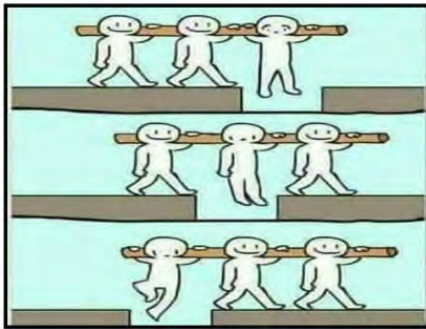
- "And shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John 3:19). , meaning we convince our hearts to be reassured. The question is, reassure about what? Children of God are occupied with the important things all day long, which is the salvation of their souls. This is the goal of our faith. There is insistence from Satan who scares us by telling us that we are rejected. The apostle here gives us a sign by which our hearts are reassured.

This love only comes to those in whom the Holy Spirit resides, changing their hearts and giving them a love that fills every person. The Holy Spirit gives us to taste the love of Christ first, then give others what Christ has given us.

- A person may become hopeless when they hear the above and wonder secretly whether they truly love people or not. Have you passed from death to life or are you still in death? How can we calm our hearts if our hearts condemn us?

- "If our heart does not condemn us," (1 John 3:21). If a person stands to pray honestly and is upset with someone, the Holy Spirit will convict them if they have sinned, but if they have not sinned and the other has actually sinned against them, they will not find any convicting inside their heart. If this person is honest with God, let them force themselves to pray for the one they have sinned against, then the Holy Spirit will transform the feelings of distress inside them into love for the one they have sinned against. This love is a gift from God, and is not in the power of man, it is a free grace that God gives.

Comment on this picture:



What are the actions and conditions of love which have appeared in this chapter? Discuss this with your servant.

What is the condition for acceptable prayers contained in this verse? (1 John 3:23).

In this verse, St John summarises the commandments of Christ in two points. What are these points?

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

Chapter 4

The Anti-Christ (v. 1-6):

In this chapter we see what our position should be towards heretics and towards our brethren. We must strictly reject heretics, but as for our brethren, we must treat them with all love.



A device that differentiates between diamond and glass →

What does this device have to do with the chapter?

In the first verse, the Apostle began to advise the necessity of testing the spirits, whether they are from God or false prophets who have come out to the world. Through our reading of the following verses, we can distinguish between the true (diamond) and the false (glass). In the table, you can put the verses that express diamond (truth and faith) and the others that express glass (delusion and heresies).

Diamond	Glass

- "Do not believe every spirit" (1 John 4:1). This is the teaching that teachers claim comes from the Holy Spirit of God. False teachers come from evil, deceitful spirits.

The apostle here asks us not to follow every emotion or admiration for a person, or emotion behind a person, as this may lead us to follow heresy, as not everything we hear is true.

- "Test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). This means that we should test the words we hear and compare them with what the Lord and the apostles of the Lord said (the written word) and what the church teaches. As believers, we must not be deceived by philosophical deceptions or the pride of human philosophy.

The Holy Spirit is the one who bears witness to us that Christ is God incarnate for our salvation. He takes what is Christ's and tells us, so that we know Christ. Whoever knows Christ and the sweetness of His company loves Him. We notice that Saint John here is talking about a specific heresy, which is the denial of the incarnation. But now we are faced with dozens, even hundreds of heresies, so let us beware. All of these heresies are against God. Here the apostle encourages them not to be disturbed by these heresies, "For He who is in you (i.e. the Holy Spirit) is greater than he who is in the world (i.e. Satan, error and evil)", and this is what Christ did, as he reassures us all that he has overcome the world (John 16:33).

So we do not fear, but we will be victorious. Therefore, now with the increase of heresies, we do not fear, for the Holy Spirit is in His church, preserving it. And despite the number of heresies over time, the church still remains and strong until now and has overcome them.

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- "They are of the world" (1 John 4:5). These are the false teachers, because they have unsound motives such as material and temporal gains, and self-esteem.

- "And the world hears them" (1 John 4:5). Their goals align with the desires of the people of the world. Let us note that Satan inspires their hearts because he wants the church to split. And whoever believes them and follows them is not sincere in seeking God.

Loving others (v. 7-11):

Discussion question:

"Dear beloved... let us love because love is from God. The Apostle was speaking about heresies and their errors, so what made him suddenly shift to the topic of love?"

From verse 7 until the end of the chapter, the word love was repeated several times. Find out the number of times it was repeated as this clarifies its importance. The love has attributes. You must write the references and the verse indicating each attribute: (God is the source of love - God is love - love is not in words - steadfastness in love, no fear in love - love for God is linked to love for others - the sum of the commandment of love).

Notice St John saying that God is love. He did not say that God loves or that God is loving, for this is an attribute. By saying that God is love, he means that the essence of God is love. He is the fountain of love, and there is no source of love except God. The Father pours out love from Himself to the beloved Son first (Ephesians 1:6), and this is through the Spirit of love, that is, the Holy Spirit. And through baptism we are born of God and united with Christ. And through this the Spirit of love which is poured out in the Son is poured out within us.

- Therefore he says: "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God". Knowing God means that we are united with God and have the life of God, that is, love.

- "He who does not love does not know God". The one who does not love rejects God's gifts and is not steadfast and not united with God. They do not want to be steadfast in Him, that is, to know Him and unite with Him, because they do not strive to be filled with the Spirit who renews our nature.

If love is not found in us, we have changed the stamp by which we are formed into a form for God. Note that love comes from God to the one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, and that love leads us to God. Whoever receives love from God draws near to Him. So if a person enters this cycle, they draw closer and closer to God.

- "In this the love of God was manifested toward us": by the Holy Spirit poured out from God. Note that he said toward us, for love is not something I see but is felt within me.

- "Was manifested": means that it existed eternally. It was declared and appeared visibly in the incarnation of Christ. God loves us from eternity and did not love us suddenly. After salvation, God sent the Holy Spirit to us, and He poured His love into our hearts. This gave us:

1 - The discovery of God's love for us

2 - Loving God, and all people

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

How was the Spirit of God poured into us, revealing the love of God?

“God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” The Spirit was poured out in us through the justification of the blood of Christ shed for us, since we were united with the Son of God. The redemption and the Holy Spirit who descended upon us were a cause of life for us, by restoring us to the image of God in which we were created. The image of God is love, for God is love.

What is the difference between:

- "has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2) and 'came to the flesh'

- "manifested toward us" (1 John 4:9) and 'shown to us'

- "Live through Him". Christ has become our life, whoever unites with Him unites with life and lives. Life without Christ is not joyful, but with Christ it is peace and joy no matter what the trials, pains and hardships.

We did not begin with love for God, but God is the one who began to declare his love by sending his Son to us. He loved us despite our wickedness and enmity towards Him. He loved us while we were undeserving, because His nature is love.

What did this chapter say about the following?

“Of God” –

“Not of God” –

“Us” –

“Them” –

3 - Confirmation in the love of God (v. 12-21):

- "No one has seen God at any time.": How can we proclaim Him to people, and how can people love Him whom they have not seen? "If we love one another", an image of God appears in us, i.e. love. Because God is love, when love appears in His children and amongst each other, people see in us an image of God, so they love Him, are drawn to Him, and believe in Him.

- Love for God does not arise from seeing Him in the flesh (the Jews saw Him and crucified Him), but love is a feeling that the Holy Spirit places in our hearts (Romans 5:5). But these feelings do not grow (and thus our love does not increase) if we do not love our brothers. Love is poured out in the heart that is steadfast in Christ.

For if we love God, this means that we abide in Him.

The feelings towards God are completed in us if we love others. The loving heart can see God.

- "If we love one another, God abides in us,". This is what the apostle pointed out previously (1 John 3:24), that whoever keeps God's commandments has Christ abiding in them and they in Christ. The most important commandment, indeed the summary of all the commandments, is the commandment of love.

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- "And His love has been perfected in us.". This means that the work of His love has reached its goal in us and we have all become living stones in the communion of his body. Christ became incarnate and offered us redemption to restore us to unity, as one body whose members are bound together by love. Christ is the head of this body and we are bound with Him and abiding in Him by love. This was the divine purpose from the beginning, that we be one with each other in Christ and in the Father (John 17:20-23). Christ came to fulfill the divine purpose. How do we know that we are abiding in Him? If the Holy Spirit dwells in us. And if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, He will bear fruit, the first of which is love.

Application

Examine yourself. Do you have love for God and people and do you hear the Spirit rebuke if you sin? If you do, the Holy Spirit dwells in you and therefore you are steadfast in Christ.

Find verses that match the same meaning from this chapter:

- "God was manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16)
 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" (Psalm 111:10)
 - "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)
 - "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18).
-

- "We have seen". John saw, heard, and touched Christ, therefore he says "we testify". But John's view was not just a physical view, as this gives a superficial understanding, since many saw Christ, heard Him, and then crucified Him. John's view was deep and by the Holy Spirit, so he knew the truth about Christ. And we, by the Holy Spirit, are able to have this view of faith. Therefore, we know Him as the Savior of the world:

1- From judgment and eternal death.

2- From sin, our fears, lusts, stubbornness and our old man.

3- Granting to those who desire a new eternal life and a new creation capable of walking in righteousness.

- "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Here we see another condition or proof for steadfastness in Christ, which is confessing in love, openly and before everyone, even in the face of dangers and hardships. Here is a love that reaches the point of martyrdom for the sake of Christ whom we love. Faith and love do not only reside in the heart, for faith without works is dead. How can we say that we love Christ while we fear persecution, or while we deny Him before people? In 1 John 4:2 the apostle asked for confession of the humanity of Christ, that is, that Christ came in the flesh, and here he demands confession of His divinity.

Here John speaks of experiential knowledge (we knew - we believed), and this is given to us by the Holy Spirit, for love filled his heart. We have known, and knowledge is life (John 17:3). Love is a sign of life.

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- "Love has been perfected". Love grows, and this is the meaning of growth in grace. The love of Christ is complete, but it lacks the one who accepts it and tastes it, that is, accepts to live in it and struggle for it. And whoever does so will feel love filling their heart. It increases day by day, and so it is perfected.

- "As He is... in the world". God loves the world despite its evils and sent Christ.

- "So are we". This is how we should behave and love God and love our brothers even if they hate us. The point is to be similar to God in love, with the exception that it is a relative thing but it has become possible by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us if we will and discipline ourselves.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18).

St Anthony said to his disciples: "I do not fear God." When the brothers said that this was a difficult word to hear, St Anthony answered "It is because I love Him," and "perfect love casts out fear,"

- "We love Him because He first loved us": meaning we love God and our brothers because God first loved us, even while we were still in our sins. So what credit do we have? We must return this love to Him and to His children.

"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

- Love for our brothers and sisters is the true proof of our love for God. It is impossible to have love for God if we do not love our brothers and sisters whom we see, when our hearts are moved with love for them. Attachment to something seen is stronger and easier than attachment and love to something unseen.

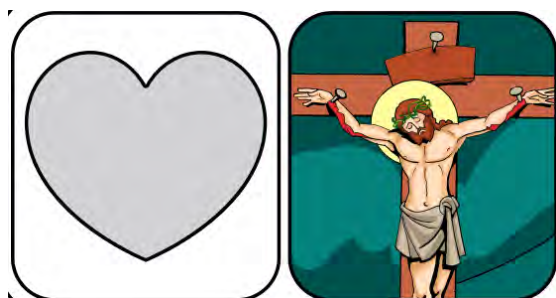
- "And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." (1 John 4:21).

What do the following verses mean?

(Deuteronomy 6:5), (Leviticus 19:18), (Luke 10:25-28), (Matthew 22: 35-40), (John 13:34-35).

Deep commentary:

What is the connection between these two images?



“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

Chapter 5

1 - Faith in Christ (v. 1-5)

**Membership card to become a
child of God**

**Place a
photograph
of yourself
here**

Name: _____

**Conditions of
membership: You can
find the conditions of
membership by reading
the chapter.**

What made the apostle change from talking about love to talking about faith? The apostle wants to explain that love is not something enjoyed by the natural man (the non-Christian who has not been dealt with by grace) but rather it is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized believer. It is an acquired nature by which we love God and people, even enemies. This love of enemies is not possible for the normal, natural man, only for the believer.

Why did the Apostle mention faith only without mentioning baptism? Is faith alone without baptism enough for us to obtain this new nature? Ask your servant

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." (1 John 5:2). St John has previously said that the sign of our love for God is our love for each other (1 John 4:20-21). Now he says that the sign of our love for God is our love for each other. What does this mean?

His commandments are not burdensome. Why?

1- If we love God, we will find His commandments easy, for love makes difficult things easy, and we will even carry out the commandments without pressure. The sign of love is complete obedience to the commandments of the one you love.

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2- God does not command anything unless He gives the power to carry it out. He works through me and in me. He carries it with me no matter how difficult the matter is.

3- Everything that Christ did in the flesh was for our sake.

Ask your servant how you can fulfill commandments that appear to be difficult

- Everyone who is born of God becomes a child of God. They love their Father and trust Him, trusting that everything He says is for their benefit and advantage.

- Whoever believes and is baptized has Christ living in them, for faith is the gateway to the life of grace. Christ who is in us said: "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). Christ who is in us gives us strength to overcome, which we call grace that supports us in our struggle.

What is the faith required in Christ for us to be victorious?

"Jesus is the Son of God": This is equivalent to "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16) i.e. faith in the mystery of the incarnation. That God entered the world and gave me His life, by which I live, and this is what makes me overcome.. But faith is not a theoretical endeavour, but practical faith is walking in the path of Christ, which began with the cross, then death, then resurrection... then glory.

What is the connection between these images and 1 John chapter 5?



2- Witnessing to Christ (v. 6-10)

- "This is He who came", meaning Christ

- "By water and blood": that is, not with water only like John the Baptist who used to baptize a baptism of repentance where down into the water was a symbol of repentance. Christ came with water and blood. The water and blood coming out of Christ's side is a sign of the Church coming out of His side as the new Eve.

- Baptism is not ordinary water, but water in which the Holy Spirit works through the justification of the blood (water without the power of the blood of Christ is worthless). The baptized person is born from the water and the Spirit in a new birth and a new creation capable of overcoming the world. This creation is "water and blood—Jesus Christ": that is, through baptism.

- "And it is the Spirit who bears witness". Baptism is through water and the Spirit (John 3:5). By mentioning water and blood, the apostle speaks of the death and life that happened to the body of Christ on the cross. The water referred to the death of the body, that is, the separation of the human spirit of Christ from his human body, while the blood coming out of the body of Christ refers to the life of this body. Blood does not come out of a dead body, so life in the body of Christ who died on the cross was due to the union of the divinity with his body. After Christ died on the cross, two actions took place in him: death and life. Death in the human body, meaning

“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

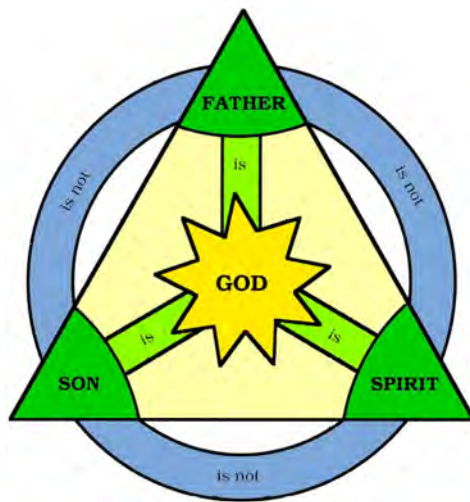
the separation of the spirit from the body, and life in the union of the divinity with his human body. And through baptism, both actions take place in us. We die to our old selves, and we live in the eternal life of Christ. And the Spirit within us bears witness to that.

- "Bear witness". They bear witness to the new life that we have obtained, the Trinity in heaven bears witness to this new life. It is not only the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Christ and His work in us, but the Holy Trinity bears witness to the incarnation of the Son and His work of salvation for man.

- Every commandment that Christ gave is for life. Let us remember the words of the Lord Christ: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

Dogma in a verse

What dogma does this diagram describe? What verse from chapter five refers to the diagram?



- "Are one". We believe in one God, the Triune God. He created us and renews our creation in a new creation that can receive salvation.

- "That bear witness on earth". This verse is about baptism and it bears witness that through it we obtain new life and new birth with a new creation. We repeat what was done on the day of Christ's baptism in the Jordan in the church with every baptized person. The Holy Spirit takes from the justification of the Blood and gives the baptized person to die with their old self born of Adam and thus their old sins are wiped away, then they rise united with Christ the Son as a new creation and obtain sonship to God.

- Baptism is by "the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.". The 'one' is the body of Christ from which the water and blood flowed, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the body of Christ on behalf of the entire church on the day of Christ's baptism by John the Baptist. The Spirit now works in the water of baptism, by the power of the blood of Christ, and baptism gives birth to the children of God, a new creation. Baptism has no meaning without the presence of one of the three elements (water, blood, and Spirit).

- "Blood": It is the price that Christ paid in order to offer us redemption "you were redeemed... with the precious blood" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

- "Water and the Spirit": They refer to baptism, which is the means by which we receive the justification of this blood. Through baptism we are born again from water and the Spirit.

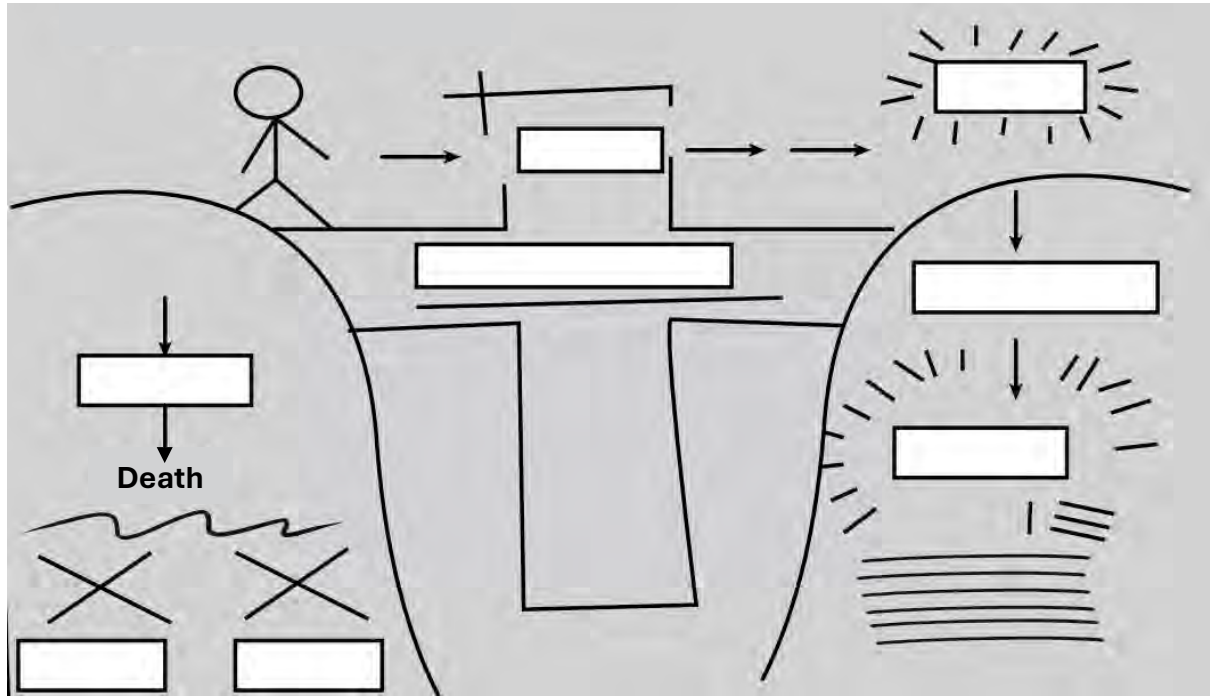
“ THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION ”

Find:

1 - Verses specific to the Hypostasis of the Son

2 – Commandments

Fill the blanks by using 1 John 5:



- "We receive the witness of men". Many have witnessed to the miraculous work of baptism in their lives. And many have testified to Christ, starting with Nathanael and ending with Longinus the soldier (Mark 15:39). In general, in ordinary cases, we accept the witness of men.

- "The witness of God is greater". This is the witness of the Trinity about the work of Christ, that Christ came to give me a life that is greater. And the witness of the Trinity on the day of Christ's baptism, that through baptism we become children of God. The witness of the Spirit within us is stronger than all the words of men.

- "He who does not believe God", that is, the ones who resist the testimony of God within themselves and the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the ones who do not believe the holy books inspired by God, and resist the faith once delivered to the saints and entrusted to the church, makes God a liar.

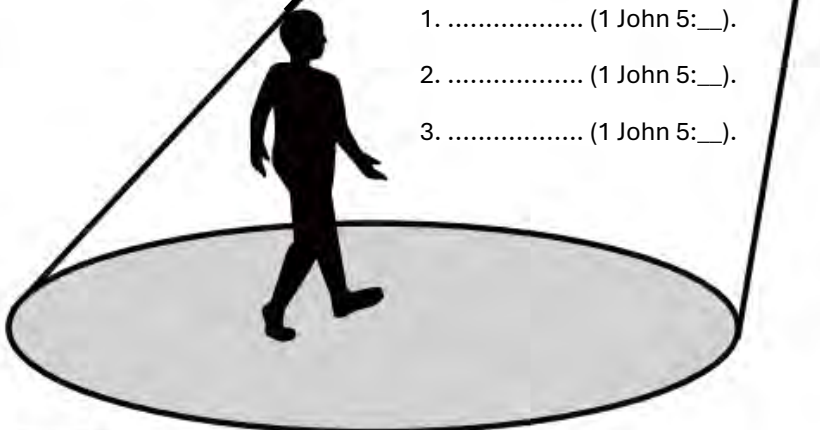
Using the chapter, find what the children of God know and understand, and what the result of being far away and lack of faith is.

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Write down the verse that describes
the image:

He who does not believe God

.....



**As children
of God, we
know:**

1. (1 John 5:___).

2. (1 John 5:___).

3. (1 John 5:___).

3 - Eternal life (v. 11-21):

- "And this is the testimony". God testifies to His Son, not because His Son needs this testimony, but it is for us, since the Son intended for us to believe in Him through His incarnation and to unite with Him in baptism, so that we may have eternal life.

- "And this life is in His Son". This life that God gave us flows within us and we feel it as a testimony within us.

- "He who has the Son has life". This eternal life is the life of the Son in us, "Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). And union with the Son began with baptism. We must be careful regarding this steadfastness, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4), by walking in the same way that Christ did, that is, death and life. This life is eternal life because Christ who lives in us is eternal.

- "You who believe in the name of the Son of God". The name expresses the personality, so the name Son of God is an expression of His entire personality, power, and love that reached redemption.

- "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him". Confidence arises from the testimony of the Spirit within us that we are children of God, beloved by Him, to the point that He sacrificed His Son for us. From this confidence we pray, confident that He must answer if the request does not harm us.

- "A sin leading to death". The issue is not in the type of sin, but in the stubbornness and insistence on committing the sin. Even the sins of adultery or murder are forgiven if the person responds to the Holy Spirit and does not resist and repents, as the freedom of the person is what determines whether the sin leads to death or not.

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- "Commit sin not leading to death". That is, the sins of human weakness due to our existence in the body. But they struggle and want to change and please God. We ask forgiveness for that person and pray for them.

What are the sins leading to death? Ask your servant

- "All unrighteousness is sin". The word "unrighteousness" in Greek means a person's transgression against the rights of others (so sin is an infringement on the rights of God or the rights of any human being).

- The word "sin" means disobeying God's will and commandments. It means doing what I want and not what God wants. The origin of the word "sin" is in Greek is "He who misses the target and does not hit it." Whoever hits the target will be rewarded, and whoever fails to hit the target will not be rewarded.

Did God give us commandments so He can control us? Ask your servant.

- "Whoever is born of God does not sin;" meaning that everyone who is born of God will not be hard-hearted, stubborn, or refuse to repent, and thus commit a sin leading to death. But who is the child of God? You find that if they fall, they quickly rise and repent. The apostle asks the children of God that each one "keep himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.": that is, he cannot have any kind of contact with them. Satan cannot overcome the one who is steadfast in the Father, but the moment they forgets their sonship to God and deviates a little from the Father, they fall. Therefore, the apostle here asks every one born of God to keep themselves, that is, to try to always remain attached to God.

- The meaning of the verse is: Everyone who is born of God does not sin (sin leading to death). Rather, the ones who are born of God keep themselves (struggle), and the evil one does not touch them (for the He who is in us as children of God is greater).

- Just as the children of God live in the boundary of God's power that keeps them, the children of the world live in the boundary of the power and temptation of the evil one. Satan falsifies everything that is true and seduces and misleads his followers so that they fall and he enslaves them. How does Satan mislead his followers? By making them imagine that the world and sin are pleasure and enjoyment and a goal to strive for, and he hides from them the pain and sorrow resulting from sin. The world is full of sins.

- The believer opens their insight to God and knows that the Lord Jesus is all truth, and is satisfied with Him, believing that He is the source of life. They abide in Him by obeying His commandments and do not want to be separated from Him. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32).

Application

Do not forget your goal in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life. Your only goal is eternity, and your path to it is the love of Christ through your connection to the church and your love for everyone.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols.". What are these idols? Ask your servant.

What are the theological concepts that are similar between the Gospel of John and this epistle? Provide evidence through verses and references.

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- The Only Begotten Son came down from heaven to lift up the sins of humanity (John 1:29, 3:16).
 - The Eternal Word (John 1:1-2).
 - Christ transfers those who believe in Him from death to life (John 5:24).
 - The devil is the father of lies and sin (John 8:44).
 - Love is one of the most important characteristics of believers (John 13:34-35, 15:12-17).
-

Topic 3 “The Trinity”

Could it be that the sun is extinguished?

What has happened?!

“A firefighting company announces its need for volunteer firefighters who are heroes, but not to put out bush fire, nor to control oil or gas field fires, but there is a strong call to extinguish the largest global fire - to extinguish the sun's fire!! Under the grounds of reducing the temperature of the Earth!! The company provides each of these heroes with their own extinguisher, some with water hoses, some with aerosol sprays, and others with sand.

The strange thing is that each of these heroes, after returning from completing their mission with courage, says: Yes, I was able to extinguish part of the sun's flames!!! Here is my fire extinguisher, which is empty and about to melt, and another one declares: Yes, we will continue to work with all our might, even if we must draw water from the oceans and connect it to spaceships, no matter what the cost!!”

This story may seem like fiction, but it is the truth that happens every day in our world! The devil has recruited many to try to extinguish the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ! And Satan gave each one the extinguisher that suits them, some with sands of doubt, and others with foam extinguishers (i.e. chatter) claiming that God cannot be incarnate! And how can there be a Trinity when He is one! And others with carbon dioxide extinguishers and paper lies saying: Christ was not crucified. Others with spraying water, and spraying the idea that God cannot die! And finally the extinguisher of the twenty-first century, social media. All this because they think that they are extinguishing the truth. But will they succeed? Let us discuss what the truth is:

1. How can we say that we believe in One God, if there are three Hypostases?

A - The Holy Bible reveals to us the Holy Trinity. Unity cannot be understood without believing in the Trinity, for we do not believe in three gods, but in one God, a Trinity of Persons (Hypostasis): the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And God has revealed that He is a Triune God...

And that there is no division or separation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This declaration came with the utmost clarity and simplicity in the Holy Bible...

Determine through these verses the proof of this fact:

(Luke 1:35, John 15:26, John 14:26, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:18, Matthew 3:16-17).

There are many verses that we can use to extract proofs of the existence of the Trinity, such as (Matthew 28:19, 12:18, John 4:23, Luke 3:22).

B- Equality in the Holy Trinity:

We believe in one God, three Hypostases, with one essence and one nature. The three Hypostases share all the essential attributes, but they are distinguished in the Hypostatic attributes, which are: fatherhood, sonship, and emanation.

- The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, in terms of essence.

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- But the Father is not the Son nor the Holy Spirit in terms of Hypostasis, and the Son is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit in terms of Hypostasis, and the Holy Spirit is also not the Father nor the Son in terms of Hypostasis.

- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all have the attributes of the divine essence, according to the teaching of the fathers and the Ecumenical Councils.

God is One in a Holy Trinity, equal from eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no superiority between them, so the Holy Bible does not mention them in a fixed order... lest it be thought that the Father is greater than the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19 starts says...

2 Corinthians 13:14 says...

Jude 1:20-21 says...

C - One essence, three hypostases:

1 - The meaning of 'Essence'

Essence - or ουσία in Greek - is what is specific to the nature of our great God, and is unique above all other "essences" of humans or other beings. "Essence" is what is in the being, and this essence has a special nature, which is the divine nature that has its essential characteristics.

2 - Meaning of 'Hypostasis'

This unique and unrepeatable divine essence is based on three hypostases, without which the divine essence cannot exist, and each of them has unique hypostatic characteristics:

The Father is the source...

The Son is begotten...

The Holy Spirit proceeds...

Among the essential properties of our great God are: Infinite Life - Infinite Power - Infinite Wisdom - An Infinite Mind - Infinite Understanding - Infinite Truth - Infinite Love.

He is the origin of existence, the cause of existence, the necessary Being, through whom all existences exist.

If God is infinite life, then the Father is the living one (the source of life), the Son is the life born from the source, and the Holy Spirit is the spirit of life.

If God is the infinite truth, then the Father is the truthful one (the source of truth), the Son is the truth (born from the truthful one), and the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth (proceeding from the truthful one).

Ask your servant: What are the Essential and Hypostatic characteristics of God?

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3 - The three hypostases work in unity

Some people imagine that the Father created us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit sanctifies us. The truth is that there is no separation between the hypostases in action. The Father created us through the Son in the Holy Spirit. We were redeemed by the will of the Father and His giving of His only Son, and by the sacrifice of Christ and His redemption of us, and the action of the Holy Spirit in conveying the blessings of redemption to our hearts. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us by the will of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son.

The Lord Jesus Christ has two births:

One is eternal from the Father, "begotten of the Father before all ages, begotten not created, Light of Light, true God of true God."

The other is temporal, from the Virgin Mary, when He was incarnated from her for the sake of our salvation. Thus Divinity united with humanity in the womb of the Virgin by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon her, purifying her womb through the one incarnate nature of the Lord Christ from two natures. It is a union without mixing, without mingling, and without change.

Thus we understand that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God (by His eternal birth from the Father) and He Himself became the Son of Man by His temporal birth from the Virgin).

Using these verses, prove that we believe in one God:

Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Kings 6:80, 1 Chronicles 17:20, Ephesians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 1 John 5:7.

Analogies of the Holy Trinity in our One God:

What are the analogies of the Trinity that bring the meaning closer to our minds? Any analogy we mention brings the meaning closer to us in one or more aspects, but it cannot match the truth completely in all its aspects. Therefore, we present several analogies that may bring the meaning closer to our simple minds so that we may approach, even from afar, the lofty theological matters:

Like the Sun

The sun that sends its rays for millions of miles, illuminating the darkness of the earth, and sending its heat to plants, animals, and humans. It is an example of the Trinitarian Unity, for the sun is one and three at the same time. How? The sun is one in essence, and at the same time it contains the sphere, the ray, and the heat. The ray is generated from the sphere, and the heat proceeds from the sphere. It is an example of the one God, the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The ray is not another sun, and the heat is not another sun. The ray is not different to the sun, but it is the ray of the sun, and likewise the heat is not different to the sun, but it is the heat of the sun. The sphere, the ray, and the heat are one unit. This is an example of the unity of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in one God.

- We can call the sphere of the sun the sun itself, so we say that the sun is in the sky, and we can call the sun's ray the sun, so we say that the sun illuminated the universe, and we can call the

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sun's heat the sun, so we say that the sun warmed us up. This is an example of what we say about the Father that He is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, so they are not three gods but one God. The sun's sphere is not the ray, and not the heat... an example that the Father is not the Son, and not the Holy Spirit.

- The sphere of the sun is a huge mass of flaming gases, which humans cannot reach. It is an example of the Father whom man can never see and live.

- The sun's ray is light from light. It comes from the sphere and reaches us on earth without being separated from the origin. It is an example of the Son who became incarnate, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and yet he was never separated from the Father.

- And the sun's heat cannot in any way be separated from the ray or from the sphere, nor can the sphere be separated from the ray. This is an example of the impossibility of separating the Father from the Son or separating the Holy Spirit from them. If we ask who came first in existence, the sphere, the ray, or the heat? We find that there is no precedence between them, for the moment in which the sphere existed, the ray existed, and the heat existed in. The sphere was never without a ray or without heat. This is an example that there was never a moment in which the Father was without the Son or without the Holy Spirit.

- One sun in which there is flame, light and heat = one essence and three hypostases.

- The disc is not the light, and not the heat = the Father is not the Son, and not the Holy Spirit.

- There is no separation between the flame, light and heat = no separation between the three hypostases.

- There is no separation between the sun and each of its light and heat = no time difference between the Father and the other two hypostases.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Any metaphor used cannot fully describe the true nature of God.

Ask your servant. What is there for us in the Holy Trinity?

2. How was He incarnate?

Here are some of the verses that the heretics use (The firefighters who are trying to extinguish the sun):

- "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry." (Matthew 4:2)

- "If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)

- "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

- "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

- "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

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- "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."" (Matthew 26:39)

- "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3).

Thus some say, doubting that Christ is less than God, for He hungers, suffers, fasts, prays, etc. "How did the Son of God become incarnate?" "How did the Giver of Life die?" And many other similar questions. We will try to answer these questions in the following pages.

How was He incarnate?

The Holy Spirit purified the womb of the Virgin to take from her a body, so that the one born of her would be without sin. He completed the miracle without human seed, and the fetus was formed from the moment the angel announced to the Virgin: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35). And the Virgin said: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38).

God (The Divine nature)	Man (Body + Spirit + Soul)
The hypostasis of the Father x the hypostasis of the Son x the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit	Represented in the Virgin, a human nature.
The Logos	Humanity
The uniting of the Divinity and humanity happened at the beginning of time	
Jesus Christ, fully Divine and fully human, is one united Nature out of two.	

God is able to do all things. He is able to be incarnate, as incarnation is an act of power, not an act of weakness, as it is within the infinite and unlimited power of God. The incarnation did not change the nature of God, because the union between the divinity and humanity was without mixing, confusion, or change, as we say in the hymn: "He did not cease to be divine, He came and became the Son of Man, for He is the true God, who came and saved us." (Thursday Theotokia). The only thing that God does not do is sin, as He is free from sin.

3 - Did Christ exist before His birth from the Virgin?

Yes! As God, He has existed since eternity, meaning that His existence had no beginning, but in His divine nature He filled every place without having a tangible body. The evidence for that is that the Lord Christ says: "before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58).

Monday Theotokia

"He shone in the flesh, taken from the Virgin, without the seed of man, in order to save us."

4 - Did He also fill all places while in the womb of the virgin? How?

Wednesday Theotokia

"The Father looked from heaven, and found no one like you, He sent His only-begotten, who came and took flesh from you."

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Yes... but how?

Despite the union of His divinity with His humanity, this humanity cannot limit His unlimited divinity.

Example: In a light bulb from which light is emitted, can we say that the glass cover (which may represent the humanity) prevents the light (which represents the divinity) from shining everywhere? Of course not.

5 - Why was he born without an earthly father?

It is known that the father gives existence and the mother gives the body. Any living being on earth, whether animal, human, or plant, needs a father and a mother. The plant needs the “seed” (father), the “earth” (mother). The only One who existed and was a being and did not have a body is God, so he needed a mother to give him a body, but he did not need a father to give him existence, because he existed and was a being before all ages.

6 - How were the Divinity and humanity united?

An example to illustrate the idea: (Iron heated by fire) Pope Athanasius the Apostolic says: It is just as fire unites with a piece of black coal to make a burning red ember. Because of its intangible nature, fire may represent the divinity, while the piece of coal, because it is tangible, may represent humanity. Just as the burning ember is the result of the union of fire with the piece of coal, so also in Christ, the Divinity united with humanity. The Son, who is the Word of God (the Logos), dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, and formed for himself a complete and pure body, since the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her sanctified and purified her. He took from her a body exactly like ours, except for sin alone, and began to grow completely for nine full months until He was born a physical birth, without human seed, but from the Spirit. He lived on earth as a true human being, and he grew in wisdom, grace, and stature before God and men, as the Bible says. He was a complete human being, but He carried within Him the nature of divinity. His divinity was never separated from his humanity.

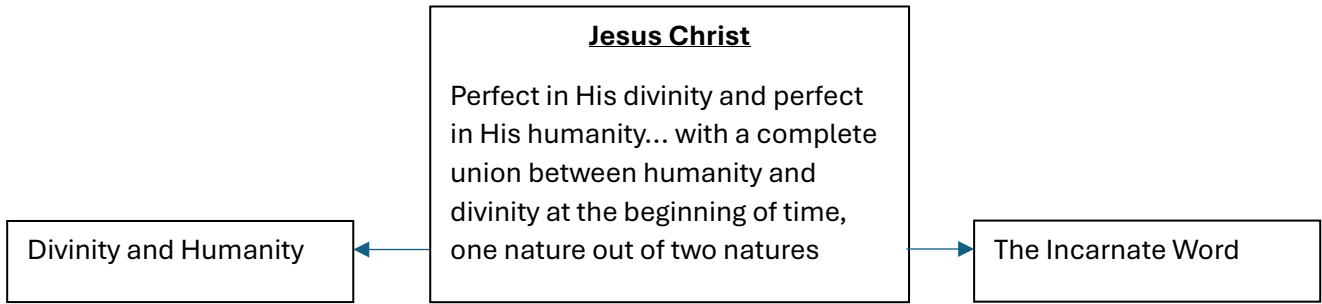
Thursday Theotokia

"He did not cease to be divine, He came and became the Son of Man, for He is the true God, who came and saved us."

7 - How can the life-giver die?

The amazing thing about the character of the Lord Christ is that He was dead and alive at the same time... How? According to His humanity, He was dead, and at the same time alive according to His divinity. He was dead and alive at the same time... He truly died according to the flesh, and at the same time He did not die according to His divinity. Therefore, this living divinity is the one who raised up the humanity (united in Him) at dawn on Sunday. Here Satan doubted the divinity of the Lord Christ, and his ability to conquer death, because how could He, while being God, say that He does not know the day or the hour, and that He hungers and thirsts, etc. So he completed the plot of crucifixion and Satan forgot that the Lord Christ was speaking about these matters according to his humanity to confirm his humanity, as He emptied himself and took the form of a servant. “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8).

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1 - Unity without mingling, confusion, or alteration. Just like a piece of metal that is heated in the flame:



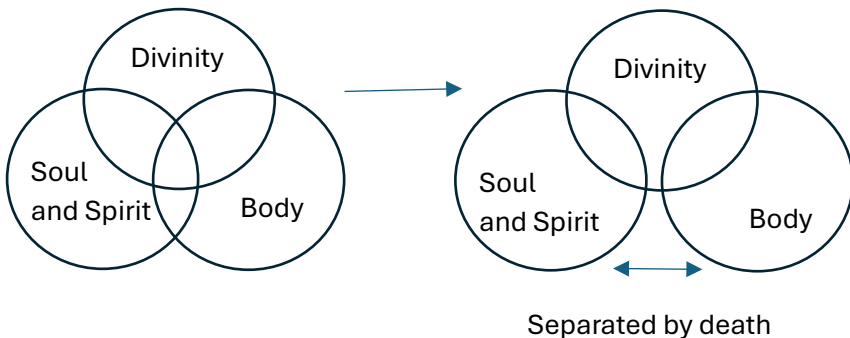
2 - The one nature of Christ

This nature has all the attributes of divinity and all the attributes of humanity (the Son of God, and the Son of man)

John 3:13, Matthew 16:27

3 - Without separation at the death of Christ

At death, the body and the soul were separated, but both remained united to the Divinity.



4 - Begotten of the Father before all ages

Example:

The birth of Christ from the Virgin at the fullness of time is like the birth of a thought from the mind.

8 - At times, Christ spoke of His humanity, and at times of His Divinity. Why did this happen?

To answer this question, we present this illustrative example:

There is a great leader in the army who has a high position and special status, but he decided to leave all of this and go to live with the junior soldiers, eat as they eat and practice their exercises and their life with all that it entails, in order to feel their needs and teach them his disciplined behaviour. The question now is: Can we tell him that you cannot or are not able to make this concession because you are the leader and the one who gives orders? What prevents him from adopting such humble behaviour? His goal is noble, which is to empathise with the soldiers and experience their needs, and present them with a role model, being himself, in exercises and discipline in life.

Thus the high-ranking commander allowed a simple sergeant to have authority over him for a limited period, and by his own will, because he decided to resemble the soldiers in everything, even in submission, work, and the nature of life they live. He is a humble commander. Here this commander can speak to this sergeant in two completely different ways: the first as a commander of the entire army, and the second as an ordinary soldier like the rest of the soldiers.

We believe that the Lord Christ is God manifested in the flesh, and thus He has all the attributes of God, and we also believe that He became incarnate and took our human nature completely, except for sin alone, so He is a human and has all the attributes of a human (except for sin alone).

When He says in Mark 13:32 that He does not know the last hour, He speaks according to His humanity, since He, being wisdom itself, knows all things. However, in order to show the human aspect, since not knowing is specific to humans, and that He has put on the body that does not know some truths, He said according to the body: “I do not know”, because He does not know in the body although He knows as the Word of God.

As He took humanity, He therefore hungers, thirsts, suffers with people, prays, weeps, etc. Thus, the Lord Christ can speak in His human or divine capacity, as He wants in every situation, to implement His divine plan for the salvation of mankind. We attribute the actions of the body to the whole human being, and the feelings of the soul to the whole human being, but it is understood that the one who performed the actions (sleeping, eating, etc.) is the body. Likewise, everything that Christ did was attributed to him as a whole, and not to His Divinity alone, or to His humanity alone. On this scale, you can understand the style of dialogue and dealings of the Lord Christ throughout the period of His dwelling on earth (Divinity united with humanity).

Important definitions:

- Divinity: The nature of God
 - Humanity: The nature of humans
 - Logos: The Word of the Father and the Hypostasis of the Son.
-

9 - Does God have a Son? What is the difference between the Sonship of the Son to the Father, and our sonship to God?

The Lord Christ is the Son of God. This does not mean that God took a wife (heaven forbid), because God is not a human being like us. Rather, the Bible says: “God is Spirit.” Therefore, the sonship of Christ is a spiritual sonship, not a material or physical one.

Examples of non-physical sonship: Daughter of the Nile - Brain child - Sons of the pyramids - Sons of Egypt - Sons of this age - Son of 20 years... etc.

An example from Pope Athanasius: The birth of the idea from the mind - just as there cannot be a mind without thought, there cannot be thought without a mind, so the existence of the mind means the existence of thought as well. The existence of one does not precede the other. Just as thought comes out of the mind without leaving it or separating from it, so the birth of thought from the mind is continuous and does not stop. Likewise, the birth of the Word, the Son, from the Father is before all ages. He is from eternity like the Father and the Holy Spirit, and is not less than them in essence, for He is equal to them in essence. And there is a union between them without separation. This is the sonship of the Son to God the Father, sonship by nature, because He is of the same nature and essence as the Father. This birth is like the birth of a ray of light with the same nature and essence. As for our sonship, it is a sonship by adoption, and it is a sonship acquired because of the incarnation and is not by nature. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God,” (John 1:12).

Therefore, in the hymn Omonogenes that is said on Good Friday, we say in it: “O Only-Begotten One” because He is the only One who has the same nature and essence as God the Father and He is called the Only-Begotten One. The affiliation of others to God is by adoption by grace and not according to nature and essence.

10 - Why did Christ refer to Himself as 'the Son of man'?

Is this a lack of recognition of His Divinity? And why did He not say that He is the Son of God? Does this indicate that Christ is only a human being?

In the miracle of healing the man born blind, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” (John 9:35-37).

Here is an explicit statement from our Lord Jesus that He is the Son of God, but the title of Son of Man was the preferred title of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the one who gave it to Himself and no one gave it to Him. He always affirmed that He is the Christ with all His attributes as God incarnate, “for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” (Colossians 2:9), so He is God manifest in the flesh.

Ask your servant how you can learn more about the titles of Christ.

Topic 4 “Personal and Highly Confidential”

Question for discussion:

What is the difference between a person and a thing...

Some may apply the word "God" to mean an idea or concept about Him, such as "the origin of creation," "the power of life," or "the highest value," as if God is not a person and make Him a thing.

"God is not just an idea but a living person."

He is a person with whom we can establish a personal relationship. Since we cannot connect with stones but only with people, we can have a personal relationship with God. God wants to be an intimate friend to you...The evidence can be found in this verse (John 15:15) (Ask your servant).

We do not come to know God through accumulating information about Him from books, but by knowing Him personally, loving Him, obeying Him, following Him, and conversing with Him in prayer.

The goal is to reach a personal relationship with our Lord: "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1)

Question for Discussion:

Do you have a relationship with God that is: Obligatory, A wage, Routine, Formalities Or a relationship of love? What is the difference from your perspective among all these types of relationships? Which one do you live and which one do you aspire to?

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How do you know that God loves you? Extract from these references what proves this.

The Evidence of His Love for You	The Verse	Reference
"God says that He loves you."	"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."	Jeremiah 31
"God says that He loves you."	"I have loved you," says the Lord." But you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'	Malachi 1:
		Isaiah 43:4
		Psalms 32:8
		Zechariah 2:8
		1 Peter 5:7
		1 Timothy 6:17
		Matthew 6:31-33
		Psalms 103:3
		1 Thessalonians
		1 John 5:11
		1 John 3:1

To love God is to... (Ask your servant.)

Your guide to reaching God's love.

1. "The necessity of understanding God's love for you."

"To the extent that a person understands God's love for him, he reciprocates with love. Our love is nothing more than a result of understanding His love for us. 'We love Him because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). 'He loved them to the end' (John 13:1). There is no reason in us, (so to speak,) that invites love. He loved us out of grace, because we are His children. No matter who we are, He loved us even unto the death on the Cross. Therefore, the soul that understands God's work for her understands how much He loves her.

One of the most important things that the enemy of good seeks to make you live in complete ignorance of, is the understanding of God's love for you. The enemy may tell you that you are a drop in the ocean!!, that the cross is a story that happened long ago and ended!!, and question if you really believe that God loves you!!. What is good in you? This is a doubt-instilling attack from the enemy to make you lose the greatest value in your life, which is understanding God's love for you."

"Is your struggle positive?"

Application... and why not...

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"Alongside your struggle against sin, strive to be filled with the love of the Lord. Make your struggle positive and not just negative. The struggle against sin is a necessary negative effort, but the positive struggle is to grow in a loving and personal relationship with the Lord."

"Remember that gratitude opens up the heart to experience more of God's love, and that God increases His blessings for the grateful person."

"If you perceive God's love for you as limited, you will reciprocate with the same limited feeling of love. If you feel that God's love for you is hesitant, you will respond in the same way. If you feel that God does not love you, this will be your corresponding feeling towards Him."

Your understanding of God's love for you is reflected in your perception of His love."

"To the extent that you feel God's love for you, you will reciprocate with the same extent."

"Therefore, the enemy of good aims to create a gap between you and the Lord, which could lead to rejection or dissatisfaction, and may even reach the point of questioning God (such as: 'Why did God create us like this? Why us specifically? etc.')."

"Imagine you are on a bus and you are asked to establish a strong relationship with the person sitting next to you and talk to them, even though you don't know them and they don't know you. What would you talk about? The conversation would likely be about something unrelated to either of you personally. Similarly, if you stand before the Lord without having a personal relationship with Him, your conversation will be external, dry, lacking in feeling, and thus it will be dull and brief."

So with whom do you confide your complaints and struggles? You will only trust someone who is a close, loving friend."

2. "Personal relationship with God."

"Often, we may have known Christ intellectually or by inheritance because we were born as Christians, but what is your true relationship with Christ? This is what will lead you to the love of Christ."

How do you establish a living relationship with a friend?"

"Meet Him often, talk to Him frequently, listen to Him and He will listen to you. Give Him a gift, and He will give you a gift in return. Visit Him, and He will visit you. Show Him affection, and He will show you affection. Open your heart to Him, and He will open His heart to you. This is how it is with God. A non-formal relationship is what is needed—a living relationship with the Lord throughout the day. Call on Him with a verse, a hymn, a special request, the Jesus Prayer, a moment from the Agpeya, and so on."

"Personal relationship with Christ... how?"

"The Lord Jesus did not come to establish an institution, noble principles, or a religion. Rather, He came to present Himself as a living person, to live and dwell in our hearts forever."

"What is the difference between believing in God and knowing God? (Ask your servant.)"

"A personal relationship with the Lord Jesus is essential, but it only grows when you intend it to. It does not happen spontaneously between you and the Lord Jesus; rather, it is born, nourished,

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and developed through a daily personal relationship—through prayer and reading His Word. Through this, we enjoy and experience His presence every day in our lives."

"We must establish this special relationship with the Lord Jesus, meeting Him face to face. No one else can do this for you. You approach God to the extent that you choose, and like any friendship, you must work to develop your friendship with God. This will not happen by chance."

"The real problem is that we are always in a hurry. Everything tends to be 'Take away'.

But with the Lord, it's different. You must give enough time, sincere desire, and dedicated effort."

- The disciple whom "Jesus loved" is not only John or Lazarus, but each one of us.
- This deep relationship and strong love are not just for John, but also for you and me, as we grow in our faith and love.



How do we reach... through solitude, a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus? What is solitude?

"It is a quiet session with God to help a person grow in the knowledge of God.

It is the moments of being in the presence of God, through which He reveals Himself to me.

The essence of solitude is a meeting with God, a calm presence with Him, and being alone with Him.

God created you to enjoy being with Him, so if you strive towards Him by spending time in solitude, He will welcome you and help you. Through this, you will be able to behold God, feel at ease, and begin a true personal relationship with Him. With His assistance, you will move through the events of life."

"In solitude, God gradually reveals Himself to you, or something of His beauty, which brings joy to your heart and opens your mind and emotions. You will enjoy His fatherhood towards you.

The fulfillment of meeting with God in solitude happens gradually. Even a small degree of comfort to the soul and the movement of your desires towards closeness to God can be experienced.

In solitude, you are alone with God in calmness, and you feel that God is yours, as if you alone are embracing Him and He is embracing you."

- In solitude, a person begins to feel new emotions that are completely different from those experienced towards material things, no matter how joyful. Material emotions quickly fade and only affect the external part of a person, whereas spiritual emotions reach the depths of a

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person, bringing comfort and peace. At the same time, within a person, a longing for God is formed. When God sees your readiness to sit quietly with Him in solitude, He will open your heart and work in you with His Holy Spirit gradually, so that you may be enlightened and understand many things that will change your life."

"How should I spend my time in solitude?"			
<p>Place of Solitude</p> <p>Many young people have become accustomed to associating the place of solitude with being in monasteries. Indeed, monasteries are ideal places for spending deep periods of solitude and enjoying fellowship with the Lord of glory in the desert. There are many reflections one can enjoy there. However, if it is not possible to be in a monastery for extended periods throughout the year, should we abstain from solitude? Certainly not. Solitude can be practiced anywhere, but with some conditions."</p>	<p>Duration of Solitude</p> <p>At the beginning of practicing solitude, what matters most is benefiting from the solitude (the quality) rather than the length of time spent (the quantity). It is not as important how much time is spent in solitude, but whether there was a connection between you and God. Did you feel the presence of the Lord? Did you listen to His voice? Did you speak to Him from your heart? Therefore, you can gradually increase the duration of solitude. You might start with just a few minutes and increase it as your love for God grows in your heart. Initially, solitude can last for 20 minutes, and it is possible to continue for 20 minutes daily for a year, and then gradually increase the time."</p>	<p>Solitude Appointment</p> <p>The appointment for solitude should be set daily, whether in the morning, afternoon, or evening. You should choose a suitable time when the mind is clear, free from distractions, and the body is active, not after tiring mental or physical work. Some fathers prefer solitude to be in the early part of the day, when the body is fresh and the mind is clear. Additionally, starting your day with the Lord of glory, Jesus, allows you to seek His guidance and assistance throughout the day and entrust Him with the management of your affairs so that He may lead you through the day. You might find it challenging at first to wake up early, so it is necessary to go to bed early to wake up early the next day and find time for solitude."</p>	<p>Solitude is a decision</p> <p>Before anything else, there must be a decision within you for solitude and the desire for a session with the Lord of glory, Jesus. It requires a sense of need to connect with Him and seriousness in seeking a deep relationship with Him. If this longing is within you, it will be easy to make the decision to begin a period of spiritual solitude. We will provide you with some guidelines to ensure that your solitude is successful and fruitful, and that it becomes the foundation for a true relationship and fellowship with the Lord of glory, Jesus.</p>

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Escape the Noise:

Solitude should be in a quiet place away from hustle and noise. This place should be consistent and familiar so that you don't waste time choosing a new location each time, which can affect the duration of your solitude. It could be your own room or any space in the house where you can be alone and have the ability to focus and avoid distractions. If a quiet place is not available at home, you might go to the nearest church and spend your solitude there, or any quiet place like a peaceful garden or beach. If possible, solitude in a monastery is also an option."

Program of Solitude:

What do we do in solitude? How do we start solitude? What do we say during solitude? We will answer all these questions and set basic guidelines to begin our solitude and continue it.

Solitude includes four parts:

1. Prepare yourself
2. Listen to His voice
3. Speak with Him
4. Conclude the Solitude

First: (Prepare Yourself) Preparation of the Heart:

Preparation time for solitude is essential and beneficial for making the solitude focused, with the mind free from distractions, and attuned to the words and dialogue with God.

In order to enter the presence of God, you must prepare yourself to be in a spiritual atmosphere that allows you to enter His presence.

Turn off your mobile phone and disconnect from the Internet. Calm yourself, even for a little while, before starting your solitude, to prepare yourself for the atmosphere of solitude and to engage your emotions and feelings towards talking with God and being in His presence.

It is not appropriate to move directly from the things you were preoccupied with to solitude, because if you do, you will not enjoy the dialogue with God, and your mind will be scattered.

Ask your servant about what the Fathers have said regarding the necessity of preparing oneself for solitude.

To prepare the heart, it is necessary to focus on the reality of the Lord's presence and existence in the prayer room. God is undoubtedly present, and failing to be aware of this will cause you to miss out on the opportunity and blessing of solitude.

Keep in mind that you will be in the presence of God, and that God sees and hears you. Father Nectarios said, 'Make sure every day to stand before God without sin. Pray to Him as though you are witnessing Him, because He is truly present.'

Therefore, to prepare your heart to enter the Lord's presence, gather your thoughts to realize and be aware of the Lord's presence in the place. You should be able to say in your prayer room with faith: 'The Lord is present with me now; He listens to me, sees me, and loves me.'

There are methods to help you prepare yourself for solitude, such as: (The Holy Bible - Spiritual reading - The Psalms - A hymn you love that kindles the desire of your heart to speak with God - Prayers from the Agpeya - The Jesus Prayer - Repeating the hymn of the Sunday Epsali 'I have sought You from the depth of my heart' - Reading a passage from a spiritual book) All these

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methods can be used to enter into the spiritual atmosphere, calming the senses and focusing the mind on God.

Secondly: Listen to His Voice (The Holy Bible):

After you enter the presence of the Lord by preparing your heart to stand before Him, the second part of the quiet time begins: listening to the Lord's voice as He speaks to you through the Holy Bible. To clearly understand the Lord's voice, consider these steps:

- Lift up your heart with a short request and say to your Heavenly Father: "Lord Jesus Christ, open my heart, mind, and ears to hear Your words, understand them, and follow Your commandments. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide Your commandments from me, but open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law."
 - Contemplation of the Holy Bible during your quiet time is not for the purpose of studying, researching, or interpreting. Instead, it aims for comfort and spiritual growth. This does not negate your daily Bible readings.
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What Should We Read from the Bible During a Quiet Time?

- Read a portion of a chapter daily, according to the schedule of daily readings for quiet time. (It is recommended to start with the four Gospels, as they form the foundation of Christianity.)
- Understand the main idea of the reading.
- Read several times the verse that you feel God is speaking to you through, and that resonates with you. Then, understand the verse thoroughly to clearly grasp God's intended message.

Then, begin your meditation on the verse if it is:

- 1 - A Verse About a Specific Virtue: Reflect on how you can acquire this virtue, and ask the Lord of Glory who is present with you to help you attain it.
 - 2 - A Verse Indicating a Weakness Within You: Ask the Lord of Glory who is with you to help you develop yourself and address the weakness within you.
 - 3 - A Verse Pointing to God's Love and His Work with You: This opens a field for meditation on God's love and the greatness of His works with you. Ask Him to help you understand the depth of the love He offers you.
 - 4 - A Verse Referring to Eternal Life: This is an opportunity to meditate on heaven and the angelic life. How wonderful it is for your heart to yearn for heaven.
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Thirdly: Talk with Him (Prayers):

After listening to the Lord's voice through the verse of meditation, it is now your turn to speak with Him.

You don't need me to tell you that God, who is with you in solitude, longs to hear your voice. He is deeply attentive to every word, feeling, or emotion you express. He eagerly awaits His time with you to listen to everything within you. Trust that the Lord is waiting for you and longs for your company.

As the bride says: "I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me" (Song of Solomon 7:10)

Application

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During your period of solitude, try to contemplate one or two verses deeply. This allows you the opportunity to delve into the depths of their meanings, understand God's intent, and transform it into prayer.

Discussion Question:

Many young people often ask: "What should I say when I talk to God? I don't know how to speak or use nice words."

Fourth: Concluding the Quiet Time

You should:

- Thank the Lord for giving you the opportunity to sit with Him and be in His presence. Thank Him for His mercy and patience with your weaknesses. Thank Him for the joy, happiness, and peace He has bestowed upon you during the quiet time.
 - Ask for Grace and Continuity, Pray that He grants you the grace and continuity, and prepares the environment for the next quiet time.
 - Strive Against Obstacles: Work against the things that hinder your daily meeting with God, as this meeting is the secret of your life.
 - End with a Few Words At the end of the quiet time, say just a few words such as, "I love You, Lord," or "I long to be in Your presence."
 - Praise the Name of God: Conclude with praise, thanking God for answering your prayers. Finally, end the prayer with the hymn ("Khen Efran Axioos" for the saint of the day or your intercessor.)
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Important Note:

- + If you happen to miss your quiet time for any unavoidable reason, don't despair. Instead, rise up and start anew, taking another step in your journey to deepen your relationship with the Lord.
- + Make sure to have your Bible, a hymn book, a quiet time journal, and a pen in your prayer room to write down your reflections.
- + Be diligent in recording your quiet time in the daily quiet time journal before leaving your prayer room. This practice will help you focus, stay collected, and avoid distractions during your quiet time.
- + Moreover, it will encourage you to be consistent and persistent daily.
- + Writing down your quiet time will serve as a reminder each day. If you neglect your quiet time, you will realize your negligence when you resume it, as you will see how many days have passed without sharing your life with the Lord.

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Memorization

(From the Prayers of the Sixth Hour - Agpia)

THE GOSPEL (Matthew 5:1-16)

A chapter from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew may his blessings be with us all. Amen.

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

“Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Litanies of the Sixth Hour

Lord, who on the sixth day, at the sixth hour You were nailed to the Cross for the sin that Adam dared to commit in paradise. Break the bonds of our sins, Lord Christ and save us. I cried to the Lord and He heard me. Lord accept my prayer and answer my supplication, hear me in the evening and in the morning and at noon. Hear my words and spare my soul. **Thok-sa-patri Ke ey-you Ke agiyou epnevmaty.**

O’ Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was nailed to the Cross at the sixth hour. You mortified sin by the cross, by your death You raised the dead; Man, whom You created with Your hands, who died to sin. O’ Lord, may all our pains be ended through Your life giving and healing sufferings. May our minds be saved from foolishness and worldly desires to the remembrance of Your heavenly laws. **Ke-neen Ke-ae Ke-is-touse E-onas ton E-onon. Amen.**

Because of our many sins, we are without liberty, pretext or excuse, we can only plead to You, O’ Virgin Mary, Mother of God, to pray to whom you gave birth, because your supplications are acceptable to our Saviour, O’ Pure Mother, do not turn the sinners back, plead for them, because He to whom you gave birth is the merciful redeemer. He suffered to rescue us. O’ Lord, we are helpless, we badly need Your compassion, help us for the sake of Your glory, God save us and forgive our sins for the sake of Your Holy Name. **Ke-neen Ke-a-ee Ke-is-touse E-onas ton Eonon. Amen.**

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O' Lord Christ, You gave salvation to the whole world when You spread Your undefiled hands on the cross, for this all nations give You praise saying; “Glory be to You O' Lord”. **Thok-sa-patri Ke ey-you Ke agiyou ep-nevmaty.**

O' Good Lord, we worship Your incorruptible person, praying for the remission of our sins, for You were pleased to willingly go to the cross to rescue Your creation from the slavery of the enemy. We thank You Christ, for You filled us all with joy, when You came to help the world, Glory be to You. **Keneen Ke-a-ee Ke-is-touse E-onas ton E-onon. Amen.**

O' Mother of the Lord , full of grace, Virgin Mary, we praise you, because the Cross of your Son, Hades has fallen and death destroyed. We were dead before, but we have been raised, and made worthy to inherit eternal life and to regain paradise, for this we thankfully glorify our immortal Lord Jesus. **Ke-neen ke-a-ee ke-is-touse e-onas ton e-onon. Amen.**

Anthem 2024/2025

(Our God is eternal
Our God is One in Three
Pantocrator, The Logos
Redeemer and Holy) x 2

All generations witness for Him
His creation gives Him praise
Tells of His might and His wonders
How this world His hands have made

We're peaceful in His promises
Guided by His teachings
We live by His commandments
We seek Him and His blessings

Our Church fathers and martyrs
Kept Tradition to this day
A life of Sacraments
My Church unique and firm in faith

My faith and my doctrine are glory
Unchanging the teachings and Holy
The Lord is my light and my salvation
The Lord is my light and my salvation

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