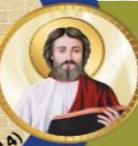


Diocese of Melbourne - Summer Festival  
continue in the things which you



have learned (II Timothy 3:14)

2026

## Summer Festival | 2026

But you must continue in the things which you have learned - II Timothy 3:14



Youth (19-29 yo)  
English Edition

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS  
WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

**His Holiness Pope  
Tawadros II**



**His Grace Bishop  
Rewis**



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

**General Bishop of  
the Diocese of  
Melbourne and its  
affiliated regions**

## **Appreciation**

The summer festival central committee of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and its affiliated regions would like to give thanks and appreciation to the **Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States** ([www.smfsus.org](http://www.smfsus.org)) for their blessed and tireless work in the translation, revision and art-work of St. Mark's Festival (Mahragan Al Keraza) books from the original Arabic version under the guidance and prayers of **H.G Bishop Youssef**.

May The Lord bless all their fruitful services and for many years to come.

**In Christ,**

**SF Melbourne Central Committee.**

## Table of Contents

Continue In What You Have Learned	5
The 2 Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians	8
Church Teachings and the Salvation of Man	12
The Church Between Tradition and Modernity	16
Teaching, Discernment, and Refuting Heresies and False Doctrines	20
Understanding Miracles	23
Memorization	26

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

# Continue in What You Have Learned

**2 Timothy 3:14**

St. Paul wrote to his disciple, St. Timothy, saying, “**Continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them**” (2 Timothy 3:14)

St. Paul advised St. Timothy about the importance of striving with a spirit of strength, not one of hopelessness, to preserve the sound faith. He encouraged him to refute heresies with firmness, but also with meekness and love.

This is the theme of St. Mark Festival this year: there will always be resistance to the work of God. The devil will always resist the truth, but our reassurance is in the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ:



**“The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church.” (Matthew 16:18)**

## **I. One Faith, Sound Teaching**

### **a. Why preserve the faith?**

- This is the faith that our Lord Jesus Christ established, and the apostles preached. It was preserved by the Church living it and handing it down pure and sound from generation to generation.
- Our Church has kept the faith unchanged, as it was handed down to us through the Holy Bible, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils. It is recorded in Church Tradition.

### **b. Characteristics of an Orthodox Believer:**

#### **• Filled with Christ:**

Knows Him intellectually, understanding that He is one of the Holy Trinity; abides in Him through the Eucharist; and has a relationship with Him through prayers.

#### **• Filled with the Holy Bible:**

Faithfully knows God’s message to stand against all the wrong teachings that we come across every day.

#### **• Filled with the Holy Orthodox Church:**

The congregation of *believers (one doctrine)*, gathered in the *sanctified house of God (rite)*, led by the *clergy (Sacrament)*, in the presence of *angels and saints (tradition and role models)*.

#### **• Filled with the Church Fathers:**

Knows their lives and righteousness, follows their example and teachings.

#### **• Integrated:**

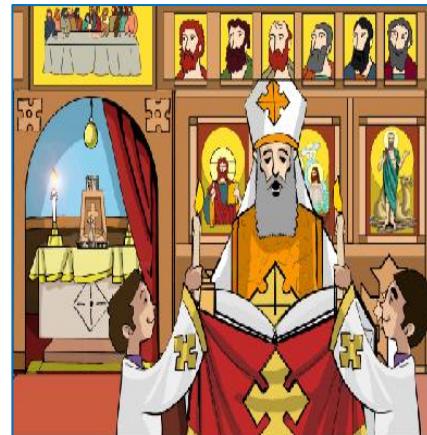
In the community, and not isolated.



## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **II. Resources of the Coptic Orthodox Teaching**

- a. **The Holy Bible:** The Holy Bible is the foundation of all Church teachings. No teaching may contradict it; every teaching must align with the Scriptures.
- b. **Church Tradition:** The rites of the Church and teachings of the Fathers have been handed down from generation to generation, as they received it from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is through Tradition that we received the Holy Bible.
- c. **Liturgy:** The Liturgy is a trusted resource like the canons of the Ecumenical Councils. We pray what we believe and do not teach anything different.



In the Divine Liturgy, we declare our faith in the Trinity, the incarnation of the Only Begotten Son of God, His redemption of humanity, His death on the Cross and His resurrection, His ascension into Heaven, and sending us the Holy Spirit, the Second Coming, and eternal life.

We also proclaim our belief in the Sacraments and the work of the Holy Spirit in us, that St. Mary is the Theotokos, and our belief in the intercession of the saints.

- d. **Biography and Teachings of Church Fathers:** The Church Fathers explained and taught the sound faith as agreed upon by the Church. Their lives and writings continue to guide us today.
- e. **Canons of the Ecumenical Councils:** These are decisions unanimously agreed upon in the council.

### **III. Abiding in the Sound Faith and Handing It Down to Generations**

- a. **Our Lord Jesus Christ established the Church on the rock of the Orthodox faith:**

- “On this rock I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18)
- He instructed His apostles to care for His people: “Tend My sheep” (John 21:16)
- And to preserve the faith and teach it to everyone: “Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20)

- b. **Our Coptic Orthodox Church firmly rejects any teaching that differs from the true faith:**

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let them be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8)



## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **IV. Why and How to Reject Heresies and Wrong Teachings**

#### **a. Why Reject Heresies:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ warned us of the false prophets who are “ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

Throughout the ages, the Church convened councils to refute heresies and to separate heretics when they insisted on their wrong teachings.

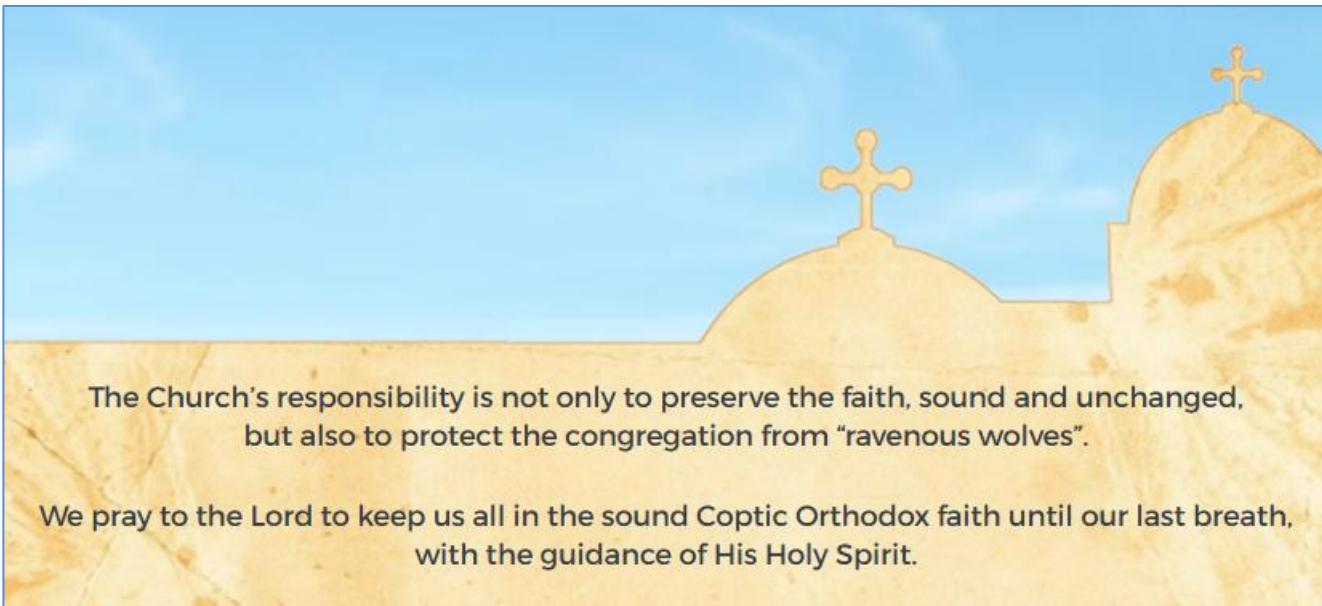
We honor the heroes of the faith who participated in keeping the true faith sound, such as St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Dioscorus, St. Samuel the Confessor, and others.

We, too, should follow in their footsteps, remaining faithful in keeping the true faith, pure and unchanged, just as we received it.



#### **b. How the Church Handles Heresies:**

- **Warning:** “**warn those who are unruly.**” (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- **Avoidance:** “**Note those who cause divisions... and avoid them.**” (Romans 16:17)  
“**From such withdraw yourself.**” (1 Timothy 6:5)
- **Rebuke:** “**Rebuke them sharply.**” (Titus 1:13-14)
- **Separation:** “**Put away from yourselves the evil person.**” (1 Corinthians 5:13)



The Church's responsibility is not only to preserve the faith, sound and unchanged, but also to protect the congregation from “ravenous wolves”.

We pray to the Lord to keep us all in the sound Coptic Orthodox faith until our last breath, with the guidance of His Holy Spirit.

# **The 2 Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians**

Thessalonica was the capital of a province in Macedonia, in northern Greece, known for its immorality and wickedness. This prompted St. Paul to urge its people to live in purity (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8). He visited the city during his second missionary trip, and some Jews and Greeks believed. However, some unbelieving Jews incited the people of the city against St. Paul and St. Silas, forcing them to leave and head to Athens. As persecution of the believers increased, St. Paul sent St. Timothy to strengthen their faith.



The letter was written around 52–53 AD from Corinth.

## **Purpose of the Letter:**

1. To strengthen the believers in their faith.
2. To comfort and encourage them amidst tribulations, and to speak about the Lord's Second Coming.
3. To encourage them in their spiritual strife and to live a righteous life.

## **First Letter:**

### **Encouragement Amidst Persecution and a Reminder of the Lord's Second Coming**

#### **Chapter 1: The Success of the Church in Thessalonica**

1. St. Paul mentions Silvanus and Timothy as partners in the service and prays for God's grace and peace for the Thessalonians.
2. He thanks God, remembering them in his prayers: "**We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers**" (1 Thessalonians 1:2).
3. He praises them for becoming examples to others, receiving the word with joy amid affliction: "**You became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit**" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

#### **Chapter 2: St. Paul's Fatherly Care for the Thessalonians**

1. He emphasizes the sincerity of his message and his willingness to suffer in order to please God, not men: "**For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know.**" (1 Thessalonians 2:5)
2. He likens himself to a nurturing mother and a loving father, affirming his holy conduct.
3. He thanks God because they received the word not as mere human words, but as God's words.
4. He expresses his love for them: "**For you are our glory and joy**" (verse 20).

## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **Chapter 3: Sending Timothy to Minister Among Them**

1. St. Paul sent Timothy to strengthen the Thessalonians during their tribulation, and Timothy returned to him with good news.
2. St. Paul describes Timothy as: "**Our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ**" (verse 2).
3. St. Paul prays that their love may grow: "**And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another**" (verse 12).



### **Chapter 4: The Meaning of a Righteous Life**

#### **First: St. Paul explains the concept of a righteous life through several key points**

1. Living a righteous life is not only about morality, but also about obedience to God's commandments.
2. Christian holiness is a lived tradition, passed down from the fathers.
3. To attain holiness and righteousness, all forms of sexual immorality must be rejected.

#### **Second: Brotherly love, the mark of God's children**

1. St. Paul encourages them to grow in love.
2. To aspire to live a quiet life.
3. To work with their hands.
4. To behave properly toward outsiders.



#### **Third: The Lord's Second Coming**

St. Paul begins to direct their attention toward the resurrection of the dead and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Chapter 5: Practical Instructions and Final Salutations**

St. Paul concludes his letter with practical advice, affirming the importance of:

- A life of watchfulness
- Love and respect for shepherds

#### **Final exhortations:**

Warn the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, uphold the weak, and:

**"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks" (verses 16–18).**

- Do not quench the Spirit
- Do not despise prophecies

He concludes with an apostolic blessing and a request for prayers.

## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**



### **Second Epistle: Victory Over the “Man of Sin” (or “Lawless One”)**

The Thessalonians misunderstood the first letter, thinking the Lord’s coming was imminent. As a result, some abandoned their jobs and became dependent on others, living in disorder. St. Paul, therefore, sent the second letter.

#### **Reason for the Epistle:**

1. To correct the misunderstanding about the nearness of Christ’s coming, leading some to stop working.
2. To encourage them to remain steadfast in faith and endurance.
3. To clarify the appropriate conduct as children of God.

It was written a few months after the first epistle, around 53 AD, in Corinth.

### **Chapter 1: St. Paul’s Boasting About the Thessalonians**

1. He thanks God for their growing faith.
2. He encourages them to endure suffering: "**The tribulations you are enduring, is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God**" (verses 4-5).
3. He lifts their eyes to the coming of Christ and His righteous judgment.

### **Chapter 2: The Revelation of the “Man of Sin” (or “Lawless One”)**

1. St. Paul explains the events that must precede the Second Coming and warns against false prophecies.
2. He speaks of:
  - a. A great falling away from the faith that will occur first, as many deny Christ and turn away from the Church.
  - b. The revelation of the “*man of sin*” or Antichrist, who will appear before the Lord’s return, “*according to the working of Satan*”, performing false miracles, signs, and wonders to deceive many. The “*man of sin*” will spread sin into the world.
  - c. The Lord Jesus Christ will consume him with the breath of His mouth.
3. St. Paul encourages the believers to remain firm in the apostolic teachings they have received.

#### **What we, as believers, should do regarding these events:**

1. Give thanks to God
2. Hold fast to the teachings received from the apostles
3. Remain steadfast in Christ

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS  
WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

**Chapter 3: Final Practical Instructions**

1. Requests prayers for the success of his ministry: "**Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified**" (verse 1).
2. Encourages them to work and avoid idleness.
3. Encourages doing good deeds.
4. Warns against those who do not obey the teachings.
5. Concludes with a message of peace and an apostolic blessing.

**In conclusion, both epistles deliver messages of encouragement, instruction, and warning, emphasizing the importance of steadfastness in faith and diligence until the Lord returns.**

# Church Teachings and the Salvation on Man

The Church's foremost pastoral concern is **teaching**. At the heart of its doctrinal instruction lies the subject of **salvation**. There is no salvation outside the Church, for God has granted it the grace and means through which man attains salvation.

## 1. No Salvation Without the Church's Sacraments

- **The Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), Repentance & Confession, and the Eucharist** are necessary for salvation.
- **The Eucharist** is given “**for the salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life to those who partake of Him.**” (**Liturgy of St. Basil**)
- **Priesthood** is the sacrament that enables the other sacraments.
- Through the authority which Christ gave to the apostles and their successors, sins are forgiven to those who repent and confess their sins during the **Sacrament of Confession**, making them eligible to partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord.



## 2. No Salvation Without the Liturgy

The rites of the liturgical prayers—such as the Divine Liturgy, the **Agpeya** **prayers, fasting, and prostration**—are filled with humility, pleas for mercy and help, and a deep sense of unworthiness. These spiritual practices encourage perseverance in spiritual struggle, continual repentance, growth in spiritual fruits, a life of virtue, and steadfastness in Christ—all of which are essential and necessary for salvation.

## 3. No Salvation Away from the Church's Teaching

As an **Apostolic Church**, we depend on **apostolic tradition** and the teachings of the Church Fathers who defended the faith against heresies. The Church has preserved her faith pure across the ages and resisted every heresy that sought to destroy sound doctrine—rejecting Gnosticism, Arianism, Nestorianism, and others that threatened the salvation of her children. We must remain vigilant in preserving the purity of the doctrine. The early Church established strict systems for teaching, requiring a sound confession of faith before baptism.

# “BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)

## First: The Holy Sacraments

### 1. Baptism:

Baptism is the **gateway to the sacraments**, through which one enters the Church. Without it, one cannot partake in any other sacrament. Christ said: “**He who believes and is baptized will be saved**” (Mark 16:15–16)—He did not say “believes only.”



During baptism, we die and resurrect with Christ. “**Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**” (Romans 6:3–6)

Also, “**Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**” (John 3:5).

### 2. The Holy Chrismation (Myron):

This sacrament reflects the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Initially, it was granted through the apostles’ laying on of hands, but it later came to be administered directly through anointing with Holy Myron oil after baptism.



### 3. Priesthood, Repentance, and Confession:

The repentant should only confess to the priest, who has authority from the Lord to forgive sins, as He said: “**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them**” (John 20:23). St. James affirms the necessity of calling priests to pray over the sick, linking healing to confession (James 5:14–16).



There is **no forgiveness** without confession to a priest, and **no priesthood** without the authority of the Holy Spirit working in the Church.

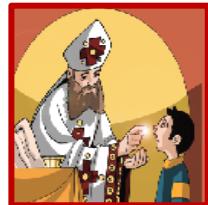
## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **4. The Eucharist:**

This is the sacrament of **partaking of the true Body and Blood of the Lord**, as Christ said: **“Take, eat; this is My Body”** and **“This is My Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26–28)**.



The Church does **not** consider it a mere symbolic memorial but a **living and ongoing remembrance** of the Cross.



- St. Paul said: **“Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27)**. If it were merely symbolic, why would there be judgment?
- The Eucharist follows every sacrament: baptism, chrismation, confession, ordination, marriage, and anointing of the sick.
- It is the **center and culmination of all the sacraments**, and the altar is the continuation of the sacrifice of the Cross.

### **Second: Liturgical Prayers**

The Church integrates doctrine within its rites. The **Divine Liturgy** includes the full story of creation, the fall, redemption, resurrection, ascension, and the Second Coming.



The **Agpeya Prayers** reflect the living Orthodox faith, and even the apostles themselves prayed the hours, as practiced in the temple (Acts 3:1).

The Church developed its own prayers, filled with repentance and submission to God, such as:

- “If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall I, the sinner, appear?”
- “The bridegroom is coming at midnight; blessed is the servant whom He finds watching.”
- “When I realize my many wicked deeds... a tremble takes hold of me.”

These prayers express the **urgency of ongoing spiritual struggle and sincere repentance**—both of which are rejected by heretics who deny repentance and spiritual striving.

## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **Third: Sound Teaching and Refutation of Heresies**

Sound faith was a **requirement for baptism** in the early Church. Catechumens underwent extensive instruction, and the Church rejected the baptism of heretics because they had not entered the true faith. The Apostolic Canons say: *“Whoever is baptized by heretics has not received forgiveness of sins but has been defiled.”*

Whenever a heresy appeared, the Church responded with correct teachings and held councils to protect the faith. St. Paul warned of distorted teaching: **“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3–4)** and affirmed that heresies reveal those approved by God (1 Corinthians 11:19). He declared that those living according to the flesh will **not inherit the Kingdom of God** (Galatians 5:19–21).

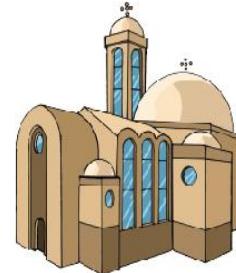
**Salvation is lived and experienced within the Church through her sacraments, prayers, and sound teachings. The Church leads her children in repentance, spiritual striving, and union with Christ. To remain in the Church is to remain on the path of salvation, safeguarded by the faith handed down from the apostles.**

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

# **The Church Between Tradition and Modernity**

## **The Word "Church" in the Orthodox Tradition**

The Church is not merely a building, but the congregation of believers gathered in one spirit under canonical spiritual leadership, the clergy, for the purpose of prayer, teaching, and fellowship. The roots of this concept go back to the New Testament, where Christ used the word "Church" (Matthew 18:17). It is the Body of Christ in the world, continuing through the holy sacraments and the teaching of the faith.



## **The Church as a Historical Continuation**

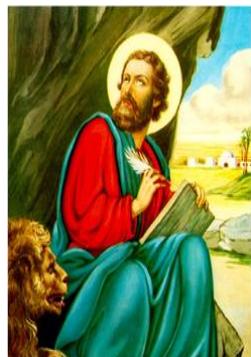
The Church represents the continuation of the congregation of believers, connected to the history of salvation—from the patriarchs and prophets to the apostles and martyrs. Though it has faced many challenges, it has remained steadfast through the power of the Holy Spirit. The lives of the saints reflect this continuity—they are living witnesses to the soundness of faith.

## **The Impact of Technology and Orthodox Teaching**

Technology has influenced sound teaching, which requires spiritual guidance to preserve Orthodox thought rooted in Scripture and Tradition, just as Jehoshaphat demonstrated in 2 Chronicles 17:9.

The Church must stay up to date with the changes of the era, responding with evangelical wisdom that does not hinder the salvation of souls, while never compromising or altering the faith we have received. Strange teachings must be warned against, and spiritual and educational programs should be delivered in ways appropriate to the times.

### **I. The Church and Doctrine**



#### **The Role of Education in Faith**

St. Mark established the Theological School of Alexandria, which quenched the early Christians' thirst for sound doctrinal knowledge, raised general awareness about the importance of education, and produced many Church leaders. It united the mind with faith, and its pioneers included St. Athanasius, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Didymus the Blind, Origen the Scholar, among others. The school also educated many fathers who became defenders of the faith.

### **The Role of the Church Fathers in Preserving the Faith**

- **Saint Athanasius the Apostolic:** Opposed Arianism and affirmed the divinity of Christ.
- **Saint Cyril the Great:** Defended the title *“Mother of God”* against Nestorianism.
- **Ecumenical Councils:** Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus safeguarded the Orthodox faith against heresies.

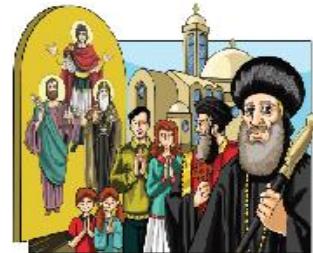


If we have received the faith through the struggle and sacrifice of the saints and the Fathers of the Church, then what we have received is a heritage we must cherish. We must recognize the responsibility and necessity of preserving it and defending it at all costs. This should be the shared mission of the entire Coptic community.

## **II. The Church as a Congregation of Believers**

### **The Concept of the Church as One Body**

St. Paul says: **“For as the body is one and has many members... so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12)**. Unity of faith is essential, as believers are united through the holy sacraments to become one body in Christ.



The Church, as a congregation of believers, must have:

1. **One Faith:** in the Holy Trinity, redemption and salvation through the Blood of Christ, communion with the angels and the saints, and the seven sacraments of the Church. St. Paul affirms: **“there is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4-6).**
2. **One Goal:** The salvation of souls and the glorification of God.
3. **One Spirit:** Preserving unity of faith and fellowship in ministry. **“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God” (1 Corinthians 2:10–12).**

This is a call affirming the necessity of our unity in faith and doctrine, motivating us to keep our children within the Coptic Orthodox Church, which upholds the true Christian faith, despite modern movements with theological tendencies that contradict our Orthodox faith.

## “BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)

### III. The Lord as the Inheritance and Portion of the Church’s Priesthood

**The Word "Clergy":** It originates from Greek, it means "The Lord's inheritance." Thus, the clergy are those for whom the Lord is their inheritance.

**The Church recognizes three clerical ranks:**

- **Diaconate:** For serving in worship and helping the needy, like St. Stephen (Acts 6:1–8).
- **Presbyterate:** For administering the sacraments and caring for the faithful (Acts 14:23).
- **Episcopate:** For spiritual oversight and teaching the faith (1 Timothy 3:1–2).

In the Orthodox understanding, these three ranks are received through divine calling, election, invitation, and anointing through the laying on of the bishop's hands.

- Priesthood is not a profession but a spiritual calling requiring strong preparation to preserve sound teaching. Priests are responsible for the sacraments and spiritual guidance of the congregation, while bishops also oversee the Church's unity and faith.
- Each clergy member must abide by the limits of his rank and not exceed them. Clergy must also serve within the bounds of their assigned regions and should not move without permission.
- **Priesthood is for men only**, as the man is the head of the woman according to natural law. However, the Church does not exclude women from service - honoring roles such as deaconesses and widows since the time of the Old Testament.



### The Church as a Christian Tradition

One meaning of the word “church” refers to the building dedicated to prayer and worship, a tradition established by the apostolic fathers. Churches are consecrated with special prayers, highlighting their sacredness.

### Historical Places of Worship:

1. **Bethel:** The place Jacob consecrated and named "House of God".
2. **Tabernacle of Meeting:** The place of worship in the Old Testament, which contained the Holy and the Holy of Holies.
3. **Solomon’s Temple:** Built, destroyed, and rebuilt multiple times until it was permanently destroyed by Titus the Roman in 70 A.D.
4. **St. Mark’s House:** The first church in the New Testament, where the disciples gathered with Christ, the Eucharist was established, and the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples during Pentecost.



# **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

## **The Stages of Church Development**

1. **First Stage:** Christianity was not recognized until the reign of Diocletian (308 A.D.).
2. **Second Stage:** Christianity was permitted after Constantine's Edict (313 A.D.).
3. **Third Stage:** Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire under Theodosius the Great (381 A.D.).

## **Church Architecture Evolution**

The Coptic Orthodox Church has evolved and now has distinctive forms and components:

- **Shape:** Built in the form of a ship (Noah's Ark), circle, or cross.
- **Sections:** The altar, sanctuary, nave, choirs, and Bethlehem (room of the Holy Bread).
- **Other Elements:** Baptismal font, pulpit, iconostasis, columns, and the arrangement of Coptic icons.



## **The Importance of Preserving Church Tradition**

Church Tradition enhances worship, inspires spiritual contemplation, and must be preserved with reverence. Modern tools such as media and social platforms should be used to spread the faith, not change it.

## **Dangers of Neglecting Tradition**

Neglecting the heritage we have received would make us lose vital aspects of faith and lead us astray. Here are some examples:

- Acceptance of practices like the priesthood of women and human deification.
- Questioning the doctrine of salvation and books of the Bible.
- Using churches for non-religious purposes, stripping them of their sanctity.

## **In Conclusion**

The Church is not merely a physical structure, but a sacred tradition rooted in Christ. The Church is entrusted to us to preserve faithfully and pass on to future generations, according to the Orthodox faith established by the Lord Jesus Christ.



**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

# **Teaching, Discernment, and Refuting Heresies and False Doctrines**

## **Introduction**

Some may ask: Why does the Church oppose heretical thought? And what impact do heresies and false teachings have on the Christian faith? In reality, the Church is not against individuals, but rather it addresses distorted ideas that corrupt the faith and harm both the spiritual lives of individuals and the overall structure of the Church. Preserving sound teaching is the Church's responsibility, so that doctrine does not deviate from the truth of the Holy Gospel.

As the Bible says: **"Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed, for they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord"** (Jeremiah 29:8–9).



With this in mind, we will address some of the most dangerous intellectual deviations confronting the Church today and explain why the Church rejects these misleading teachings.

## **First: Mysticism and Superstition**

### **True Teaching vs. Corrupt Thought**

The Orthodox approach is based on the Holy Gospel, the teachings of the Church Fathers, and the correct liturgical and sacramental life. In contrast, those who follow deviant thinking often rely on visions, dreams, and personal revelations, claiming, “The Holy Spirit told me so,” without reference to Church authority or tradition. This leads to the spread of unfounded myths, legends, and superstitions.

The Holy Bible warns about such people: **"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some having strayed have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they are saying nor the things which they affirm" (1 Timothy 1:5–7).**

### **Examples of These Superstitions:**

- Promoting unbiblical ideas, such as “coughing drives out demons” or claiming that “spiritual feelings dwell in the liver and spleen.”
- Controlling people’s lives by making personal decisions on their behalf, like whom they should marry or should not marry—under the pretense that “the Holy Spirit does not approve.”

The Church’s teaching is clear: God gave us a mind to use, not to ignore. We must discern between what is true and what is false.

St. Ignatius the Bishop warns: **"Avoid poisonous herbs that are not tended by Christ, for they are not planted by the Lord. Whoever follows division will not see the Kingdom of God, and whoever follows a strange idea does not conform to the sufferings of Christ."**

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

## Second: Emotional Spirituality and Its Danger

### What is the difference between true and false spirituality?

Humans are composed of body, soul, and spirit. Therefore, spirituality should be balanced and true. If it's tied only to the body, it becomes shallow and materialistic. If it's tied only to the soul, it becomes emotional and deceptive.

True Orthodox spirituality is led by the Holy Spirit with depth and balance.

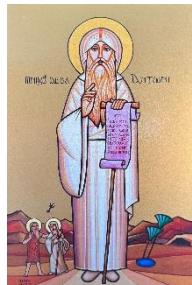


### How does false religiousness appear?

- Relying on emotional songs and loud music to only stir emotions.
- Using emotionally charged words instead of doctrinal teaching.
- Focusing on passionate, emotional preaching that appeals only to feelings without building true understanding or faith.

The Holy Bible describes such people:

**"These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (Jude 1:19).**



St. Anthony the Great warns against this kind of spirituality, saying:

**"Many have done great works, but because they lacked discernment, they did not recognize God's path."**

True Orthodox spirituality is not a fleeting emotion; it is a way of life, “like water that carves into rock,”: **deep, steady, and enduring.**



### **Third: Speaking in Tongues and Messages of the Holy Spirit**



#### **What is the Church’s position on speaking in tongues?**

Speaking in tongues was a gift given at the beginning of the Church as a sign for unbelievers. According to the Bible: **"Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe." (1 Corinthians 14:22).**

This gift was not a continuous phenomenon; it ceased once the Church's mission was firmly established. Therefore, anyone who claims to be “Coptic Orthodox” yet believes in the practice of speaking in tongues today is contradicting the faith of the Coptic Church.

### **Fourth: Discernment and the Difference Between Truth and Falsehood**

#### **Why must we be cautious of false teachings?**

The Bible warns us: **"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1).**

#### **How do we distinguish between true and false teaching?**

- The teaching must align with the Gospel and the patristic tradition of the Church.
- The teacher must be humble and submissive to the Church’s teachings.
- Spiritual discernment and wisdom are essential to confronting doctrinal deviations.

Our Lord Jesus warned: **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)**

#### **What is the Church’s Role in Facing Heretics?**

- The Coptic Church faithfully preserved the apostolic faith passed down through the Fathers.
- Anyone who deviates from the true faith separates himself from the Church and bears responsibility for his own spiritual judgment.
- A true believer obeys the teachings of his Church and does not follow every new or invented idea.

**Conclusion:** The Coptic Orthodox Church is the Church that has faithfully preserved the sound faith. Therefore, anyone who wants to understand the true teachings of Christ must return to the Church and draw from her spiritual treasures—far from myths, false emotionalism, and distorted doctrines.

**"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me,  
in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).**

# Understanding Miracles

The Holy Bible speaks of miracles, which God may perform either directly or through His saints. Some miracles are still reported today, and there are various media channels sharing such stories. But what is a miracle? What is its purpose? And how is it connected to faith?

## First: What Is a Miracle?

A miracle is a **supernatural event** that exceeds human capability, such as healing the sick without medicine or raising the dead. Yet everything that has been created is naturally within God's supreme power, as the Psalmist says: **“For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.” (Psalm 36:9)**

When Christ came, His divine power healed, forgave, and blessed naturally for Him, like electricity that lights and energizes. His resurrection from the dead is not a miracle in the sense of being unusual for Him, but rather an expression of His divine nature: **“Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” (Acts 2:24)**

Therefore, miracles are not unnatural for God, though they are supernatural from a human perspective. Therefore, the **true miracle is the Incarnation**.

At times, God grants His saints the ability to perform wonders in His name, as a testimony to His glory and power.

## Second: The Purpose of the Miracle

1. **To reveal the power of God, to glorify His holy name, and for people to believe:**

**“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” (John 2:11)**



2. **To declare divine authority over nature and humanity:**

The Lord Christ demonstrated His power of spiritual renewal through miracles such as:

- Healing the sick: symbolizing the cleansing of sin.
- Raising the dead: indicating victory over spiritual and physical death.
- Calming storms: asserting His authority over creation.



## **“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

### **3. To show God’s compassion for people and creation:**

Miracles also expressed God’s mercy. Christ fed the multitudes saying:

**“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat” (Mark 8:2).**

He also healed the leper and raised the son of the widow of Nain. This shows the Lord’s deep love for humanity.



### **Third: The Relationship Between Miracles and Faith**

Does faith come before the miracle or after it? The answer varies depending on the individual’s heart and spiritual state. The Holy Bible reveals four categories:



- 1. Those who received miracles because of their faith:** These include the woman with the flow of blood (Matthew 9:22), the Canaanite woman, the healing of the blind, and the centurion who believed Christ could heal his servant from a distance. Their faith preceded the miracle.
- 2. Those who believed after witnessing a miracle:** For example, the people of Cana believed after the Lord Jesus Christ turned water into wine (John 2:11), as well as those who saw Tabitha and Lazarus raised from the dead, or Elymas the sorcerer struck blind.
- 3. Those who did not believe despite seeing miracles:** The scribes and Pharisees, for example, witnessed many of Christ’s signs but their hearts remained hardened: **“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him.” (John 12:37)**
- 4. Those who did not receive miracles due to their lack of faith:** **“Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” (Matthew 13:58)** Faith opens the doors to divine intervention, lack of faith shuts it.

### **Fourth: Satan and Miracles**

The Holy Bible warns us that Satan can perform **false signs** to deceive people: **“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Matthew 24:11)**

Therefore, miracles must be tested to determine if they are truly from God, as St. John instructed: **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.” (1 John 4:1)**

## **Fifth: Are Miracles Proof of Righteousness and Right Faith?**

### **1. Saints who performed no miracles:**

A miracle is not proof of holiness; rather, a holy life is proof that a miracle is genuine and from God.

The Bible tells us that **St. John the Baptist performed no miracles** (John 10:41), yet Christ called him **the greatest of the prophets** (Luke 7:28). Likewise, **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel, Isaiah**, and many others in the Holy Bible were great in faith but did not perform miracles.

### **2. Evil people who performed miracles:**

Miracles alone are not signs of sainthood. Christ Himself warned: **“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”** (Matthew 7:22-23)

True holiness is known by obedience, humility, and purity of life, not by signs and wonders.

## **Sixth: The True Miracle**

The greatest miracle is not a physical healing or supernatural event, but the Incarnation of the Son of God and Redemption of humanity: **“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)

That **God became man, died, and rose from the dead to give eternal life** is the greatest miracle in human history.

As St. Paul said: **“We walk by faith, not by sight.”** (2 Corinthians 5:7)

**Let us then live by faith, discern wisely, and give glory to God, the true Worker of all wonders.**



# **Memorization**

## **Psalm 98 (97) in the Ninth Hour in the Agpia**

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvellous things; His right hand and His holy Arm have gained Him the victory. The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has openly shown in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.

Sing to the LORD with the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm, With trumpets and the Sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King. Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell in it; Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD, For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity. **Alleluia.**

## **The Gospel of the Ninth Hour in the Agpia**

THE GOSPEL

(Luke 9:10-17)

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

And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. And He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." But He said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

**Glory be to God forever. Amen.**

## **Litanies of the Ninth Hour in the Agpia**

O' Lord who tasted death in the flesh at the ninth hour for our sake, we the sinners; mortify our carnal senses, O' Christ our God, and deliver us. Let my supplication draw near You, O' Lord. Give me understanding, according to Your wisdom. Let my request reach Your presence and give me life through Your word.

**Thok-sa-patri Ke ey-you Ke agiyou epnevmaty.**

At the ninth hour You surrendered Your soul to the hands of the Father, after being hanged on the cross. You guided the thief to join You in paradise, do not forget or reject me for I have strayed. Sanctify my soul, enlighten my mind and let me partake of the grace of Your sacraments so that when I taste Your goodness, I offer You praise unceasingly, longing for Your light above all things O' Christ our Lord, save us. **Ke-neen Ke-a-ee Ke-is-touse E-onas ton E-onon. Amen.**

You were born of the virgin, for our sake and endured crucifixion, O' Righteous Lord, with Your death You defeated death, with Your resurrection You made eternal life manifest. Do not turn Your face from those whom You made by Your hands. Show Your love to mankind O' Good Lord. Accept the supplications of Your virgin mother on our behalf. O' Saviour, spare Your humble people and do not let us perish, do not revoke Your promise and do not deprive us of Your mercy for the sake of Your beloved Abraham, your servant Issac and Israel Your saint. **Ke-neen Ke-a-ee Ke-is-touse E-onas ton Eonon. Amen.**

## **Sayings of the Church Fathers**

1. “A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.” (St. Basil the Great)
2. “If we seek God, He will show Himself to us; and if we keep Him, He will remain close to us.” (Abba Arsenius)
3. “Do not give your heart to that which does not satisfy your heart.” (Abba Poemen)

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

**“BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED” (II TIMOTHY 3:14)**

# Anthem 2026

C  
O  
N  
T  
I  
N  
U  
E  
  
I  
N  
T  
H  
E  
T  
H  
I  
N  
G  
S

W  
H  
I  
C  
H  
Y  
O  
U  
  
H  
A  
V  
E  
  
L  
E  
A  
R  
N  
E  
D

(Our doctrine, from the start,  
established by God himself,  
preached by the apostles,  
and our fathers kept it safe.) **2x**

a strong tree of faith,  
its roots trace back to history,  
pure and watered by God's words  
(Rites and also liturgy) **2x**

firm,  
firm in my faith and doctrine  
Our church is fatherly  
Orthodox as my forefathers  
Heroes of the Coptic church.

Mark, Athanasious, Dioscoros,  
heroes and pillars of faith,  
though heresies arise,  
still we're steadfast in our faith.

Rooted in your church,  
**be firm in what you've learned.**

Contact us on:

Website: [www.sfmelb.org.au](http://www.sfmelb.org.au)

Email: [info@sfmelb.org.au](mailto:info@sfmelb.org.au)

Facebook: SummerFestivalMelbourne