



Summer Festival | 2023 / 2024



# REJOICE

Gr 10-12 | English Edition

*“ ... the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice” (Deut 16:15)*



## His Holiness Pope Tawadros II



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

## 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**

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# “ REJOICE ”

## Rejoice Always

The Holy Bible always encourages us to live a life of joy as we read in Deuteronomy 16:15 **“you shall surely rejoice”**. However, how can we experience the true life of joy when we are happy one day, and sad on other days?! Some days we are not satisfied with our lives even if we accomplish much! We may wonder, how can we rejoice if the world is in turmoil; much trials, pains, sicknesses, wars, and inflation. .... We do not know where the world is heading.

The Wisdom of Sirach answers this question for us in 2:11 **“My sons, consider the nations of men, and know that not one of them hoped in the Lord and was confounded”** which is why we **“shall surely rejoice”**. Joy is one of the fruit of the Spirit Who works in us.

### There are 2 Types of Gladness:

#### 1. Worldly happiness:

Showy, exasperated, and temporary. Worldly happiness passes away once the reason passes. It affects our thoughts and our emotions but does not affect our spirits.

#### 2. True Christian Joy:

It is what is given by our Lord Jesus; **“For He Himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14)** and the source of our joy **“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)**

### Sources of Joy:

#### The Joy of Repentance:

What can strip the person from his/her joy other than sin?! Sin gives us a sense of guilt which leads to loss of joy. The Holy Spirit inside us, rebukes us and encourages us to repent and restore our joy.

#### The Joy of Fellowship, Service, and Giving

#### The Joy of Enduring Hardships:

just as our Lord endured for our sake, we too rejoice in enduring for His name, **“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41)**

# “ REJOICE ”

## Rejoice in the Lord Jesus My Savior and Redeemer:

### “Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous” (Psalm 97:12)

Our Lord Jesus is Great! He offered the greatest love ever! He created us in His image and likeness to enjoy His unlimited love and to live with Him in paradise. But we have sinned and fallen with our own will.

He was incarnate, born in a manger from a poor virgin, and lived poor. Not only poor but suffered and rejected by many. He died on the cross for our sake, He was buried, and He rose on the third day to raise us with Him. He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father to take us with Him to His throne. **“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”** (Isaiah 35:10)

## Rejoice in the Holy Bible:

### “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

The Holy Bible is your personal divine message; in it we find love, rebuke, commandments, promises, teaching, and details about the way to eternal life ... Can we reach God without His guidance and life-giving words?!

Therefore, every Christian ought to study the Bible regularly fulfilling the Lord's commandment **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”** (John 5:39)

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

Jeremiah the prophet said, **“Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.”** (Jeremiah 15:16)

## Rejoice in the Church - The House of Joy:

Our Coptic Orthodox Church is unique; the Lord redeemed her with His blood. She received the sound faith from our fathers the apostles. Therefore, she is an apostolic Church, straight in her teachings, faithful to the Lord regardless of the circumstances (tribulation, persecution, heresies, etc.). She is the house of joy, and she gives us joy.

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## Rejoice in Being a Member of the Body of Christ:

**We receive this membership through the Holy Sacraments**, and we keep this membership through our spiritual struggle. We serve inside the Church then we witness to the Lord outside in our society. Each member of the Body of Christ has a calling and a message for the society. This brings joy to our life, knowing our identity and our calling. I am a Christian, Orthodox, Coptic, and Australian.

## Joy in Spiritual Fulfillment:

**“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.” (Psalm 63:5)**

As a member of the Body of Christ, has a life of joy and fulfillment through:

- Praying the Psalms daily
- The Arrow Prayers (Jesus Prayer): *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*
- Daily lectionary readings
- Reading the Synaxarion daily
- The Midnight Praises
- Church Fasts
- Church seasons
- The Eucharist
- The Church Fathers sayings

## Joy in Asceticism:

There is a major difference between our moderate Coptic asceticism and other forms of asceticism that are puffed up at times, and could lead to sadness, and not joy.

The asceticism which we adopt is that of St. Anthony and St. Paul. St. Anthony lived in his cave for 20 years and came out joyful. He was not overweight or raw-boned. This is moderate and spiritual asceticism. The body is a talent from the Lord, and we ought to keep it healthy.

The sound asceticism is under the direction of the father of confession offering my asceticism to the Lord.

## Joy in Martyrdom:

**“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41)**

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## Rejoice in the Eternal Life to Come:

Being confined within time and busy with our lives on earth threatens the health of our spiritual life; As humans, we are spiritual beings, created with the breath of God, He allowed us to live on earth for a short period of time. After that, we go back to our original heavenly and spiritual condition where all the glory and holiness resides, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

### Joy in the glory of holiness:

As St. John the Beloved saw a great crowd, dressed in white, with palm branches in their hands **“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7: 14)**

The robes which have been made white in the blood of the Lamb and palm branches in their hands are a sign of victory as **“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:26)**

The illuminated body that we will live with in heaven is unable to fall or sin, no illness and no death, no temptation, and no sadness.

### Eternal Joy:

**“Enter into the joy of your lord.” (Matthew 25:21)** ... this is the call that the honest and believing soul will hear when it reaches paradise, that is why it is referred to as the “paradise of joy.”

The joy of meeting with the Lord, with the saints and all who went there before us, “the place which grief and sorrow have fled away in the light of the saints.”

### Joy of the Communion with the Lord:

In heaven we will live in continuous communion with God and with the **“members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19)** ... with the angels and the saints. Let us imagine our meeting with the Lord ... How joyful .... How longed for ... How fulfilling! What about our dialogue with the angels, with St. Mary, with the Church fathers, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints!



There is no doubt, we will be entering into a never-ending joy in the presence of the Lord, and an indescribable happiness **“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man. The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)**



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## Joy in the Glory of Eternal Life:

The Lord promised us saying, **“Because I live, you will live also.” (John 14:19)** ... and as long as the Lord lives forever, so are those who believe in Him will live with Him forever.

**“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)** That is why St. Paul said **“For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain... Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” (Philippians 1:21-24).**

## Rejoice through the Act of Prayer

Prayers bring joy to the believer’s life when he/she is rested while being assured that the Lord is the Pontocrator. He is in control of everything. He is good, loving, and righteous.

Those who were successful in their prayers did not have specific expectations from their prayers in which they lost hope when it wasn’t fulfilled. Instead, they found their fulfillment in the act of communicating with God. That is why they found favor in God’s eyes, and they were able to speak to Him as a close friend ...

Like Abraham who interceded with God regarding His decision on Sodom and Gomorrah when he said: **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25)**

Or David when he said to God: **“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1-2). Who can talk to God like that if he wasn’t close to Him!**

**“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6)** God will take care of us; our role is to pray, and not be anxious, and He will take care of the rest. That is why the correct way to pray is to ask for God’s will to be done, regardless of what our will is.

**“rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12)** St. Paul is telling us that prayers bring hope, and require patience. I have hope that **“whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13)**

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## Habakkuk

Habakkuk is one of the 12 Minor Prophets. His name is an unusual Hebrew name derived from the verb “habaq” which means “embrace.” Thus, Habakkuk likely means “one who embraces,” as he chose to embrace God regardless of the injustice around him. He prophesied in Judah during the time of King Manasseh, about six hundred years before Christ. This was during the fall of Nineveh and the rise of Babylon. He was a contemporary of the Prophets Nahum, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zephaniah.

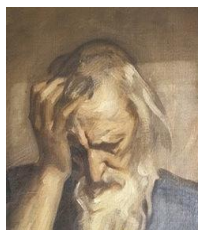
**When:** The date is about 605 B.C. during the weakening and collapse of the Southern Kingdom of Judah but before the arrival of the Babylonians, also known as Chaldeans, and the Babylonian exile. During this time, it appeared as though the wicked were prevailing both inside and outside of Judah. Habakkuk cried out against the injustice that he saw all around him. Judges at the time were corrupt.

**Background:** Our Orthodox tradition tells us that Habakkuk was the prophet who was miraculously transported to Babylon and who visited and ministered to Daniel in the lions’ den. He died at a great old age, and his relics were recovered in the fourth century during the reign of Theodosius the Great.

Before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the people of Judah were living a life of wealth and luxury, and the society was on the verge of collapse. The rich were greedy and disregarded the needs of the poor, the widows, and the orphans.

**Themes:** Habakkuk agonizes over the wickedness and oppression that are widespread in Judah as he believes that God is doing nothing about it. He becomes even more confused when he learns that God will use the Babylonians to judge Judah, when the Babylonians were even more wicked and ruthless. In the end, he learns to trust in the Lord and to believe that God will make all things right and just in the end.

### Chapters 1 & 2: Habakkuk 1:1-11 ~ First Complaint



Habakkuk describes the burden, or prophetic oracle, he saw as he laments the seeming silence of God in response to the rampant injustice and violence. **He asks the Lord, “How long, O Lord, shall I cry out to You, and You will not hear me?” (Hab 1:2).** “How long?” is a common question among the Old Testament prophets and the psalmists when God appears silent, remote, and powerless. God’s answer was beyond belief. The Chaldeans, also known as Babylonians, would inflict judgment upon Judah. The Chaldeans were evil, ungodly people who would violently punish Israel. Although the Chaldeans were instruments of God’s wrath upon Judah, they would still answer to God for their crimes against humanity.

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We read in Revelations, **“And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” (Rev 6:10,11).**

## **Habakkuk 1:12-2:20 ~ Second Complaint**

God responds by asking Habakkuk to wait patiently and to know, **“The righteous shall live by My faith” (Hab 2:4).** God then goes on to caution against arrogant greed, violence, and faith in idols. **“Woe to him who takes advantage of evil gain for his own house, so that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil” (Hab 2:9).** Man often seeks relentlessly for material possessions and money in an attempt to protect himself from misfortune. The Bible tells us that this type of wealth is false security because there is no security other than in God.

**“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed, who establishes a city by wrongdoing. Are not these things from the Lord Almighty?” (Hab 2:12, 13).** A city built by bloodshed and conquest will ultimately be destroyed. Only the city built with righteousness will endure.

**“What benefit is a graven image, since men carve it? They have formed it into a molten image, a false image. For the one who made the thing trusts in that which is formed by him, to make idols that cannot speak. But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be reverent before Him” (Hab 2:18, 20).** Idolatry begins with deception, encourages deception, and calls for a commitment to deception.

## **Chapter 3: Habakkuk 3:1-19 ~ Habakkuk’s Prayer**

Although Habakkuk opens his book by questioning God, he ends it with a beautiful psalm of praise. His praise focuses on the person of God, the power of God, and the plan of God. While Habakkuk should be in great despair knowing the immediate future of destruction, he finds hope in God’s divine purposes and past redemptive work.



Habakkuk concludes with, **“Yet I will glory in the Lord; I will rejoice in God my Savior. The Lord God is my strength; He will direct my feet to the end; He will set me upon high places, so to conquer by His song” (Hab 3:18, 19).** God will strengthen those who trust in him and will give those who live by faith great confidence.

Nations are often given to greed, power, idolatry, and to immorality. Often, people treat each other without regard to human dignity. It may appear that the ruthless and most evil people are the ones who succeed. However, according to Habakkuk, the Lord remains sovereign and will eventually judge each person. While people may be lured into wickedness through power and success, a glorious future awaits those who wait on the Lord and submit to His will.

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## Rejoice in Salvation

The Church teaches us that when Adam sinned, the result of his sin was death and corruption: **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned –”(Romans 5:12)**

Adam’s sin did not only affect him personally but affected the entire human race. Because of his sin, corruption, sin and death entered into the world.

As the children of Adam, we were born with this sin (referred to as the original sin), we also were born carrying the result of that sin which is death and corruption. Therefore, humanity needed a Savior, to save it from sin and its consequences.

### What happened to humanity with Adam’s sin?

#### Spiritual death

- Adam’s sin separated man from God, Who is the source of life.
- The “image” was separated from the “Origin” rather than communion.
- Man started to run away from God rather than running toward Him.
- It became impossible for man to be with God, there is no communion between light and darkness.



#### Physical death

- The consequence of sin is death. When Adam broke the commandment there was no escape from death.
- Man became under the sentence of death; man became prone to illness and disease which led to death.
- It is from God’s mercy that Adam did not die immediately after breaking the commandment.

#### Shame, fear, and suffering

- Because of the fall, man lost the glorified image of God, he lost his reverence and dignity, and was expelled from the garden of Eden carrying the shame of sin.
- Before the sin, Adam and Eve were living in the garden naked and not ashamed as they were covered with God’s grace. However, after the fall, the shame of sin opened their eyes to their nakedness. **“and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” (Genesis 3:7)**
- Fear entered Adam’s life for the first time, and pain and suffering found their way to his being. **“I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10)**

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## Corrupt nature

- Sin settled in human nature and affected it from all aspects. Fear, anxiety, turbulence, pain, and disease all became part of the human condition.
- Sin also reached nature, the earth, and the plants. The animal's nature became aggressive toward man. Even climate, wind, tornados, floods, and volcanos all became against man.
- Humans became inclined to sin. All were born with this nature along with Adam's sin.

## Why did God not simply forgive Adam?

Knowing the massive consequences of Adam's sin, some may wonder why did Adam not offer repentance? God would accept sparing humanity from dealing with the consequences.

This solution was not feasible for the following reasons:

- God is completely just, as He is completely merciful. If God simply forgave Adam because He is merciful, then His mercy would contradict His justice.
- God gave Adam a clear warning and gave him all the necessities to help him obey the commandment.
- So, if Adam falls and does not bear the consequences of sin, it will contradict God's divine justice.
- Also, God declared the consequences of sin before the fall. How can God not keep His word?! **“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do?” (Numbers 23:19)**
- Finally, if a judge acquitted a person who was found guilty, he himself will be guilty towards justice. Will the Judge of the universe be guilty towards the divine justice?!

## If Adam is the one who sinned, why do I bear the consequences?

It seems unfair that we -as individuals- are held accountable for Adam's transgression. To understand this, we ought to understand that the entire human race was in Adam when he sinned (As human nature, not as individual persons)

- Humanity was in Adam when he was created, when he sinned, and when he died. Therefore, we were counted corrupt, sinful, and dead with Adam.
- We were born with the sin of Adam, and the corrupt nature represented in Adam.
- Like a tree, when it is hit by a disease, every fruit of that tree becomes bad, and the seeds inside its fruit also carry the same disease.
- Adam became the diseased tree that carried the disease (sin and corrupt nature) to its branches, fruit, and seeds. **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)**

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## Does that mean that we bear our parents' sins too?

- No. There is a difference between Adam's sin, of which sin and the corrupt nature entered into the world, and sins committed afterward, in the state of the fall.
- We see this in Adam's sin (and Eve before him); their sin was introduced from outside (the serpent) while when we look at Cain's sin, where did it come from?
- Cain's sin came from within, and no one pushed him to it, it was initiated from his heart, born with this corrupt nature.
- This continued throughout all generations. Including the prophets **“They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:12)**
- Each of us is born with the sin of Adam and carries it along with his/her own sins. **“No one is without sin even if his life on earth was a single day.”**

## The Divine Liturgy Explains our Faith

In the Liturgy of St. Basil, the priest says **“Holy, Holy, Holy indeed, O Lord our God, who formed us, created us and placed us in the Paradise of Joy...”** However, while none of us now say that we saw Paradise, we were there in Adam because we were created through Adam.

Then the priest continues saying **“When we disobeyed Your commandment by the deceit of the serpent, we fell from eternal life and were exiled”** – it is important to note the specific language being used here as the use of the word “we” implicates all.

In The Gregorian Liturgy, the priest says **“but according to my will, I did eat”** – one might ask the priest “you were not there, how did you eat from the tree” – the response however would simply be that if Adam ate, we all ate too. For through Adam, we shared in this act and **“plucked for ourselves the sentence of death.”**



## The First Adam and the Second Adam

St. Paul explains this doctrine in detail in his epistle to the Romans. **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”. (Romans 5:12)**

It is important to understand what is meant here by the word “world” - it is not meant as to the physical world i.e. Asia, Europe, Africa – however the word refers to people. When it is said “God so loved the world” it is understood that the world means its people. Therefore, here the scripture is clear that through one man, sin entered the people; **“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” (Romans 5:15)**

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What St. Paul is saying here is that just like how Adam burdened us, Christ redeemed us. In the same way, one man's sin was imputed to all, one Man's gift saved all. **“For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in the life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17)**

This comparison is repeated throughout the epistle. What happened to us because of Adam was remedied because of Christ. **“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.” (Romans 5:18)**

It is further explained to us what exactly the gift is. **“So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21)** The emphasis here is that the grace of God is greater and that we can take solace in knowing not only did God's gift redeem us from the original sin but gave to us more than that which we were burdened by through Adam's error.

## **Conclusion:**

To summarize our Church's faith on this issue, we believe that we were in Adam when he was created, when he sinned, when he died, and when he was corrupted by sin. That is why we were born of him sinful, corrupt, and dead. **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)**

The Lord Jesus - the Second Adam- came as a new beginning for a new humanity and its first fruit so that we can be united as a whole with Him. When the Lord Jesus became man He became the representative for all humanity.

The Holy Bible says that Christ is above all, this means that He is able to be a representative not just for His generation or region where He lived, but for all humanity from the beginning until the end. For Him to do this, He must have witnessed humanity from the start until the last day – no one else can do this but our Lord Jesus Christ.

From this summary, we can understand that Christ was incarnate, that He took flesh from St. Mary, that while He was in the flesh, undertook the act of salvation to save us, that while in the flesh He carried our sins, that He died and that He resurrected from the dead. From this understanding we can contrast what we took from Adam versus what we received from Christ.

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## Pope Dioscorus



“Coptic” means “Egyptian” and “Orthodox” means straight in faith. St. Mark the Apostle preached Christianity to the Copts, and they remained faithful in the faith holding fast to what they received from him from one generation to the other. They held fast to the teachings, the rites, and the Holy Tradition.

Over the centuries, our beloved Church had a clear stance against many false teachings and heresies. Our Coptic Church led the ecumenical councils, which were held in the early few centuries of the history of the Church.

Our saintly Church fathers who were well knowledgeable in the faith and were guided by the Holy Spirit Like St. Athanasius, St. Timothy, St. Cyril, and St. Dioscorus were a safeguard to the Christian faith from the confusion and schisms those heresies caused. During the early centuries of the church, many heresies arose due to the incorrect interpretation of some of the Bible verses.

There were two types of councils:

1. **Local or provincial councils:** Held in a specific region where the bishops and priests of that region gather to discuss a problem or a heresy.
2. **Ecumenical councils:** Includes bishops and representatives from all the original Apostolic Churches, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome.

Our Coptic Orthodox Church recognizes 3 ecumenical councils:

1. The Council of Nicaea 325 AD
2. The Council of Constantinople 381 AD
3. The Council of Ephesus 431 AD



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## Pope Dioscorus Defends the Faith

Eutychus (who was an archimandrite in Constantinople) fell into another heresy while trying to refute the Nestorian heresy. Emperor Theodosius II called for a council to be held in order to look into the teaching of Eutychus and confirm the correct faith. This council was presided over by Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria and the council was referred to as **the second council of Ephesus**.

## The Second Council of Ephesus, 449 AD

**Reason for the Council:** The council was held to look into a request from Eutychus asking to be returned back to the church after he was excommunicated by Flavian the Archbishop of Constantinople. Eutychus was an archimandrite in Constantinople who strongly opposed Nestorius' teachings. However, while defending the faith against the Nestorian heresy, he fell into another heresy.

Eutychus taught that the humanity of Christ was not similar to our humanity, and it was consumed by His divine nature. Meaning that there was mingling between His humanity and His divinity in the nature of Christ which altered His human nature. **This is contrary to the Orthodox teaching that the Lord Jesus' incarnate nature is one nature out of two and that His divinity was made one with His humanity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration.**

However, Eutychus returned and confessed the true Orthodox faith, and with the canons and teaching of all the previous Ecumenical Councils.

- **The council was called by:** Emperor Theodosius II
- **The council was presided by:** Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria
- **It was held in** the city of Ephesus in the year 449 AD
- **It was attended by** 150 bishops including representatives from the Church in Rome

## **Decisions of the Council:**

After his declaration of the true Orthodox faith both orally and in writing and abandoning his initial claim, Eutychus was restored to the Church. However, after the council Eutychus returned back to his initial (false) teachings; he is now anathematized for these false teachings.

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## Schism of the Church:

The Church worked tirelessly in the first few centuries to defend the faith from any false teachings in unity by calling for Ecumenical councils, discussing the teaching, and formulating decisions and canons to combat the heretics.

Undoubtedly, false teachings were the biggest challenge facing the Church at that time aside from persecution. Later on, the Church had to face a bigger problem, between the different sees, the problem of schism. The first schism in the Church began with the council of Chalcedon.



## **The Council of Chalcedon**

### Reason for the Council:

The Bishop of Rome did not accept the results of the second council of Ephesus. He also did not accept the statement of faith of the second council of Ephesus which confirmed the statements of faith of the previous Ecumenical Councils. He followed the teachings of Flavian of Constantinople who was Nestorian and believed in the two natures of Christ (after the union) and the two wills.

- **The council was called by:** Emperor Marcian called for the council to be held.
- **It was held** in the city of Chalcedon in the year 451 AD.
- **Number of attendees:** Some say there were 330 bishops, and some say they were 600 bishops. Pope Dioscorus attended and defended the true Orthodox faith with all his might.

### **Decisions of the Council:**

- Cancelling the decisions of the second council of Ephesus.
- Giving absolution for Flavian of Constantinople.
- Excommunication of Eutychus despite his confession of the Nicene Creed.
- Excommunication of Pope Dioscorus and sending him to exile after accusing him of believing of Eutychus' heresy.

## **Pope Dioscorus**

- **His place of birth:** Alexandria
- **Length of his papacy:** 10 years, 1 month, and 9 days
- The See of St. Mark was empty for 1 year after his departure.
- **His departure:** He departed while in exile on the island of Gangra on the 7th of Thout.
- Pope Dioscorus departed after a lifetime of struggle against



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heresies and divisions of the church. He truly fought the good fight and preserved the faith as St. Paul said.

- In his discussion with the opposing bishops, he said: **“The Lord Jesus is One, He was invited to the wedding at Cana of Galilee as human, and He turned the water into wine as God. His humanity and His divinity never separated.”**
- He also used the same analogy to describe the unity in the nature of Christ taught by Pope Cyril, the Pillar of Faith which is the iron with fire. They are one, however, they are not separated, nor confused.
- He faced the emperor and the empress and expressed the true orthodox faith, which led the empress to order for him to be hit on his mouth and to pull the hair of his beard. The hit was so strong to the point that some of his teeth fell off. He took his teeth and the hair of his beard and sent them to Alexandria saying this is the fruit of faith.
- When other bishops saw what happened to Pope Dioscorus, they agreed to sign Leo’s tome with the Nestorian doctrine.
- Pope Dioscorus asked for the tome and wrote on it: **“Anathemas for everyone who signed this Tome contrary to the upright faith”**.
- He was exiled to the Island of Gangra along with Abba Macarius, the Bishop of Edko who also stood firm in the faith.
- This council led to splitting the whole church into **Chalcedonian** and **Non-Chalcedonian Churches**.
- **The Non-Chalcedonian Churches** are the Churches who do not accept the council of Chalcedon. They are referred to as the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Oriental Orthodox Churches are The Church of Alexandria (The Coptic Church), The Armenian Church, The Ethiopian Church, The Eritrean Church, The Syriac Church, and The Indian Orthodox Church also known as Malankara Orthodox Church.
- **The Chalcedonian Churches** are the Churches which accept the Council of Chalcedon. They are mainly the Catholic, and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.
- Until the time of Pope Shenouda, who started the dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox family, the Patriarchs of both Orthodox families signed a common statement of faith.

**“We believe that our Lord and savior Jesus Christ is the incarnate Logos of God while He is fully human and fully divine. He made His humanity one with His divinity without mingling or confusion or alteration and His humanity parted not His divinity for a single moment or a twinkle of an eye. At the same time, we anathematize the teachings of Nestorius and Eutychus”**

# “ REJOICE ”

## Trials and Tribulations



Stress, anxiety, and sadness are all results of facing hardships, tribulations, and challenges in life. These hardships could be social, related to school or work, family related, etc. These challenges could make us lose our inner peace, joy, and our enthusiasm toward various activities. It is important to keep in mind that not all challenges are bad; some challenges push us to be better, and stronger. The most important thing is knowing how to deal with hardships and challenges.

Trials and tribulations are common in the life of every believer; even prophets and saints had to deal with many tribulations. Some face tribulations because of their own faults and weaknesses, and some endure it due to no fault of their own.

### **Why do we have to face stress, trials, and pain?**

The truth is that pain does not come from God. It often comes from the misuse of the freedom given by God. However, sometimes God allows pain and tribulation in our lives according to His divine wisdom. We can see the misuse of free will by Adam and Eve; this misuse led to sin entering the world, not only sin, but evil, pain, and suffering as well.

Therefore, sin is the main reason behind pain and suffering, however, it is not the only reason;

- Pain teaches us patience and longsuffering.
- Pain teaches us to get closer to the Lord, cry out to Him asking for help, and depend on Him to deliver us from every hardship.
- The Lord teaches us many lessons with pain that we cannot otherwise learn; i.e. when we lose someone dear to us, we think about our eternity and judgment day. We may never think about it if it wasn't for that hardship.
- Pain and suffering show us that God is the Pantocrator, He is in control of everything.

**“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” (1 Peter 4:1-2)**

# “ REJOICE ”

## How to deal with hardships:

**Trust in God’s Wisdom and Economy.**  
**Trust in God’s Fatherhood.**  
**Determine the Reasons Behind the Problem.**  
**Take Control of Your Emotions.**  
**Accept the Responsibility.**  
**Establish New Habits.**

## The 3A’s of Stress Management:

**Avoid** accepting every suggestion without thinking first. Learn how to say no to ungodly gatherings, ungodly friends, etc.

**Adapt** to the current circumstances that are out of your hands while keeping your eyes on the goal and the purpose of your life **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” (2 Corinthians 4:17)**

**Accept** the situations that come your way that you cannot change. Seek and exercise the virtue of patience in enduring these situations.

## Final Thoughts (Prescription for Stress):

### Thank the Lord - even during the time of hardship.

- Thanksgiving is a way to express our love towards the Lord.
- Trust that the Lord loves you and cares for you even more than you love and care for yourself.
- The attitude of thanksgiving will help you understand the wisdom of God.

### Pray and ask the Lord to reveal His will to you.

- The more you are close to the Lord, the more you will understand His ways. You will know that with every hardship there is a lesson for you and a purpose for your edification.

### Submit your will to the Lord’s will (even if you did not understand it).

- Trust is built over time, your experiential relationship with the Lord will help you live a life of submission.
- Submit your will to the Lord trusting in His loving kindness.

# “ REJOICE ”

We all face stresses, hardships, and disappointments in our lives. However, each of us has a different response to these trials. The result often depends on how we faced the trial. The starting point in dealing with any hardship is dealing with it while holding on to Christ.

**“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)**



# Memorization

**From The 6<sup>th</sup> Hour - Agpia**

## **PSALM 54 (53)**

Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen up against me, And oppressors have sought after my life; They have not set God before them. Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is with those who uphold my life. He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth. I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all trouble; And my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies. **Alleluia.**

## **PSALM 70 (69)**

Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O LORD! Let them be ashamed and confounded Who seek my life; Let them be turned back and confused Who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back because of their shame, Who say, “Aha, aha!” Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; And let those who love Your salvation say continually, “Let God be magnified!” But I am poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay. **Alleluia.**

R

## **Anthem 2023/2024**

E

(By the grace of God we grow  
And give fruits a hundredfold  
And His Spirit dwells within us  
Gives us joy as the Bible told) **x 2**

J

(Rejoice in your faith and church  
Handed down to us by God  
Be firm in prayers and doctrine  
And build your life on His word) **x 2**

O

(Our Lord wants us faithful  
Glorified and joyful) **x2**  
Always joyful

I

For He has redeemed us on the cross  
And gave us eternal life  
When you're a temple for His dwelling  
Sadness will not be a choice

C

Praise and thank God every day and you...  
And you will surely rejoice!

E

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