



Coptic Orthodox Church الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية
Diocese of Los Angeles,
Southern California, and Hawaii
إيبارشية لوس انجلوس

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

DRAFT
NINTH GRADE

THE PAGE FROM FATHER BOULS

MASTEER LIST OF REFERENCES

REFERENCES USED IN THE LOS ANGELES DIOCESE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM 0(AS OF AUGUST 27, 1999)

Ref. #s	Reference	Suggested Price, \$	Reference Ordered
1	<u>The Holy Bible</u> The New King James Version		
2	<u>Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church</u> Author: Father Tadros Y. Malaty Publisher: St. George Coptic Orthodox Church, Sporting, Alexandria, Egypt	6	
3	<u>The Coptic Synaxarium</u> , 4 volumes Publisher: St. Mark & St. Bishoy Church 15 W. 455 97 th St. Hinsdale, Illinois 60521 (312) 654-9716	Use Your Church Copy	
4	<u>The Story of the Copts, Volume I & II</u> Author: Iris Habib El Marsi Publisher: The Coptic Bishopric for African Affairs 7 Ahmad Zaki St. Hadayek El Kobba Cairo, Egypt	24	
5	<u>St. Mary in the Orthodox Concept</u> Author: Father Tadros Y. Malaty Publisher: St. Virgin Mary Coptic Church 1-11 Epsom Rd, PO Box 72 Flemington, VIC 3031 Melbourne, Australia	2	
6	<u>The Holy Sacraments of the Coptic Orthodox Church</u> Author: Sami Hanna Editor: Peter Brownfield Commentator Review: Father Mikhail Meleka Publisher: St. Fam Orthodox Publications	3	

7	<u>The Church the House of God</u> Author: Father Tadros Y. Malaty Publisher: St. mark Coptic Orthodox Church 1600 S. Robertson Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90035	3	
8	<u>Topics for the Christian Youth</u> Author: Father Shenouda Anba-Bishoi Publisher: St. Mark and St. Bishoy Coptic Church of Chicago 15 W. 455 79 th St. Hinsdale, Illinois, 60521 (312) 654-9716	4	
9	<u>The Divinity of Christ</u> Author H. H. Pope Shenouda III Translator: Dr. Wedad Abbas Publisher: Dar El Tebaa El Kawima Cairo, Egypt	4	
10	<u>Essays For the Orthodox Youth</u> Author: Dr. William Hanna Publisher: St. Mary & St. Abram Coptic Church 1843 Ross Ave St. Louis, Missouri, 63146	4	
11	<u>The Coptic Orthodox Church As an Ascetic Church</u> Author: Father Tadros Y. Malaty Publisher: St. George Coptic Orthodox Church Sporting, Alexandria, Egypt	4	
12	<u>Judge Not Others</u> Author: H. H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: St. Luke Coptic Orthodox Society Corona, California	2	
13	<u>Christ in the Eucharist</u> Author: Father Tadros Y. Malaty Publisher: St. George Coptic Orthodox Church Sporting, Alexandria, Egypt	5	

14	<u>Contemplation on the Sermon on the Mount</u> Author: H. H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: Dar El Tebaa El Kawima Cairo, Egypt	4	
15	<u>The Orthodox Creed</u> Author: H. H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church 1600 S. Robertson Blvd Los Angeles, Ca 9003	2	
16	<u>Come to Me, Your guide to Confession</u> Publisher: St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church 20830 52 nd Ave W. Lynnwood, WA 98036	1	
17	<u>Contemplation on the Ten Commandments</u> (four volumes) Author: H. H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church 1600 S. Robertson Blvd Los Angeles, Ca 90035	10	
18	<u>Comparative Theology</u> Vol. I Author: H.H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church PO Box 3535 Van Nuys, CA 91407 And: St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church PO Box 626 E East Brunswick, NJ 08816	2	
19	<u>Allah or the God of the Bible</u> Author: Basilea Schlink Publisher: Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary 9849 N. 40 th St. Phoenix, Arizona 85028	3	
20	<u>Islam Unveiled</u> Author: Abdullah Al Araby Publisher: <u>The Pen Vs the Sowed</u> PO Box 661336 Los Angeles, CA 90066	1	

21	<u>Islam, the Facade, the Facts</u>		
22	<u>Allah, Is He God?</u> Author: P. Newton and M. Rafiqul Hagg	2	
23	<u>The Coptic Offices for the Coptic Orthodox Church</u> Translator: Father Marcos Hanna Publisher: St. Mark Church 1600 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90035	Use your Church Copy	
24	<u>The Ordination of Women and Homosexuality</u> Author: H.H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: Coptic Orthodox Publisher Assoc. 50 Netherford Road London SW4 6AE	3	
25	<u>Divine Inspiration Of the Holly Bible</u> Author: Father Augustinos Hanna Publisher: St George Coptic Orthodox Church 14858 East Anola St. Whittier, CA 90604	2	
26	<u>Religions of the World, the Cults</u> Author: Dr. Emil Bishay Publisher: St. George Coptic Orthodox Church 14858 East Anola St. Whittier, CA 90604	4	
27	<u>Nature of Christ</u> Author: H.H. Pope Shenouda III Publisher: St. Mary Coptic Church PO Box 6970, Station J Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2A3Y6	1	
28	<u>Science and the Bible</u> Author: Henry M. Morris Publisher: Moody Press (800) 678-6928 ISBN: 0-8024-0656-4	9	

29	<u>The Holy Bible and Science</u> Author: H. G. Bishop Paula St. Mark Church 1600 S. Robertson Los Angeles, CA 90035	3	
30	<u>World Religions</u> Author: John Catoir Publisher: Alba House, New York Society of St. Paul 2187 Victory Blvd. Staten Island, NY 10314 ISBN: 0-8189-0640-5	9	
31	<u>The Coptic Orthodox Church as a church of Erudition & Theology</u> Author: Father Tadros Malaty Publisher: St. George Coptic Church Sporting, Alexandria, Egypt	4	
32	<u>Traditional Egyptian Christianity</u> Author: Theodore Hall Patrick Publisher: Fisher Park Press ISBN: 0-9652396-0-8		
33	<u>The Concept of THE LITURGY in The Coptic Orthodox Church</u> Author: Father Markos Hanna Publisher: St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church 1600 S. Robertson Los Angeles, CA 90035		

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BIBLICAL BOOKS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ABBREV</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ABBREV</u>
Acts	AC	Judges	Jg
Amos	Am	1 Kings	1 k
1 Chronicles	1 Ch	2 Kings	2 K
2 Chronicles	2 Ch	Lamentations	Lm
Colossians	Col	Leviticus	Lv
1 Corinthians	1 Co	Luke	Lk
2 Corinthians	2 Co	Malachi	Ml
Daniel	Dn	Mark	Mk
Deuteronomy	Dt	Matthew	Mt
Ecclesiastes	Ec	Micah	Mic
Ephesians	Eph	Nahum	Nh
Esther	Es	Nehemiah	Ne
Exodus	Ex	Numbers	Nu
Ezekiel	Ez	Obadiah	Ob
Ezra	Ezra	1 Peter	1 P
Galatians	Ga	2 Peter	2 P
Genesis	Gn	Philemon	Phm
Habakkuk	Hb	Philippians	Phil
Haggai	Hg	Proverbs	Pr
Hebrews	He	Psalms	Ps
Hosea	Ho	Revelation	Rev
Isaiah	Is	Romans	Ro
James	Jas	Ruth	Ru
Jeremiah	Jr	1 Samuel	1 S
Job	Job	2 Samuel	2 S
Joel	Jl	Song of Solomon	Sgs
John	Jn	1 Thessalonians	2 Th
1 John	1 Jn	2 Thessalonians	2 Th
2 John	3 Jh	1 Timothy	1 Ti
3 John	3 Jn	2 Timothy	2 Ti
Jonah	Jon	Titus	Titus
Joshua	Js	Zechariah	Zec
Jude	Jd	Zephaniah	Zep

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 1

Date:

Aim: To give the students an example of the martyrs, in the occasion of Nerouze, So that they are encouraged to look up to the saints and use their intercession.

Subject: Nerouze: St. Mina

Verse: “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” Rev.6: 9

References: Attachments

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. Give a quick overview about the Nerouze, and the importance of remembering the martyrs in encouraging us to declare our faith to the world without fear.
2. This is the story of one of the most beloved martyrs, whom sacrificed his life for his love of Christ at a very young age, a special example for the youth.
3. Go over the story as detailed in the attachment.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to ask for the intercession of St. Mina in their prayers throughout the coming week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ An icon or a picture of St. Mina

ST. MENAS THE MIRACLE-MAKER

St. Menas is considered the most well known saint in the East and the West, due to the many miracles that are performed through his prayers for us. That is evident in the numerous little clay bottles on which his name and picture are engraved. These were discovered by the archeologists in diverse countries around the world, such as Heidelberg in Germany, Milan in Italy, Dalmata in Yugoslavia, Marcella in France, Dengela in Sudan, and Jerusalem. Visitors from these cities and others would buy these bottles, which usually contain oil or water for blessing, and take them back to their relatives.

Saint Menas was born in Egypt in the year 285, in the city of Niceous, which lies in the vicinity of Memphis. His parents were real ascetic Christians, his father's name was Audexios and his mother's was Aufimia. On the feast of St. Mary, the mother who did not have any children was praying in front of the Icon of the Virgin with tears that God may give her a blessed son. A sound came to her ears saying "Amen", and thus she called her son Mena.

His father, a ruler of one of the administrative divisions of Egypt died when Menas was fourteen years old. At fifteen he joined the army, and was given a high rank because of his father's reputation and was appointed in Algeria. Three years later he left the army longing to devote his whole life for Christ. He headed towards the desert to live a different kind of life.

After he spent five years as a hermit, he saw the angels' coronating the martyrs with glamorous crowns, in a revelation and longed to join them. While he was thinking about it, he heard a voice saying: "Blessed are you Abba Menas because you have been called for the pious life from your childhood. You shall be granted three immortal crowns; one because of your celibacy; the second because of your asceticism and the third because of your martyrdom".

Immediately he felt as if the earth under him was vanishing, and he was overwhelmed with great eagerness to be carried away to heavens. In a mood of valor he hurried to the ruler, declaring his Christian faith. His endless sufferings and the tortures that he went through, have attracted many of the pagans not only to Christianity, but also to martyrdom.

THE SAINT'S BODY

The saint's assassins tried to burn his relics but they failed, so the believers loaded his body on a camel and headed towards the western desert. At a certain spot, the camel stopped and the people could not force it to continue its trip by any means. Right there; hear a water well they burned him (that place is his present monastery, at the end of Marriute lake not far from Alexandria).

THE DISCOVERY OF HIS BODY

It happened that while a shepherd was feeding his sheep in that area, a sick lamb fell on the ground. As it struggled to get on its feet again, its scab was cured. The story was spread quickly and the sick that came to this spot recovered from whatever illnesses they had just by laying on the ground.

During that time, the daughter of king Zinon, the Christ lover, caught the itch. His advisors suggested that she should try that place, and she did. At night the Saint appeared to the girl and informed her that his body is buried in that place. The following morning, she bathed in the well and was healed. She related her vision about St. Menas to her servants and that he cured her.

ST. MENAS IN MARRIOUT

Immediately, King Zinon ordered the Saint's body to be dug out, and a church to be built there. Not only that, but he also ordered to build a large city to be named after the Saint. Sick people from all over the world, used to visit that city and were healed by the intercession of St. Menas, the miracle-maker.

Mrs. Bucher recorded that destruction started to take place in the city, and its inhabitants were degraded after the Arab conquest. During the period after Haroun El- Rasheed, the Barbarians attacked the city and burned a large portion of it. At the time of El-Mamoun he ordered to put the entire city down, and then he used its numerous marble pillars to build his palace and the mosques. It is only in the twentieth century that international missions began to search for the city and the church. The remainders of it, no doubt, demonstrates the glory of the Coptic past.

THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. MENAS

As soon as Pope Cyril the Sixth was coroneted on St. Mark's Throne, he began to put the foundations of a great Monastery close to the remains of the old city. Thus in his blessed days God's will had permitted the old monastery of St. Menas to be resurrected and the Copts to visit it and to be blessed by the Saint. What is even more interesting is that the Pope has stated in his will that his body should not be burned in the new famous Cathedral in Cairo, but in the monastery of his personal friend and intercessor St. Menas the miracle-maker!!!

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

A CLAY POT FROM ST. MENAS CITY

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 2

Date:

Aim: To explain to the students the main features of the Coptic Church, so that to enforce in them the sense of belongings and appreciation for their beloved church.

Subject: The Coptic Church: A brief synopsis

Verse: “whom the lord of hosts shall bless, saying, “Blessed is Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel My inheritance.” Is 19:25

References: R2, P.5-7 & Canadian Program 9,p23 & Attachment

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. We live in a multi-Cultural society where everyone is seeking to identify him / her self in it.
2. We, as Coptic Orthodox, should be appreciative of the fact that we belong to a church that has one of the most glorious history, contributions, and characteristics among all the churches in the Christian world.
3. Go over the points mentioned in the attachment.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to select one of the main features of the Coptic Church, and write an essay about why he/she feels that this feature make him/her appreciative of belonging to the Coptic Church.

Audio & Visual Aids:

An icon or a picture of St. Mark



The Christian Coptic Orthodox Church Of Egypt

The word Copt is derived from the Greek word Aigyptos, which was, in turn, derived from "Hikaptah", one of the names for Memphis, the first capital of [Ancient Egypt](#). The modern use of the term "Coptic" describes Egyptian Christians, as well as [the last stage of the ancient Egyptian language script](#). Also, it describes the distinctive [art](#) and [architecture](#) that developed as [an early expression of the new faith](#).

The Coptic Church is based on the teachings of [Saint Mark](#) who brought Christianity to Egypt during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero in the first century, a dozen of years after the Lord's ascension. He was one of the four evangelists and the one who wrote the [oldest canonical gospel](#). Christianity spread throughout Egypt within half a century of Saint Mark's arrival in [Alexandria](#) as is clear from the New Testament writings found in Bahnasa, in Middle Egypt, which date around the year 200 A.D., and a fragment of the Gospel of Saint John, written using the [Coptic language](#), which was found in Upper Egypt and can be dated to the first half of the second century. The Coptic Church, which is now more than nineteen centuries old, was the subject of many [prophecies in the Old Testament](#). Isaiah the prophet, in Chapter 19, Verse 19 says *"In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border."*

Although fully integrated into the body of [the modern Egyptian nation](#), the Copts have survived as strong religious entities that pride themselves on their contribution to the Christian world. The Coptic Church regards itself as a strong defendant of Christian faith. [The Nicene Creed](#), which is recited in all churches throughout the world, has been authored by one of its favorite sons, [Saint Athanasius](#), the Pope of Alexandria for 46 years, from 327 A.D. to 373 A.D. This status is well deserved, after all, Egypt was the refuge that the Holy Family sought in its [flight from Judea](#): "When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ["Out of Egypt I called My Son"](#) [Mathew 2:12-23].

[The contributions of the Coptic Church to Christendom](#) is many. From the beginning, it played a central role in Christian theology---and especially to protect it from [the Gnostics heresies](#). The Coptic Church produced thousands of texts, biblical and theological studies that are important resources for archeology. [The Holy Bible](#) was translated to the Coptic language in the second century. Hundreds of scribes used to write copies of the Bible and other liturgical and theological books. Now libraries, museums and universities throughout the world possess hundreds and thousands of [Coptic manuscripts](#).

The [Catechetical School](#) of Alexandria is the oldest Catechetical School in the world. Soon after its inception around 190 A.D. by the Christian scholar Pantanaeus, the school of Alexandria became the most important institution of religious learning in Christendom. Many prominent bishops from many areas of the world were instructed in that school under scholars such as Athenagoras, [Clement](#), Didymus, and the great Origen, who was considered the father of theology and who was also active in the field of commentary and comparative Biblical studies. Origen wrote over 6,000 commentaries of the Bible in addition to his famous Hexapla. Many scholars such as Saint Jerome visited the school of Alexandria to exchange ideas and to communicate directly with its scholars. The scope of the school of Alexandria was not limited to theological subjects, because science, mathematics and the humanities were also taught there: The question and answer method of commentary began there, and 15 centuries before Braille, wood-carving techniques were in use there by blind scholars to read and write. The Theological College of the Catechetical School of Alexandria was re-established in 1893. Today, it has campuses in [Alexandria](#), [Cairo](#), New Jersey, and Los Angeles, where priests-to-be and other qualified men and women are taught among other subjects Christian theology, history, Coptic language and art---including [chanting](#), [music](#), [iconography](#), [tapestry](#) etc.

Monasticism was born in Egypt and was instrumental in the formation of the Coptic Church's character of submission and humbleness, thanks to the [teachings](#) and [writings](#) of [the Great Fathers of Egypt's Deserts](#). Monasticism started in the last years of the third century and flourished in the fourth century. [Saint Anthony](#), [the world's first Christian monk was a Copt from Upper Egypt](#). Saint Pachom, who established the rules of monasticism, was a Copt. And, Saint Paul, the world's first anchorite is also a Copt. Other famous Coptic desert fathers include [Saint Makarios](#), [Saint Moses the Black](#), and [Saint Mina the wondrous](#). The more contemporary desert fathers include the late [Pope Cyril VI](#) and [his disciple Bishop Mina Abba Mina](#). By the end of the fourth century, there were hundreds of monasteries, and thousands of cells and caves scattered throughout the Egyptian hills. [Many of these monasteries](#) are still flourishing and have new vocations till this day. All Christian monasticism stems, either directly or indirectly, from the Egyptian example: Saint Basil, organizer of the monastic movement in Asia minor visited Egypt around 357 A.D. and his rule is followed by the eastern Churches; Saint Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, came to Egypt around 400 A.D. and left details of his experiences in his letters; Saint Benedict founded monasteries in the sixth century on the model of Saint Pachom, but in a stricter form. And countless pilgrims visited the "Desert Fathers" and emulated their spiritual, disciplined lives. There is even evidence that Copts had missionaries to Northern Europe. One example is [Saint Moritz of the Theban Legion](#) who was drafted from Egypt to serve under the Roman flag and ended up teaching Christianity to inhabitants of the Swiss Alps, where a small town and a Monastery that contains his relics as well as some of his books and

belongings are named after him. Another saint from the Theban Legion is [Saint Victor, known among Copts as "Boktor"](#).

Under the authority of the Eastern Roman Empire of Constantinople (as opposed to the western empire of Rome), the Patriarchs and Popes of Alexandria played leading roles in Christian theology. They were invited everywhere to speak about the Christian faith. [Saint Cyril](#), Pope of Alexandria, was the head of the Ecumenical Council, which was held in Ephesus in the year 430 A.D. It was said that the bishops of the Church of Alexandria did nothing but spend all their time in meetings. This leading role, however, did not fare well when politics started to intermingle with Church affairs. It all started when the Emperor Marcianus interfered with matters of faith in the Church. The response of Saint Dioscorus, the Pope of Alexandria who was later exiled, to this interference was clear: "You have nothing to do with the Church." These political motives became even more apparent in Chalcedon in 451, when the Coptic Church was unfairly accused of following the teachings of Eutyches, who believed in monophysitism. This doctrine maintains that the Lord Jesus Christ has only one nature, the divine, not two natures, the human as well as the divine.

[The Coptic Church has never believed in monophysitism](#) the way it was portrayed in the Council of Chalcedon! In that Council, monophysitism meant believing in one nature. Copts believe that the Lord is perfect in His divinity, and He is perfect in His humanity, but His divinity and His humanity were united in one nature called "the nature of the incarnate word", which was reiterated by Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Copts, thus, believe in two natures "human" and "divine" that are united in one *"without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration"* (from the declaration of faith at the end of [the Coptic divine liturgy](#)). These two natures *"did not separate for a moment or the twinkling of an eye"* (also from the declaration of faith at the end of the Coptic divine liturgy).

The Coptic Church was misunderstood in the 5th century at the Council of Chalcedon. Perhaps the Council understood the Church correctly, but they wanted to exile the Church, to isolate it and to abolish the Egyptian, independent Pope, who maintained that Church and State should be separate. Despite all of this, the Coptic Church has remained very strict and steadfast in its faith. Whether it was a conspiracy from the Western Churches to exile the Coptic Church as a punishment for its refusal to be politically influenced, or whether Pope Dioscorus didn't quite go the extra mile to make the point that Copts are not monophysite, the Coptic Church has always felt a mandate to reconcile "semantic" differences between all Christian Churches. This is aptly expressed by the current 117th successor of Saint Mark, [Pope Shenouda III](#): *"To the Coptic Church, faith is more important than anything, and others must know that semantics and terminology are of little importance to us."* Throughout this century, the Coptic Church has played an important role in the ecumenical movement. The Coptic Church is one of the founders of [the World Council of Churches](#). It has remained a member of that council since 1948 A.D. The Coptic Church is a member of the all African Council of Churches (AACC) and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC). The Church plays an important role in the Christian movement by conducting dialogues aiming at resolving the theological differences with the Catholic, [Eastern Orthodox](#), Presbyterian, and Evangelical Churches.

Perhaps the greatest glory of the Coptic Church is [its Cross-](#). Copts take pride in the persecution they have sustained as early as May 8, 68 A.D., when their Patron [Saint Mark](#) was slain on Easter Monday after being dragged from his feet by Roman soldiers all over Alexandria's streets and alleys. Almost every ruler of Egypt has persecuted the Copts. Their Clergymen have been tortured and exiled even by their Christian brothers after the schism of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. and until the Arab's conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D. To emphasize their pride in [their cross](#), Copts adopted a calendar, called the Calendar of the Martyrs, which begins its era on August 29, 284 A.D., in commemoration of those who died for their faith during the rule of Diocletian the Roman Emperor. This calendar is still in use all over Egypt by farmers to keep track of the various agricultural seasons and in [the Coptic Church Lectionary](#).

For the four centuries that followed the Arab's conquest of Egypt, the Coptic Church generally flourished and Egypt remained basically Christian. This is due to a large extent to the fortunate position that the Copts enjoyed, for the Prophet of Islam, who had an Egyptian wife (the only one of his wives to bear a child), preached especial kindness towards Copts: "When you conquer Egypt, be kind to the Copts for they are your protégés and kith and kin". Copts, thus, were allowed to freely practice their religion and were to a large degree autonomous, provided they continued to pay a special tax, called "Gezya", that qualifies them as "Ahl Zemina" protégés (protected). Individuals who cannot afford to pay this tax were faced with the choice of either converting to Islam or losing their civil right to be "protected", which in some instances meant being killed. Copts, despite additional sumptuary laws that were imposed on them in 750-868 A.D. and 905-935 A.D. under the Abbasid Dynasties, prospered and their Church enjoyed one of its most peaceful era. Surviving literature from monastic centers, dating back from the 8th to the 11th century, shows no drastic break in the activities of Coptic craftsmen, such as weavers, leather-binders, painters, and wood-workers. Throughout that period, the Coptic language remained the language of the land, and it was not until the second half of the 11th century that the first bi-lingual [Coptic-Arabic liturgical manuscripts](#) started to appear. One of the first complete Arabic texts is [the 13th century text by Awlaad El-Assal \(children of the Honey Maker\)](#), in which the laws, cultural norms and traditions of the Copts at this pivotal time, 500 years after the Islamic conquest of Egypt were detailed. The adoption of the Arabic language as the language used in Egyptians' every-day's life was so slow that even in the 15th century al-Makrizi implied that the Coptic Language was still largely in use. Up to this day, the Coptic Language continues to be the liturgical language of the Church.

The Christian face of Egypt started to change by the beginning of the second millennium A.D., when Copts, in addition to the "Gezya" tax, suffered from specific disabilities, some of which were serious and interfered with their freedom of worship. For example, there were restrictions on repairing old Churches and building new ones, on testifying in court, on public behavior, on adoption, on inheritance, on public religious activities, and on dress codes. Slowly but steadily, by the end of the 12th century, the face of Egypt changed from a predominantly Christian to a predominantly Muslim country and the Coptic community occupied an inferior position and lived in some expectation of Muslim hostility, which periodically flared into violence. It is remarkable that the well being of Copts was more or less related to the well being of their rulers. In particular, the Copts suffered most in those periods when Arab dynasties were at their low.

The position of the Copts began to improve early in the 19th century under the stability and tolerance of Muhammad Ali's dynasty. The Coptic community ceased to be regarded by the state as an administrative unit and, by 1855 A.D., the main mark of Copts' inferiority, the "Gezya" tax was lifted, and shortly thereafter Copts started to serve in the Egyptian army. The 1919 A.D. revolution in Egypt, the first grassroots display of Egyptian identity in centuries, stands as a witness to the homogeneity of Egypt's modern society with both its Muslim and Coptic sects. Today, this homogeneity is what keeps the Egyptian society united against the religious intolerance of extremist groups, who occasionally subject the Copts to [persecution and terror](#). Modern day martyrs, like [Father Marcos Khalil](#), serve as reminders of the miracle of Coptic survival.

Despite [persecution](#), the Coptic Church as a religious institution has never been controlled or allowed itself to control the governments in Egypt. This long-held position of the Church concerning the separation between State and Religion stems from the words of the [Lord Jesus Christ](#) himself, when he asked his followers to submit to their rulers: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." [Mathew 22:21] The Coptic Church has never forcefully resisted authorities or invaders and was never allied with any powers, for the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are clear: "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Mathew 26:52). The miraculous survival of the Coptic Church till this day and age is a living proof of the validity and wisdom of these teachings.

Today [as of the writing of this document in 1992 A.D.], there are over 9 million Copts (out of a population of some 57 million Egyptians) who pray and share communion in daily masses in thousands of Coptic Churches in Egypt. This is in addition to another 1.2 million immigrant Copts who practice their faith in [hundreds of churches in the United States, Canada, Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Holland, Brazil, and many other countries in Africa and Asia](#). Inside Egypt Copts live in every province and in no one of these provinces are they a majority. [They're cultural, historical, and spiritual treasures are spread all over Egypt](#), even in its most remote oasis, the Kharga Oasis, deep in the western desert. As individuals, Copts have reached prestigious academic and professional stature all over the world. One such individual is [Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali the Sixth United Nations Secretary-General \(1992-1997\)](#). Another is Dr. Magdy Yacoub one of the world's most famous heart surgeons.

Copts observe seven canonical sacraments: Baptism, [Christmation \(Confirmation\)](#), Eucharist, [Confession](#) (Penance), Orders, [Matrimony](#), and [Unction of the sick](#). Baptism is performed few weeks after birth by immersing the whole body of the newborn into especially consecrated water three times. Confirmation is performed immediately after Baptism. Regular confession with a personal priest, called the father of confession, is necessary to receive the Eucharist. It is customary for a whole family to pick the same priest as a father of confession, thus, making of that priest a family counselor. Of all seven sacraments, only Matrimony cannot be performed during a fasting season. Polygamy is illegal, even if recognized by the civil law of the land. Divorce is not allowed except in the case of adultery, annulment due to bigamy, or other extreme circumstances, which must be reviewed by a special council of Bishops. Either husband or wife can request divorce. The Church does not recognize civil divorce. The Coptic Orthodox Church does not have and does not mind any civil law of the land as long as it does not interfere with the Church's sacraments. The Church does not have (and actually refuses to canonize) an official

position vis-à-vis some controversial issues (e.g. abortion). While the church has clear teachings about such matters (e.g. abortion interferes with God's will), it is the position of the Church that such matters are better resolved on a case-by-case basis by the father of confession, as opposed to having a blanket canon that makes a sin of such practices.

There are three main [Liturgies](#) in the Coptic Church: The [Liturgy according to Saint Basil, Bishop of Caesarea](#); The Liturgy according to Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople; and The Liturgy according to Saint Cyril I, the 24th Pope of the Coptic Church. The bulk of Saint Cyril's Liturgy is from the one that Saint Mark used (in Greek) in the first century. The Bishops and priests of the church memorized it till Saint Cyril translated it into the Coptic Language. Today, these three Liturgies, with some added sections (e.g. the intercessions), are still in use; the [Liturgy of Saint Basil](#) is the one most commonly used in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The Church expressly forbids the worship of Saints; however, [asking for their intercessions](#) (e.g. [Marian Praise](#)) is central in any Coptic service. Any Coptic Church is named after a Patron Saint. Among all Saints, [the Virgin Saint Mary \(Theotokos\)](#) occupies a special place in the heart of all Copts. Her repeated [daily appearances in a small Church in Elzaytoun district of Cairo](#) for over a month in April of 1968 [was witnessed by thousands of Egyptians](#), both Copts and Muslims and was even [broadcast on International TV](#). Copts celebrate seven major Holy feasts and seven minor Holy feasts. The major feasts commemorate [Annunciation](#), [Christmas](#), [Theophany](#), Palm Sunday, [Easter](#), [Ascension](#), and the [Pentecost](#). [Christmas](#) is celebrated on January 7th. The Coptic Church emphasizes [the Resurrection of Christ \(Easter\)](#) as much as [His Advent \(Christmas\)](#), if not more. Easter is usually on the second Sunday after the first full moon in spring. The Coptic Calendar of Martyrs is full of other feasts usually commemorating the martyrdom of popular Saints (e.g. [Saint Mark](#), [Saint Mena](#), [Saint George](#), [Saint Barbara](#)) from Coptic History.

The Copts have seasons of fasting matched by no other Christian community. Out of the 365 days of the year, Copts fast for over 210 days. During fasting, no animal products (meat, poultry, fish, milk, eggs, butter, etc.) are allowed. Moreover, no food or drink whatsoever may be taken between sunrise and sunset. Priests on an individual basis to accommodate for illness or weakness usually relax these strict fasting rules. All Copts largely observe Lent, known as “the Great Fast”. It starts with a pre-Lent fast of one week, followed by a 40-day fast commemorating Christ's fasting on the mountain, followed by the Holy week, the most sacred week (called Pascha) of the Coptic Calendar, which climaxes with the [Crucifix](#) on Good Friday and ends with the joyous [Easter](#). Other fasting seasons of the Coptic Church include, the Advent (Fast of the Nativity), the Fast of the Apostles, the Fast of the [Virgin Saint Mary](#), and the Fast of Nineveh.

The Coptic Orthodox Church's clergy is headed by the [Pope of Alexandria](#) and includes Bishops who oversee the priests ordained in their dioceses. Both the [Pope and the Bishops](#) must be monks; they are all members of the Coptic Orthodox Holy Synod (Council), which meets regularly to oversee matters of faith and pastor ship in the Church. The Pope of the Coptic Church, although highly regarded by all Copts, does not enjoy any state of supremacy or infallibility. Today, there are over [60 Coptic Bishops governing dioceses inside Egypt as well as dioceses outside Egypt](#), such as in Jerusalem, Sudan, Western Africa, France, England, and the

United States. The direct pastoral responsibility of [Coptic congregations](#) in any of these dioceses falls on Priests, who must be married and must attend the Catechetical School before being ordained.

There are two other non-clerical bodies that participate in taking care of Church affairs. The first is popularly elected Coptic Lay Council, which appeared on the stage in 1883 A.D. to act as a liaison between the Church and the Government. The second is a joint lay-clerical committee, which appeared on the stage in 1928 A.D. to oversee and monitor the management of the Coptic Church's endowments in accordance with the Egyptian laws.

Daily, in all Coptic Churches all over the world, [Copts pray](#) for the reunion of all Christian Churches. They pray for [Egypt](#), its Nile, its crops, its president, its army, its government, and above all its people. They pray for the world's peace and for the well being of the human race.

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References:

- For an authoritative bibliography consult W. Kemmerer, "A Coptic Bibliography", compiled by W. Kemmerer with the collaboration of Elinor M. Husselman, and Louise A. Shier, University of Michigan General Library Publication, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950, reprinted 1969.
- The [Coptic Encyclopedia](#) (8 vols.), edited by Aziz Sourial Atiya, MacMillan, New York, 1989, provides a comprehensive coverage of the Coptic Church, culture, and history.
- The [Coptic Network Archives](#) contain a wealth of articles, pictures, and other materials, in addition to a backlog of Copt-Net Newsletters.
- [St. Shenouda The Archimandrite Coptic Society](#) contains valuable articles and translations of rare manuscripts.
- The [Coptologia Journal Archives](#) contains valuable articles and information



SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 3

Date:

Aim: To raise the awareness of the students about the different aspects inherited in the Cross: spiritual, theological, doctrinal and symbolic so that they will remember them as they use sign of the cross in their daily lives.

Subject: The Cross-Feast

Verse: “But God Forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Ga 6:14

References: Attachment & Canadian Program 9, p.29

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This lesson coincides with the feast of the appearance of the Holy cross, which the Church celebrates in the 17th of Tut.
2. We use the cross in so many ways in our lives (in our prayers, in the Church services, in different situations throughout the day, hangs it in many places...) Thus; we should always remember the powers and blessings inherited in the cross.
3. Go over the material covered in the attachment.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to increase the use of the sign of the cross in their daily lives (e.g. as they leave the house, in the start of a trip by car or otherwise, when they start studying or doing any task...)

Audio & Visual Aids:

❖ A big Wooden Cross



The Glorious Feast of the Cross-

The Church celebrates the feast of the Cross twice every year, on March 19th and September 27th. On the feast of the Cross-we remember many vital matters: spiritual, theological, doctrinal and symbolic.

1. We remember the love with which Christ loved us to the point where He died for our sake. We remember His words, *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his Friends."*

Sacrifice is the greatest sign of love, and self-sacrifice *is the* summit of sacrifice.

2. In the Cross-we also remember Redemption. A soul that dies for another soul, this is the principle of atonement we were under the judgment of death, and then came He who would die for us in order for us to live. His death on the Cross-can be described as follows, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53: 6).*

3. In the cross we remember endurance. The great sufferings that our Master endured, whether the sufferings of the flesh of which He said, *"They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones"*, or the sufferings of dishonor, He endured happily for our sake; that is, whilst He was happy with our salvation~ Hence, the Apostle said about Him, *"...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2).* How great then is this endurance if it is with joy! This is a lesson for us.

4. In the Cross-we remember forgiveness; how our sins were forgiven on the

Cross and how the Master spoke to the Heavenly Father whilst on the Cross saying, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).*

5. In making the sign of the Cross we remember the Holy Trinity, the One God. This is because we make the sign of the cross whilst saying, 'In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

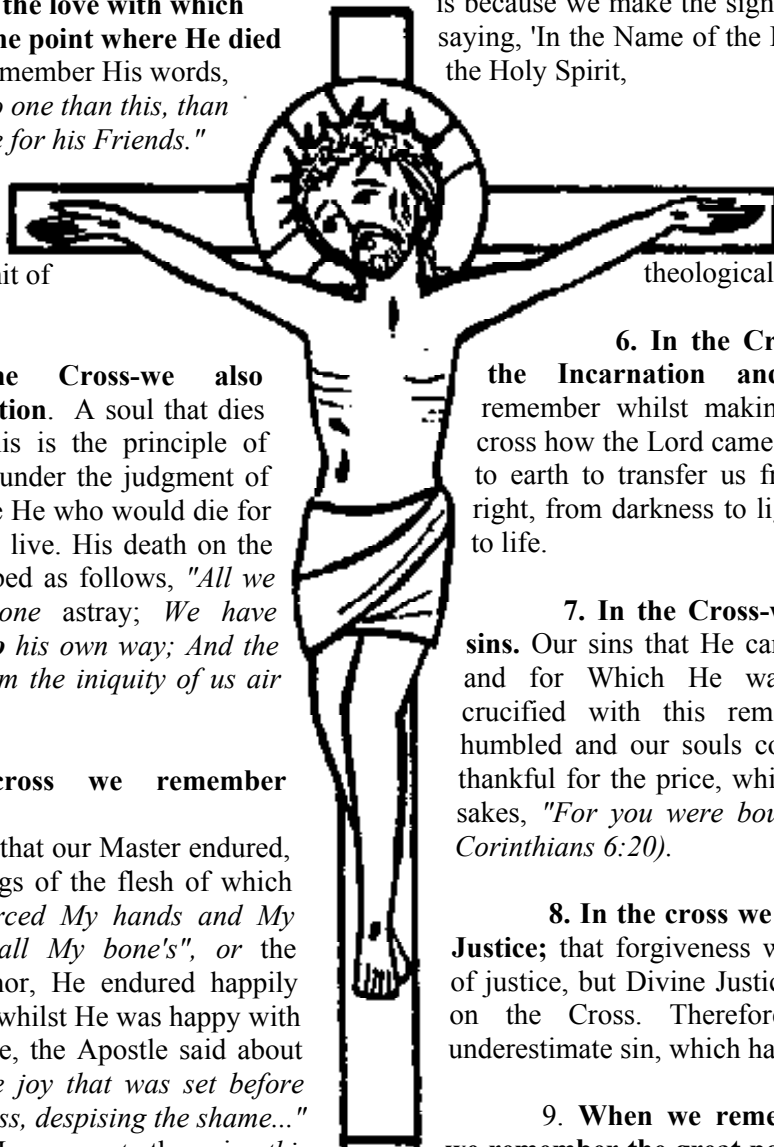
One God, Amen. Hence, the Cross- carries a theological meaning.

6. In the Cross-we remember the Incarnation and its aim. We remember whilst making the sign of the cross how the Lord came down from heaven to earth to transfer us from the left to the right, from darkness to light and from death to life.

7. In the Cross-we remember our sins. Our sins that He carried on the Cross- and for Which He was incarnated and crucified with this remembrance we are humbled and our souls contrite, and we are thankful for the price, which He paid for our sakes, *"For you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20).*

8. In the cross we remember Divine Justice; that forgiveness was not on account of justice, but Divine Justice fulfilled its right on the Cross. Therefore, we must not underestimate sin, which has such a price.

9. When we remember the Cross-, we remember the great power that defeated the devil. All of the devil's effort to destroy mankind was completely lost on the Cross-with the redemption, which the Lord offered. Hence, the devil is extremely terrified of the Cross-. On the



other hand, we find in it safety and protection, that is why we remember the Apostle's words, *"But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"* (Galatians 6:14).

Him. As the Apostle said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). We also remember the Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

10. In the remembrance of the Cross-we remember how we should be crucified with

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 4

Date:

Aim: To guide the students as to what to pray for in their personal daily prayers

Subject: Prayer: what to pray for?

Verse: "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Mt 6:6

References: See text

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

When we stand before God to pray we should have in our minds many areas to cover, which include:

- a. Thank Him for all the blessings we enjoy in our lives, and specifically in that day (health, family, food, and shelter) Also see the "Thanksgiving Prayer", and I Th 5:18
- b. To ask Him to continue help, support, and preserve us in our daily lives (work, family, friends, exams...) Mt 7:7-11
- c. To ask Him to interfere to solve our problems or others' problems (illness, death situations, disaccord, financial...) Jas 5:13, Ps 50:15
- d. To ask Him for forgiveness for all the sins we committed during the day, and to declare to Him our forgiveness for others. Ps 51:1-4, Mt 6:12,14-15
- e. To ask Him to preserve us from the temptations of the devil (be specific in mentioning the temptations you face), and to give us His spiritual gifts to glory~ His name. Mt 6:13,33 Lk 11:13
- f. Finally to praise His holy name for His goodness and glorious work which we see and experience every day. Ps 51:15, Ps 150

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to try to include in their prayers all the elements mentioned above. Assign three of them to pray next week in the classroom, and continue the following weeks until all of them pray.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that lists the verses used in the lesson

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 5

Date:

Aim: To educate the students about the history of the Ecumenical Councils, and their importance in defining the Orthodox Faith.

Subject: The Ecumenical Councils (1)

Verse: “as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” 2 Pe 3:16

References: R31, p73-84, Attachments & Canadian Program 9, p.69

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This lesson is the first lesson in a series of three lessons about the Ecumenical Councils. The focus of these lessons is on the history of the councils rather than the theological issues, which were discussed in these councils. The intent is to give the students the background information about the councils, and their importance in defining the faith as put in the "Creed"
2. This lesson will address the issues of what constitute acknowledged Ecumenical Council, and the council of Nicaea.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to include the "Creed" in their prayers for the next few weeks, and to pray it with contemplation on each word.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ An icon or a picture of St. Athanasius the Apostle.

Ecumenical Councils: Religion Lessons

What do ecumenical councils mean?

They are meetings held for the Bishops of all the Christian seats in the whole world. They are held when urgent matters arise, such as strange teachings that could cause disruption or division within the Church.

Several conditions should be observed in ecumenical councils. These are:

1. They are to be held whenever there is heresy or division.
2. They are called by a Christian Emperor.
3. They are attended by the majority of the Bishops in the east and West So as to ensure global representation.
4. They are to be held whenever a new issue is to be determined which had not been discussed before.

These conditions apply to three councils only. These are:

1. The Council of Nicaea.
2. The Council of Constantinople.
3. The First Council of Ephesus

The importance of such councils arises from the fact that the Church wishes to insure that it draws its doctrines from the following principal sources:

1. The Holy Bible.
2. Apostolic doctrines.
3. Ecumenical councils.

Consequently, the Church respects these councils, and is blessed by them, as well as by their decisions and saintly members. This is due to the belief that these councils ensure that the Church is built on very strong foundations.

What are the specific domains of these councils?

1. The investigation of issues related to the faith. (To ensure the correct delivery of its teachings and doctrines)
2. Setting down the regulations and laws necessary for the policies of the Church.
3. Solving the problems that face the Church, and ending disputes among the clergy or the congregation or between both of them.
4. Bringing to trial the clergymen who deviate or contradict the faith.

WHAT IS A COUNCIL?

THE SPIRIT OF UNITY

The Early Church, in the first centuries, spread all-over the world. The Holy Spirit led the Apostles, the Disciples and The bishop of the Church in understanding and interpreting The Christian faith. They always prayed for guidance from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit guided their thinking and preserved their unity. From time to time, some persons who depended on their own minds and knowledge, started teaching in a different way than what the Church has received in the Scripture and from our Lord Himself.

But the Church was always careful to preserve the Spirit of unity among the Christians all over the world, and protect Christian faith from any misunderstanding or wrong interpretation. When any controversy was raised, the leaders of the Church assembled together to examine the different views and declare the Orthodox faith of the Church. The bishops of the Church came from different parts of the world and met together in the form of an ecumenical council.

THE FIRST COUNCIL

The first council in the life of the Christian Church was assembled in Jerusalem at the time of the Apostles of our Lord. We can read about the Council in the Book of Acts, Chapter 15.

After the Assention of our Lord to heaven, His Disciples and Apostles received the Holy Spirit, and started preaching and teaching of the salvation of Christ to the world.

Paul and Barnabas. Two of the Apostles, preached among the Gentiles - the non-Jewish people in different parts of the world. When they finished their mission, they traveled by boat to Antioch, and met with the Disciples and the Church there, and told them about all that God had done with them and how He Had opened the door of faith to the gentiles.

THE CONTROVERSY

While they were in Antioch, some of the Jews who became Christians insisted that the Gentiles couldn't be saved unless they first follow the Law of Moses before becoming Christians. Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them. They had long arguments and debate together.

The Church of Antioch appointed the Apostles Paul and Barnabas and some other members of the Church of Antioch to go to Jerusalem. When they reached there, they told the Disciples of the dispute that happened in Antioch and asked their guidance.

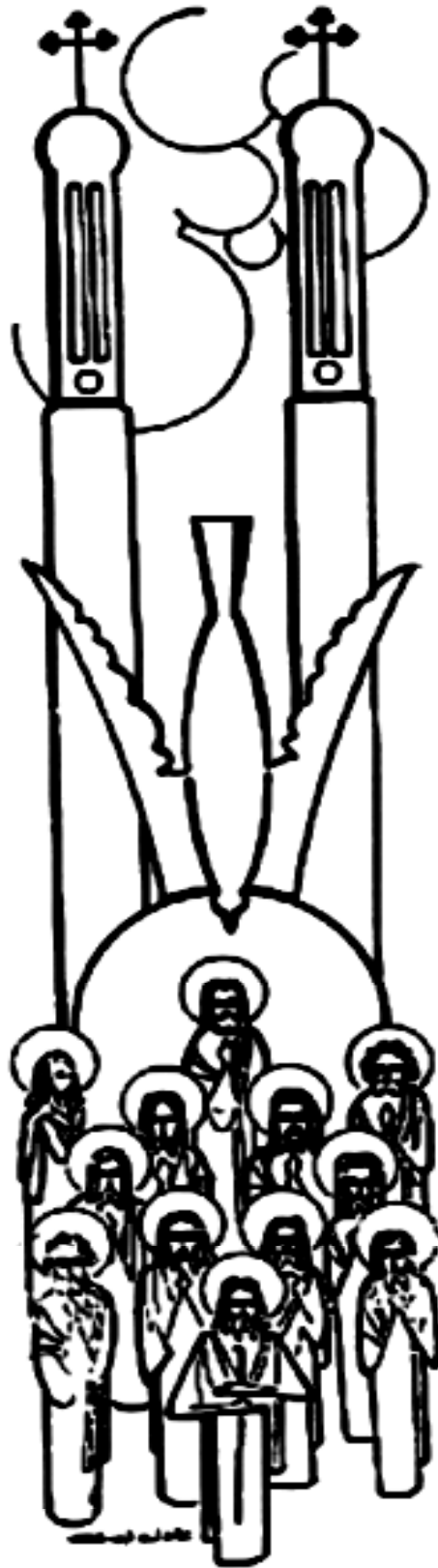
THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM:

The Apostles, the Disciples and the bishops of the Church were assembled together in Jerusalem to consider the matter. Paul and Barnabas told them how the Christian Jews of Judea insisted that the Gentiles must first follow Jewish tradition before becoming Christians. The members of the Council prayed for guidance from the Holy Spirit. They knew that they cannot decide on matters of faith by their own individual mind, but only through the action of the Holy Spirit in them as they come together with the spirit of Unity and love in the Council.

The members of the Council had long discussion about the matter. Then St. Peter rose and said that God has given the Holy Spirit to all those who believe in Him in the whole world, and purified their hearts by faith. He said, "We believe that all men, Gentiles and Jews, shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now therefore, why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the Disciples which neither our Fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

St. James, one of the twelve Disciples, told them that what they had heard from Peter, Paul and Barnabas agreed with the words of the prophets of the Old Testament. Then he offered the following proposal:

"We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from pollutions of idols and from unchastely and from what is strangled and from Blood" (Acts 15: 19.20).



All the members of the Council agreed on the proposal of St. James, and wrote a message to the Churches informing them of the Council's decision.

THE SPIRIT OF COUNCILIARTY IN THE CHURCH

The Council of Jerusalem was a model for the life of the Church, through the centuries. The church guided by the Holy Spirit, continued to build up clear understanding on Christian faith. Individual and heretic interpretations were examined and refuted by ecumenical Councils. The Councils offer testimony to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. In the ecumenical Councils, bishops from all-over the world, they express true unity and love of the whole Church. Although many ideas were expressed in seeking the truth, hut they denied their individual views and accepted the Orthodox understanding of Christian faith.

THE THREE GREAT COUNCILS

In the first three centuries, Christians were persecuted and hundreds of thousands were martyred for their faith. During the time of persecution, the Christians defended their faith and died for it. 'Christian beliefs were simple, pure and strong. In the year 313, Constantine, the Roman Emperor, accepted Christianity and forbade all persecution of Christians.

In few years, Christianity became a state religion of the Roman Empire. Statesmen and officials were Christians.

The Christian Church faced an important task in the following two centuries: TO EXPLAIN the Christian faith, and to answer the challenges of pagan schools and heretic philosophies, which continued to influence the minds of many people.

THE DANGER OF ARIANISM

At the beginning of the fourth century, a priest in the city of Alexandria called Anus started a strange teaching. He taught that Jesus Christ was not God in the same sense as God the Father, not of the same essence, and not eternal. Anus was a cunning scholar. He was able to popularize his ideas among simple-minded people, as well as among some highly educated people who were still attached to pagan thinking. He was a good propagandist, cultivating his popularity by visits, speeches letters, and by writing popular songs in which he formulated his theological arguments.

The teaching of Arius was more dangerous for Christianity than the worst persecutions. If Christ was not God, who had become Man, who had suffered and died for men, and in His death had conquered death, then Christianity would have become some moral ideas, like what pagan philosophers had offered. Arius taught that God was a Supreme Divine Being completely separated from mankind. Christianity professed faith in **God who so loved man that He himself became Man. and suffered and died for the sins of man.**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us all” (John 1: 1-14).

THE COUNCIL OF NIOAEA

The Church of Alexandria felt the danger of the Arian heresy. Alexandrus, the Patriarch of the Coptic Church at that time, condemned the teachings of Arius and tried to guide him to the Christian faith. Arius complained to the Emperor Constantine. The Emperor's family accepted to call a General Ecumenical Council, in order to settle the dispute. Three hundred and eighteen bishops and priests from the churches all-over the world were assembled in Nicaea in Asia Minor in the spring of 325 A.D. Among them, there was Bishop Paul from Syria with his burned hands carrying the signs of the persecution he had suffered, and St. Paphnotius and St. Potamon, both blinded in one eye and lamed from the tortures inflicted on them, Patriarch Alexandrus and his deacon St. Athanasius the Great from Egypt



The Council studied the teachings of Arius and examined them carefully. Long and heated arguments took place. A lengthy dialogue took place between the young deacons Athanasius and Arius. Athanasius explained the Orthodox faith showing how THE SON IS OF ONE ESSENCE OF THE FATHER. The Council finally confirmed that Arius had distorted the Christian faith. The Fathers of the Council, led by Athanasius, proclaimed the faith of the Church in clear terms.

We believe in ONE God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the things visible and invisible. And in ONE Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father, before all worlds; Light of light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made; of One Essence of the Father

The Council of Nicaea was one of the greatest events in the history of Christianity. It has brought together for the first time the largest number of bishops who formulated the Creed of the Church, and saved it from the Arian heresy.

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The Christian faith was again threatened by a new heresy. **Macedonius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, taught that the Holy Spirit was created.** A second ecumenical Council was assembled in Constantinople, in May 381 A.D., by invitation of Emperor Theodosius the Great. One hundred and fifty bishops attended the Council. After lengthy discussions, the Council refuted the heresy of Macedonius and completed the Creed of the Church.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

The Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father,

... Who spoke by the Prophets...

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

And the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS

After fifty years, Nestorius, **the Patriarch of Constantinople, preached that God was not born from the Virgin Mary**, but she had given birth to a human being and God dwelt in him later on. He forced his teachings on the Church. His heresy reached Alexandria. ~ Patriarch of Alexandria St. Cyril the Great, wrote to Nestorius advising him to leave his wrong teaching. He also wrote to many bishops around the world warning them of the danger of the new heresy. Finally, a third ecumenical council was assembled in Ephesus in 431 to settle the matter. Two hundred bishops attended the Council. The council refuted the teaching of Nestorius and declared the introduction to the Creed:

“We magnify thee, O Mother of the True Light;

And we glorify thee O Saint Mother of God.

For you had born to us the Savior of the entire world.

He came and saved our souls.

Glory is to You Christ, our Master and our King,

The honor of the Apostles, the crown of the Martyrs,

The joy of the Righteous, and the stability of the churches,

The forgiveness of sins.

We evangelize and preach the Holy Trinity, one Godhead.

We worship Him and glorify Him.

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord send your blessing. .. Amen”.

THE THREE GREAT COUNCILS

PLACE & DATE	FAMOUS DEFENDERS OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH	HERETICS	WORK ACCOMPLISHED
1. Nicaea, 325	St Athanasius the Great	Arius	Condemned the Arian heresy that taught that Christ is not God. Proclaimed the first part of the Creed. Established the date on which Easter is to be celebrated.
2. Constantinople, 381	St Gregory the Theologian St. Gregory of Nyssa	Mecedonius	Defined the teaching of the church on the Holy Trinity, Particularly on the Holy Spirit. Completed the Creed
3. Ephesus, 431	St. Cyril of Alexandria	Nestorius	Defined the Church's teaching on the Holy Virgin (Theotokos). Condemned the heresy of Nestorius who taught that Christ had two separate natures. Declared the text of the Creed to be finally completed and forbade any change of it in the future.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 6

Date:

Aim: To educate the students about the history of the Ecumenical Councils, and their importance in defining the Orthodox Faith.

Subject: The Ecumenical Councils (2)

Verse: “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,” 1Ti6: 3,4

References: R31, p93-112, Attachments & Canadian Program 9, p.79

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This lesson is the second lesson in a series of three lessons about the Ecumenical Councils. The focus of these lessons is on the history of the councils rather than the theological issues, which were discussed in these councils. The intent is to give the students the background information about the councils and their importance in defining the faith as put in the “Creed”.
2. This lesson will address the Councils of Constantinople and Ephesus.
3. See Attached of the Ecumenical Council (1)

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to include the "Creed" in their prayers for the next few weeks, and to pray it with contemplation on each word.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that summarize the facts about the three Ecumenical Councils (included in the Attachments)

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 7

Date:

Aim: To guide the students to use the word of God as their light in Searching for the answers on how to live in today's permissive society.

Subject: Seminar: Christian Behavior in Permissive Society.

Verse: "But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them." 2Ti3: 14

References: Any commentary on the Bible available in the Sunday School Library & Canadian Program 9, p.97

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. We live in a permissive society, which permits many forms of conduct, and offers a variety of entertainments, which are against the teaching of the Bible.
2. This situation poses a grave challenge to the Christian youth on how to live in the society as active members in it, while keeping their morals and spiritual lives intact.
3. We should realize that the moral decay in the society is not confined to nowadays, but rather it was the same and even worse throughout history, including the Biblical times
4. Thus, the Bible offers to us answers to these challenges, which are good today as they were as the times when they were written.
5. A good example to these answers we can find in the Epistles of St. Paul to his young disciples Timothy and Titus.
6. Go over the second epistle to Timothy, focusing on some of the verses, which relates directly to addressing the question of how to behave as a Christian youth in society.
7. Use the format of questions and answers throughout the lesson, trying to get feedback from all the students on the issues discussed.
8. Specifically focus on the following verses:
1:5,7,8,13,14
2:3,5,7,8,12,14,15,16,22-26
3:1-5,10,12-17
4:2-5

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to select of the verses and write a commentary on it. Read and discuss their commentaries the following weeks.

Note: If the time does not allow to discuss all the verse (e.g. from chapters 3 and 4) for the spiritual exercise. In this case assign one verse to each class member.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that lists the verses used in the lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 8

Date:

Aim: To educate the students about the history of the Ecumenical Councils, and their importance in defining the Orthodox Faith.

Subject: The Ecumenical Councils (3)

Verse: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith,” 2Ti 4:7

References: R31, p115-146, & Attachments

Subject Matter & Method

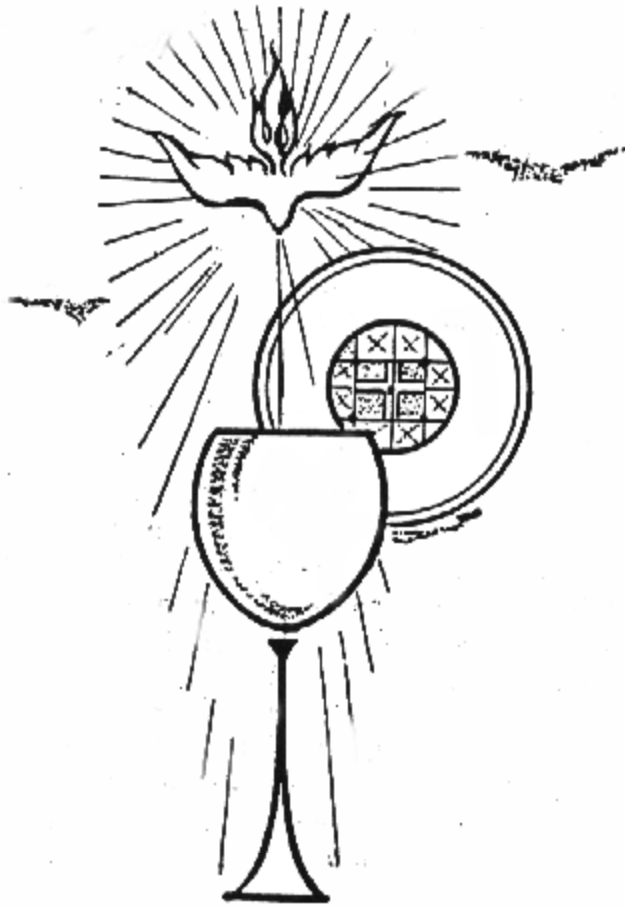
Focus On:

1. This lesson is the third in a series of the three lessons about the Ecumenical Councils. The focus of these lessons is on the history of the councils rather than the theological issues, which were discussed in these councils. The intent is to give the students the background information about the councils, and their importance in defining the faith as put in the “Creed”.
2. This lesson will address the schism of the church because of the “council” of Chalcedony, which is not recognized by the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to read about the life of St. Dioscorus, and write a short essay about one of the incidents that show his struggle to keep the orthodox faith. Help the students with finding the references.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ An icon or a picture of St. Dioscorus.



THE CHALCEDONIAN SCHISM

The earliest division in the Church took place in the middle the fifth century. It was caused by the various news held by church fathers concerning the nature of Christ, whether divine or human the controversy was pursued until it ultimately led to the split of the churches of Alexandria and Antioch from Rome and Constantinople in the days of Discorus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Leo, Pope of Rome.

THE SEEDS OF DISSENSION

+ The Nestorian heresy marked -the end of the age of unity and ushered the age of dissem3ion within the Church. Nestorius taught that the Virgin gave birth to a human. Being (Christ's human nature) who was later united with

God (Christ's Divine Nature). These views instigated the First Council of Ephesus which was headed by Pope Cyril the Great of Alexandria for the purpose of trying Nestorius and confirming with evidence the true faith that the Virgin gave birth to an infant who was God in the Form of man

We should note in this respect that the Nestorian heresy is to be considered as giving root to other religions that believe that Christ is no more than a man in whom the Holy Spirit has come to dwell, but deny that He is Himself God,

EUTYCHES

+ When Dioscorus succeeded Cyril to the See of Alexandria after the latter's death, a monk named Eutychus appeared teaching that "Christ had no more than One Divine Nature, He received human form similar to our own from the Virgin's womb." It is evident that the aim of Eutychus was to refute the Nestorian heresy.

However, by holding to the One Divine Nature of Christ and denying the Human aspect, Eutyches unconsciously missed the great significance and meaning of the Incarnation which has recreated and sanctified human nature by uniting it with the Divine.

THE SECOND COUNCIL OF EPHESUS

+ A second council was held in Ephesus under the leadership of Pope Dioscorus, but Pope Leo of Rome did not attend and only sent a number of his delegates carrying his message to the Council. Eutyches appeared and acknowledged before the Council the established belief denying his own. Thus the Council proclaimed him innocent. However, Leo's message was not read. It was later known as "Leo's Tome", and it carried to the Council new theory concerning the Divinity and Humanity of Christ.

THE OUTBREAK OF CONTROVERSY

+ Leo, Pope of Rome, was outraged When he learnt that his letter was not read at the Council, The situation became worse when Dioscorus took over the leadership of the Council, especially that the Church Rome had always felt superior to the other churches because of its situation in the capital of the Roman Empire which had been ruling the world. On the other hand, some churches, such as the Church of Alexandria, which had been dominated by Rome, wanted to feel some independence from the grip of Rome especially on matters which concerned Church Councils and doctrines. In addition, Alexandria had always been an

important center for theological teachings and Christian doctrine, and had contributed to the world a large number of Church Fathers and Scholars.

CHALCEDON

+ The controversy came to light full fledged at the Council of Chalcedon held in 451. The Council was summoned by Leo of Rome to threaten Dioscorus and his supporters, with the charge that they had adopted the teachings of Eutyches. Dioscorus explained that his belief was the same as that which he had received from the fathers, Athanasius and Cyril who in turn had received it from the Church fathers and apostles.

THE TOME OF LEO

+ Leo propagated at the Council of Chalcedon a new doctrine about the Nature of Christ. This doctrine said, “In truth, Christ came in two natures, the divine nature came to astonish us with miracles and marvelous works, while the human nature came to bear humiliation and insults.” Thus by so arguing, Leo had made a clear-cut split between the two natures of Christ or a duality of nature, the Divine and the Human.

Here Dioscorus upheld the Orthodox doctrine which holds to the one nature of Christ, namely Divine Humanity, supporting this doctrine by verses from the Holy Bible such as the following texts:

1. ‘The Word was made Flesh’ (John 1:14) - A union of divinity and humanity.
2. “That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son Of God” (Luke 1:35) - The Holy Thing that shall be born, "God incarnate.”
3. “And whence is this to me: that the mother of my Lord.” (Luke 1: 43) “God born of the mother-God Incarnate.”
4. “The wise men fell down and worshipped the Young Child” (Matt-2: 11) - God only is worshipped; and here He is Child Jesus.
5. “For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord or Glory” (1 Cor 2: 8) - Here the crucified~ in body is the Lord of Glory, incarnate. -

THE SCHISM

+ The Eastern churches refused to acknowledge the Tome of Leo. Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Antioch and the Eastern bishops held firmly to the One Person and One Nature of Christ.

Thus the Church was split at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. into two factors:

- Those who held to the one united Nature of Christ (Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem). T
- Those who held to the two nature of Christ (Rome and Constantinople).

And from this day of Chalcedon, the Church has been suffering the evils of the schism until the present.

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

+ The split of the church, however, did not bring it peace. The Council sentenced Dioscorus to excommunication and exiled him from his country: He passed away to heaven after years of struggle for the Orthodox doctrine.

Many other father, struggled with him for the faith among who was Severus, Patriarch of Antioch who was a great saint whose memory is cherished by the Church along with other heroes like Athanasius, Cyril and Dioscorus who are all mentioned in the Holy Liturgy.

The greatness of Severus was made evident at the time of the persecution, inflicted by a number of Roman emperors who supported the Tome of Leo, on the churches of Alexandria and Antioch. Severus was exiled and spent two years teaching the true Orthodox faith in Alexandria and Antioch and bearing all manner of hardship and persecution.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAITH OF THE ONE NATURE

+ The Orthodox Doctrine of the One Nature helps us to understand salvation, in that the crucifixion was not of the body of Christ alone, but of God Incarnate and by that, the sacrifice of the *Cross* becomes forever effective for mankind.

With this unity or the One Nature, God sanctified human nature by His incarnation and corrected its corruption, and uplifted the fate of mankind by uniting to His divine nature. “He took what is ours and gave us what is His”, and with this the believer feels that he is a frame for the Holy Spirit and that he is a member of Christ's body.

Those who believe in the One Nature have a deep feeling that God enters the depths of their spiritual and daily lives.

The Church prays over the water and the Spirit of God descends on it, sanctifies it and gives it power for a new birth. The bread and wine also become holy and are changed into the body and blood of God.

EXPERIENCES, DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

1. Show, from the following texts, evidence for the doctrine of the One Nature of Christ. (Homework), “Isaiah 9; Psalms 87; Matt. 1; 1 John 1; and 1 Tim. 3”.
2. Show, from the following prayers of the Holy Liturgy, evidence for the One Nature (homework):
 - a. Holy God, Holy Almighty, Holy Immortal, who was born of the Virgin, Have mercy on us.
 - b. The Syrian “Prayer of the Breaking of the Bread.”
 - c. The Prayer of Confession.
3. What is the importance of holding to the doctrine of the One Nature of God incarnate? Mention the practical side of that in our lives.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 9

Date:

Aim: To present to the students the life of a saint who set the example for practicing faithfully the virtue of charity.

Subject: Charity: St. Abram

Verse: “but when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” Mt 6:3

References: R2, p183 & Canadian Program 9, p87

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. Charity is one of the main Christian virtues, as the Lord in His first sermon on the mountain mentioned it Mt 6:1-4.
2. God who has blessed us with many blessings is asking us to share some of our wealth with the less fortunate whom he calls His “brothers” & “sisters* (Mt 25:34-40)
3. However many of us would not follow this Biblical command because of our selfishness, and would come with many excuses not to do so.
4. Many people set the example for us in giving, among them the poor widow (Lk 21:1-4) & St. Abraam the late bishop of El Fayoum (1829-1914). His name is mentioned in the Congregation of the Saints.
5. Go over his story as told in the references

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to save as much money from their expenses as they can for the next two weeks and give the money to a charitable cause of their choice. Provide them with the names of few of these organizations. Check with them later if they have or have not done so.

Audio & Visual Aids:

An icon or a picture of St. Abram

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 10

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the coming of Christ was God's plan for our salvation from the beginning as shown from the prophecies and symbols about Him throughout the Old Testament..

Subject: Christ in the Old Testament (1)

Verse: "You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me," Jn 5:39

References: See Text & Canadian Program 9, p.115

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. Good planned for our salvation, as He declared that at the time of the fall of Adam & Eve. Gn 3:15
2. The Old Testament contains many prophecies and symbols, which explained the life and mission of Christ in detail Centuries Before His Coming.
3. The Lord used these Prophecies and symbols to explain his mission to the two disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:25-27)
4. Some of these prophecies determined the exact time of his appearance (Dn 9:24-27), that is why so many people who studied the scriptures were waiting at the time of His birth (Lk 2:25,38,Jn 1:45)
5. Some of the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ, which cover only the first part of His life are
 - a. His ancestors Abraham (Gn 12:3), Isaac (Gn 26:4, Jacob (Gn 28:14). Judah (Gn 49:10), David (Is 9:6-7 This is the reason that Mathew lists the Genealogy of Jesus Christ in the beginning of his gospel to prove to the Jews that Jesus indeed is the promised Christ.
 - b. His place of birth Mic 5:2 & Mt 2:1-6
 - c. Born of a virgin Is 7:14 & Mt 1:18-22
 - d. The flight to Egypt Ho 11:1 and Mt 2:13-15
 - e. His Divine Nature Is 9:6-7
 - f. John the Baptist prepares His way Mt 3:1. Is 40:1-5, and Mt 3:1-3, Mk 1:2-3

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to read Mt 4,8,12 and extract the prophecies included in these chapters, and return the assignment next week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A hand out that lists the verses used in the lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 11

Date:

Aim: To study in detail one of the basic prayers in church, the Thanksgiving Prayer, so that the students can pray it with better understanding.

Subject: Contemplation on the Thanksgiving Prayer (1)

Verse: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
1 Th 5:18

References: See Text

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This is the first of two lessons about the “Thanksgiving Prayer.”
2. The church prays the “Thanksgiving Prayer” at the beginning of all the services (e.g. The hours of the Agbya, the Vespers, the Martins, the Liturgy, the other Sacraments, the weddings, the funerals) This is to follow the Biblical Teachings (1Th 5:18, Phil 4:5, Col 4:2, 1Ti 2:1) and the example of the apostles (ac 27:35, Ac 28:15)
3. Go over the words of the “Thanksgiving examples from our lives to illustrate these meanings.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize and pray the part of the “thanksgiving Prayer” which was discussed in the lesson, each night during the coming week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A copy of the “Thanksgiving Prayer” in big letters

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 12

Date:

Aim: To study in detail one of the basic prayers in the church, the Thanksgiving Prayer, so that the student can pray it with better understanding.

Subject: Contemplation on the Thanksgiving Prayer (2)

Verse: “giving thanks always for all things to god the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Ep 5:20

References: See Text

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This is the first of two lessons about the “Thanksgiving Prayer.”
2. The church prays the “Thanksgiving Prayer” at the beginning of all the services (e.g. The hours of the Agbya, the Vespers, the Martins, the Liturgy, the other Sacraments, the weddings, the funerals) This is to follow the Biblical Teachings (1Th 5:18, Phil 4:5, Col 4:2, 1Ti 2:1) and the example of the apostles (ac 27:35, Ac 28:15)
3. Go over the words of the “Thanksgiving examples from our lives to illustrate these meanings.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize and pray the part of the “thanksgiving Prayer” which was discussed in the lesson, each night during the coming week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A copy of the “Thanksgiving Prayer” in big letters

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 13

Date:

Aim: To present to the students the lives of three saints who, at a very young age, committed themselves to the Lord, and set the example of holy life for generations of youth everywhere.

Subject: St. John the Short, St. Maximus, and St. Domatius

Verse: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth. Before the difficult days come and the years drawn near when you say, I have no pleasure in them” Ec 12:1

References: See Attachments

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. The youth face many challenges in their pursuit for a holy life among them is that “you are too young for that”, “religion is for older people”
2. The saints presented in this lesson were able, in spite of all the temptations of the world to pursue a holy life and become some of the greatest saints in the church history.
3. Go over the story of the three saints as told in the “Attachments”

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to select one situation from the life of any of the three saints, and write an essay on how this situation touched his/her life.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ An icon or a picture of the saints

C O P N E T

Saint John The Short (Yoannis Pi Kolobos)

Introduction

Saint John, surnamed Kolobos, that is ``the Little'' or the ``the Dwarf'', was among the most eminent saints that inhabited the desert of Skeet. In the Divine Liturgy, he is mentioned in the Congregation of the Saints and in ``Pi nishti".

His Way to Monastic Life

He was born about the year 339, around the Theban region in Upper Egypt in a poor but holy family. His desire for monastic life led him since his early years to remote places where he trained himself for this austere life style. It was not long before Divine led him inspiration to leave his town. He retired, when only eighteen years old, into the wilderness of Skete (also called the Natroun Valley) and set himself with his whole heart to put on the spirit of Christ.

He went to become a disciple of the old hermit, Aba Pemouah (who was also the teacher of Saint Pishoy - the perfect man). Aba Pemouah tried to deter him from adopting this harsh monastic life. By night an angel appeared to him asking him to accept the young John as a monk. After three full days of fasting and prayers, the master and the disciple witnessed an angel blessing the new cloths John was to put on.

His Obedience

Saint John renounced all distraction and entertainment; and since monasteries were not built at that time, only hermits were populating the desert. He endured all the difficult tests as an experienced master rather than a bright disciple. Aba Pemouah led him to perfect watchfulness, solitude, subduing the body, meekness, silence, humility, simplicity and obedience.

Aba Pemouah, who was his director for his first lesson, bade him to plant in the ground a walking stick, and water it every day till it should bring forth fruit. Saint John did so with great simplicity, though the river was about 12 miles away from the stick. When he had continued his task, without speaking one word about it, into the third year the stick, which had taken root, pushed forth leaves and buds and produced fruit. The old hermit, gathering the

fruit, carried to the church, and giving it to some of the brethren, said, "Take, and eat the fruit of obedience". Postumian, who was in Egypt in 402, assured that he was shown this tree, which grew in the yard of the monastery, and which he saw covered with shoots and green leaves.

About silence he taught him saying, "my son, be silent lest evil thoughts overtake your mind and lose your soul. Particularly in church, we ought the most to be careful in order to be worthy of the presence of Holy Mysteries."

Consecration of the Mind

Saint John believed that the perfection of a monk consists in his keeping to his cell, watching constantly over himself and having God continually present to his mind. He never discoursed on worldly affairs and never spoke of "News", the ordinary amusement of the superficial. He stressed the importance of "quietness"; he says, "the longer quietness prevails, the weaker the pains of lusts become, and the healthier the mind becomes until it reaches peace." His mind dwelt constantly on Divine issues; he used to take one of the commandments each day and work hard to perfect it. He was so intent on the things of God that he became very absent-minded. At his work he sometimes plaited into one basket the material, which should have made two, and often went wrong through forgetting what he was doing. One day when a carrier knocked at his door to carry away his materials and tools to another place, Saint John thrice forgot what he went to fetch in returning from his door, till he repeated to himself, "The camel, my tools. The camel, my tools. The camel, my tools." The same happened when someone came to him to fetch the baskets he had made, and as often as he came back from the door he sat down again to his work, till at last he called the brother to come in, and take them himself.

He avoided the words of men and their discussions and so cultivated the things of peace that his words held the attention of all. A brother coming once to speak to him for a few minutes, so ardent and sweet was their conversation on spiritual things that they continued it till morning. Perceiving it was day, they went out, the one to return home, the other to go with him for a few steps, but their talk again returned to God and His Kingdom and it lasted till midday. Then Saint John took him again into his cell to eat a little; after which they really parted.

A Teacher Responsible for Many Souls

In 374, Aba Pemouah departed after 12 years of illness during which Saint John was ministering to him. At his last moments, Aba Pemouah called Saint John "the angel of God on earth" and instructed him to make his abode next to the "Tree of Obedience". He went with Aba Pishoy who shortly later settled two miles away. Saint John then dug a cave and worshipped in it in solitude. His virtues were spreading quickly and many monks, among which was his older brother, came to him to learn about and follow his angelic life. He was then leading by example; he surpassed all the elders in their self-control. When he had made a comment to a non-obedient brother during harvest, he begged him to forgive him and spent the

whole year fasting (eating only bread and salt every third day) praying, "forgive me, O Lord, for I angered your creation".

Saint John's disciples were increasing in number and came from everywhere to his abode by the "Tree of Obedience" where a monastery was built and remained open until the 17th century. We know how he had tested the good dispositions of Saint Arsenius when he first came to Skete. He became then responsible for the salvation of many of his children. A certain charitable young woman, named Paesia, after the death of her parents opened her house to care for the needy and the strangers. She was so generous that her wealth was entirely spent and, not finding money to survive, she fell gradually into a disorderly life. The monks entreated Saint John to try to reclaim her, and he went to her house and sitting down by her he said with his accustomed sweetness, "what reason can you have to complain about Jesus that you should thus abandon Him?" At these words she was struck silent, and seeing the saint in tears she said to him, "why do you weep?" Saint John replied, "how can I not weep whilst I see Satan in possession of your heart?" She was moved by his gentleness and concern for her, and grace entered into her heart and she asked him, "Father, is the path of penitence still open to me?" "It is," he replied. "Then show me the way." He rose up and she followed him without saying another word. As he was leading her to one of the nuns' monasteries, they slept in the desert. During the prayer of midnight, Saint John saw the soul of Paesia going up to Heaven carried by angels and heard a voice telling him that her penitence was perfect before God. And in the morning he found Paesia dead.

His Late Life away from Skete

When the Berbers raided Skete around 395, Saint John went across the Nile towards the Red Sea, and there, at one day's walk from the place hallowed by Saint Anthony, he remained until his departure. His rare visit to the village (the current city of Suez), he brought most of its inhabitants to Christ and he worked several miracles.

When he drew near his end, his disciples entreated him to leave them some final lesson of Christian perfection. He sighed, and that he might shun the air of a teacher alleging his own doctrine and practice, he said, "I never followed my own will; nor did I ever teach another what I had not first practiced myself".

When he departed, his servant who was coming back from the village saw the angels carrying his soul to Heaven accompanied by the spirits of the saints. He then treated the body with honor and carried him to the village. Later, in 515, his body was taken to the desert of Skete.

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Maximus and Domatius

Giving up the Royal Glory

Abba Maximus and his brother Domatius were the sons of Walendianus, a Roman Emperor who feared God and was steadfast in his faith. He had raised these two angelic sons in a holy and Christian manner. They were full of purity and holiness, always praying and reading the holy books. When they realized that this world was only transitional and temporal, they decided to leave and live a monastic life. They asked their father to allow them to travel to the City of Nicaea, to pray in the place where the first Universal Council was held in 325 A.D. Their father rejoiced and sent them with an entourage of soldiers and servants as was the custom for the children of kings. When they arrived, they asked the soldiers to go back to their father and tell him that they wanted to stay there for some time. Then they revealed their thoughts to one saintly monk that they wanted to put on the holy garb of the monks. The monk did not agree with them because he feared their father, and he told them to go to Syria where Saint Agabius abided. They went and stayed there for six years until his departure. Before he departed, he told them that he had desired to see Saint Macarius of Scetis in the flesh, but that he has seen him in the spirit; he commanded them to go to Saint Macarius and become his children.

Leading an Active and Holy Life

God granted them the gift of healing. Their report was heard in all the countries, especially among the sea merchants and the travelers. They learned the trade of making ships sails, and they were able to support themselves with money earned by selling their work and they gave the rest to charity. One day, one of their father's stewards saw a sailboat on which it was written, "Maximus and Domatius". He tried to get some information from the ship owner who said to him, "these are the names of two monk brothers which I have written on my ship as a blessing, so that God may prosper my business." He described them to him. The steward recognized them and took the man to the Emperor, and when the Emperor verified what he had heard, he sent their mother and the princess, their sister, to meet them. When they met with the two saints and recognized them, they wept. Their mother wanted them to return with her, but they refused. Meanwhile, they soothed the hearts of their mother and their sister.

Escaping from Worldly Glory to the Desert of Scetis

After a while, the Patriarch of Rome departed, and they remembered Maximus, whom they wanted to ordain in his place. His father rejoiced when he heard this. When the news arrived to Maximus and his brother, they remembered the command of their father Saint Agabius. They disguised themselves, and went to the road along the Mediterranean, and when they were thirsty, God transformed the salty water into fresh water. Finally, they reached the wilderness

of Scetis, where Saint Macarius was residing. They told him that they wanted to live with him and be his disciples. When Saint Macarius saw that they were rich, he thought that they would not be able to live in the desert because of its harshness. They answered him saying, "if we are not able to live here, our father, we will return to where we came from." He then gave them a shovel and asked them to dig a cave for them in a solid rock. He thought that they would be too tired to complete it and leave. Then he taught them how to plait palm leaves, told them about someone who would take their crafts to sell and left them.

Humility and Silence

They lived in this manner for three full years, never meeting anyone; they only went to Church on Sundays to partake of the Holy Communion silently. Saint Macarius marveled that they did not go to him all these years to seek his advice. After praying for God to reveal their secret for a whole week, he went to visit them in their cell where he also spent the night. When he woke up at midnight, as was his custom to pray, he saw the two Saints praying and a ray of light like fire, going from their mouths to heaven, and the devils were all around them like flies, and the angel of the Lord standing with a sword of fire protecting them. At dawn, they pretended they were asleep and they all got up. Saint Macarius put on them the holy garb of the monks, and asked them to pray for him. They bowed to the ground before him and they were silent.

A Glorious Departure

When they completed their course, and the Lord wanted to take them away from this sad temporal world, Saint Maximus became sick, and sent to Saint Macarius to come and visit him. When Saint Macarius arrived, he found him ill with a fever. He consoled him, and Saint Macarius saw a crowd of prophets and saints, including Saint John the Baptist, gathered around him until he gave up his pure spirit in dignity and honor.

Saint Domatius, his brother, was weeping bitterly, and asked Saint Macarius to pray to Christ to take him also to be with his brother. After three days, he became sick, and Saint Macarius visited him. On his way, he saw the crowd of saints who have carried his brother before carrying the soul of Saint Domatius up to Heaven. When he arrived at the cave, he found that he had passed away. He put his body with his brother's.

When Saint Macarius was asked about these two Saints not going to consult his wisdom, he replied that they were very wise themselves, perfect and humble; they didn't want to make that be known to the monks for not to be praised for attaining such spiritual levels in their young age.

May their prayers be with us and Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Conclusion

If royal glory is great, heavenly glory is far greater and everlasting. Silence and humility are the best guards against the devil's wars. Persistence is the key to success.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 14

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the coming of Christ was God's plan for our salvation from the beginning as shown from the prophecies and symbols about Him throughout the Old Testament.

Subject: Christ in the Old Testament (2)

Verse: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” Mt 12:40

References: text & Canadian Program 9, p.115

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This lesson is the second lesson about Christ in the Old Testament. This lesson will focus on personalities, which some aspects of their lives symbolized the life of Christ.
2. The following are some of these personalities
 - a. Adam (Ro5: 14)

Adam

The beginning of the original creation of the human race

He was of the earth in him all die.

The devil tempted him, and he surrendered

Christ

The beginning of the new creation of the human race, Col 1:18

The lord from heaven in all shall be made alive 1 Col 5:47

The devil tried to tempt Him and failed. Lk 4:13

b. Moses

Moses

- ❖ Born in a foreign land Pharaoh tried to kill him and failed
- ❖ Gave up his royal status to save his people

Saved his people from the bondage of the Egyptians Gave his people the Law

Suffered many times from his people (Ex 17:32, Lv 11)

Christ

- ❖ He left heaven to born on earth. Herod tried to kill Him and failed
- ❖ Gave up His glory to save His people

Saved His people from the bondage of the devil. Gave His people the "perfect" Law.

Suffered many times from His people, and even died on their hands.

c. Jonah (Mt 12:38-41)

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to search the life of one of the other personalities in the Bible (Isaac, Joseph, David...) and write a paragraph about one of the similarities between his life and the life of Christ.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that lists the verses used in this lesson

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 15

Date:

Aim: To explain to the students the three songs of praise that flowed from the mouths of Elizabeth, Mary, and Zacharias as mentioned in Lk 1

Subject: Mary visits Elizabeth, Three songs of praise.

Verse: “Then she spoke with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” Lk 1:42

References: Lk 1:39-80, Any Commentary on the Bible available in the Sunday School Library.

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. Go quickly over the incidents which lead to Mary's visit to Elizabeth as mentioned in Lk 1:5-38
2. Notice:
 - a. How Mary went to visit Elizabeth "with haste", a sign of her care and love,
 - b. The glorious effects of Mary's visit with the Lord in her womb, "The babe leaped, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."
 - c. That Mary stayed to help until the end of Elizabeth's term, in spite of the difficult period of her own first trimester. (Vs.56)
3. Go over the words of Elizabeth's praise (vs. 42-45) Mary's praise (vs. 46-55), and Zacharias praise (vs. 68-79)

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize Mary's praise. Make sure each of them will recite it for you in the coming weeks.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that includes the three songs of praise.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 16

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the coming of Christ was God's plan for our salvation from the beginning as shown from the prophecies and symbols about Him throughout the Old Testament.

Subject: Christ in the Old Testament (3).

Verse: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” Jn 3:14

References: See Text

Subject Matter & Method

Focus On:

1. This is the third lesson about Christ in the Old Testament. The focus of this lesson is on "things" in the Old Testament that refers to Christ.
2. The following are some of these symbols
 - a. The Passover Lamb Ex.12: 1-14, Co 3:7 explain briefly the symbol of the lamb, as they will be discussed under a separate lesson. The most important is that as the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from death (vs. 13), so is the blood of Christ saved us from eternal death. (1 Pc 1:18-20)
 - b. The Manna Ex 16, Jn 6:30-58. As the manna was the only food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, so is the body of Christ gives us the eternal life.
 - c. The water from the rock. Ex 17:1-7, 1Co 10:4&Jn4:13,14. Christ is the rock that gives us the water that spring up into everlasting life.
 - d. The bronze serpent Nu 21:4-9, Jn 3:14. The Lord explained to us that we should look to the cross (believe in Him) so that to escape the death brought to us by the bite of the serpent (the devil, Rev 12:9)

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to select one of the four symbols, read about it from the Old Testament, and write a commentary on how this benefit us spiritually.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that lists the verses used in the lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 17

Date:

Aim: To encourage the students to make their resolution for the New Year, growing in all aspects of their spiritual life.

Subject: The New Year: Growing in the Spirit

Verse: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 P 3:18).

References: See text.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The New Year should remind us that God gave us another opportunity to repent and get closer to Him.
2. God wants us to grow continuously in knowing Him, and in living up to his commandments. (Ps 92:12, Co 1:10, 2 P 3:18)
3. Jesus Christ gave us the example. (Lk 2:52)
4. God is calling us to be saints, perfect and holy, and we can only achieve this if we gradually and continuously grow in knowing Him. (Mt 5:48, 1 P 1:15, Eph 5:3)
5. We should examine our spiritual lives (prayers, confessions, fasting, reading the Bible, our relationships with others,...) and make a specific resolution to improve on each aspect.

Spiritual Exercise: Each student should select at least three aspects of the spiritual life, and make a resolution to make specific improvements this coming year.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Distribute a form to the students to fill in their specific resolutions, and let them keep it. Follow up with them periodically to check on their improvements.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 18

Date:

Aim: To make the students realize that while Jesus fulfilled the Law, He gave us much greater depth of its meaning.

Subject: The Circumcision Feast and Simeon's Prophecy

Verse: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Co 2:11).

References: Lk 2, Ac 15, R 9, p.149.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Jesus' circumcision was to fulfill the Law of Moses, which originated by God's order to Abraham. (Gn 17)
2. The reason was to distinguish God's people.
3. In the New Testament, we cut our sins away and are distinguished permanently in our souls through Baptism.
4. Also, explain to the students that many godly people were expecting the Messiah, based on the prophecies, and discuss with them the prophecy of Simeon.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize Lk 2:25-32 the Gospel of The Compline).

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Use the Agpya to read the Gospel of the Compline.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 19

Date:

Aim: To let the students understand as much as possible the mystery of the Holy Trinity so that their faith would be strengthened.

Subject: The Holy Trinity

Verse: "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and the three are one." Jn 5:7

References: R9, Ch.1& Canadian Program Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.337-355

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See References above.
2. How can we, with our limited minds, understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity?
3. Did the Holy Trinity manifest Himself to the people of the Old Testament? How? What are these manifestations?
4. Explain the specific functions and the relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and how they are one in essence? (Focus on the Trinity, as there will be further explanations about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit later in the program - see the Orthodox Creed.)

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to contemplate on the Creed during the week. Ask them to divide it into seven parts , and contemplate on one part each day

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Distribute a copy of the Creed. Divide it into seven parts to be used by the students for their spiritual exercise.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 20

Date:

Aim: To teach the students the basic beliefs of Christianity as outlined in the Orthodox Creed, in a thorough and detailed way.

Subject: The Orthodox Creed (I)

Verse: "You believe that there is one God. You do well." Jas 2:19

References: Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.169, & R 15

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Orthodox Creed will be studied in four lessons. These lessons are outlined in the program here, only as a guideline. The actual lesson may vary depending on how the lesson will actually proceed in the classroom.
2. Make sure to keep the lesson lively by using the method of "question and answer" throughout these lessons. First get the students to participate, before giving them the right teaching. Try to answer all their questions regarding the Creed, in a complete and thorough way, since these lessons are the basis of our faith.
3. This lesson will include:
 - a. Introduction: The appearance of many heresies in the first three centuries, and their spread all over the Christian world.
 - b. The Councils: The church fathers defend the faith, and convene in local councils, and eventually in Ecumenical Councils, to define the faith after considerable discussions, which included the heretics.
 - c. The adoption of the Orthodox Creed in the Ecumenical Councils and its acceptance by the whole church.
 - d. Discuss the Creed in detail, word-by-word, starting from, "We believe in one God, God the Pantocrator, who created heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen."

Spiritual Exercise: Memorize some verses from the Bible, which were the source for the part of the Orthodox Creed, discussed in this lesson.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout that includes the verses to be used for the spiritual exercise above.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 21

Date:

Aim: To teach the students the basic beliefs of Christianity as outlined in the Orthodox Creed, in a thorough and detailed way.

Subject: The Orthodox Creed (II)

Verse: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believe on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Ti3: 16).

References: Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.173, & R 15

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See comments I and 2 for the lesson, "The Orthodox Creed (I)."
2. This lesson will include the part of the Creed from, "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ...and became human."

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize the gospel of the First Hour of The Agpya (Jn 1:1-17).

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout that includes the verses to be used for this lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 22

Date:

Aim: To help the students in standing firm and resist their peers' pressure.

Subject: Seminar-Peer Pressure

Verse: " Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." Ps 1:1

References: See text

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

- Q- I am a 16-year-old boy, and everywhere I go, I hear the word "Peer Pressure." What does it mean?
- A- Peer Pressure is a psychological developmental phenomenon that is important especially during the teen-age period. It refers to the ongoing pressures or the challenges that an adolescent is subjected to by his/her friends.
- Q- Did the Bible mention "Peer Pressure?"
- A- Yes, although the Bible did not mention these specific words, as psychologists coined the expression recently, it talked about this phenomenon in many situations:
 1. Read Job 18:8-11. Notice the words "snare, trap." Read also Pr 29:25 and Ps 91:3.
 2. The Psalmist praised the person who did not yield to peer pressure in Ps 1:1. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." Notice how the precise language of the Bible, regarding escalation of the pressure the more we succumb to it, does coincide with contemporary psychological knowledge. Walk, stand, and sit.
 3. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) shows us the importance of friends. The younger son "wasted his possession with prodigal living," possibly by throwing parties, drinking alcohol, etc.... Even the older son was angry and would not join in the festivities because "you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends."
 4. St. Paul advises us "do not be conformed to this world" (Ro 12:2), and "evil company corrupts good habits" (Co 15:33)

Q- Does this "Peer Pressure" change according to times?

A- Of course. Each generation has its own peer pressure. For example, in the 60's, the issue was whether you drank beer on Friday night. In the 70's, it was what kind of car you drove, how fast it will go, and how fast you went. In the 80's, it was whether you had a girlfriend/boyfriend. Currently, young people are bombarded with a myriad of peer pressure issues: clothes, smoking, "experimenting" with drugs, hairstyles, skipping school, certain types of music, body piercing, "free" expression of sexuality, downloading certain pictures on the Internet, going to certain places, etc....

Q- I did not know peer pressure is that rampant. What do you think causes it to exist?

A- Two factors:

1. For the one who yields to the pressure, he/she wants to be accepted and approved by friends. He/she wants to blend in, to be in the "in crowd". By teen-age language, to be "cool"!
2. For the one, or group, exerting the pressure: they want, subconsciously, to relieve their guilt by involving others whom by not participating, causes their consciousness to ache. When they succeed in getting others in their "trap" or "snare," they feel like "now we feel better that you became one of us, doing what we are doing".

Q- Do you have a word of advice about how Christian youth should handle this "Peer Pressure"?

A- There are a few things, through the grace of God that we can do to handle "Peer Pressure":

1. Avoid it: We have to know our vulnerability. It is much easier to avoid situations that expose our weakness, e.g. bad company in a car parking in the street, a solitary interaction with a friend of the opposite sex that I have "feelings" for, exposure to certain magazines, videos or movies, conversation with friends that crack certain jokes in the locker rooms, trying the first cigarette puff or beer sip. A philosopher once said, "Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are."
2. Do not negotiate: The devil in our minds likes to make us bargain about sins. We frequently listen to this "silent voice" in our heads saying: "maybe", "however", "but . . . "possibly". Saint Paul advises us to "flee youthful lust." (2Ti 2:22)
3. Solidify your relationship with God: We know from simple physics, that a "pressure" can be neutralized, or overcome, by another force in the opposite direction. That leaves me to contemplate about my internal spiritual force, and how am I doing in my spirited path: Bible reading, my individual prayers, attending

liturgy and uniting with Jesus in communion, participating in youth meeting or Sunday School, confession, etc....

4. Create a positive influence: Via the grace of God, I should be able, not only to resist peer pressure, but also to have a positive impact on my friends. If I model after Christ, I indirectly become a role model for other who will see Christ in my daily behavior.
5. Never ever say "Never"... Even if I stumble, I will never lose hope in Christ changing me. "Hope" was the difference between St. Peter's repentance and Judas' despair. The early spiritual fathers tell us about a specific devil that called "the devil of the hopelessness and despair". That devil's joy is to make us lose hopes that "I will never change", so that I stay captive in his hand. As a Christian youth, every time I fall, I lift my eyes to see Christ on the cross, welcoming my return. He is not going to ask me why did I fall, but why I did not repent.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to lift their hearts to God at any moment they feel that their peers are pressuring them, and pray
"Make haste, O God, to deliver me!
Make haste to help me, O Lord!" Ps 70:1

Audio & Visual Aids

- ❖ Play parts of videotape that deals with the issue of peer pressure from a Christian point of view.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 23

Date:

Aim: To teach the students the basic beliefs of Christianity as outlined in the Orthodox Creed, in a thorough and detailed way.

Subject: The Orthodox Creed (Ill)

Verse: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work" (Rev 22:12).

References: Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.177, & R 15

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See comments of I and 2 from the lesson, "The Orthodox Creed (I)".
2. This lesson will include the parts of the Creed from "He was crucified ... who spoke by the prophets."

Spiritual Exercise: Memorize some verses from the Bible, which were the source for the part of the Orthodox Creed, discussed in this lesson.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout that includes the verses to be used for the spiritual exercise above.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 24

Date:

Aim: To teach the students the basic beliefs of Christianity as outlined in the Orthodox Creed, in a thorough and detailed way.

Subject: The Orthodox Creed (IV)

Verse: "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." Eph 2:20

References: Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.183, & R 15

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See comments I and 2 from the lesson, "The Orthodox Creed (I)".
2. This lesson will include the parts of the Creed from, "And in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church ... and the life of the coming age."

Spiritual Exercise: Memorize some verses from the Bible, which were the source for the part of the Orthodox Creed, discussed in this lesson.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- Prepare a handout that includes the verses to be used for the spiritual exercise above.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout for the students that list the answers of the Lord to the three temptations with their references from the Old Testament. (Dt 8:3, Ps 91:11-12, & Dt 6:16).

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 25

Date:

Aim: To teach the students that while the devil will always tempt us, we can conquer him by tasting and the word of God, as Jesus did.

Subject: The Temptation on the Mountain

Verse: "But Jesus answered him saying, 'It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Lk 4:4).

References: Mt 4, & Lk 4

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Jesus started His mission by going to the wilderness and fasting to teach us how we should prepare ourselves for the different tasks in life.
2. The devil will attack us, and will try to conquer us at any place and by any means. (1 P 5:8)
3. Discuss with the students the three temptations, and how we are subject to the same in today's world. (1 Jn 2:16)
4. Explain how the Lord was able to conquer the devil by using the verses from the Old Testament.
5. We should always be alert, and ready to fight the devil's temptations, by all spiritual means, including fasting and memorizing many verses from the Bible, to use them in time of temptation.

Spiritual Exercise: Encourage the students to practice fasting in a spiritual way, by combining it with an increase in their spiritual readings, memorizing verses from the Bible, and increasing their devotion time for praying and meditation.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 26

Date:

Aim: God hears the affliction of His people and plans for their deliverance.

Subject: The Slavery in Egypt

Verse: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them."
Is 63:9

References: Ex 1-5

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Israelites grew tremendously in number and prosperity in Egypt (from 175 to more than 3 million in about 430 years).
2. The Egyptians worried about their security and started to persecute the Israelites.
3. God interfered by planning the life of Moses, who would lead the people out of Egypt.
4. Moses was being prepared for his mission when he stayed in the wilderness for 40 years.
5. Moses and his confrontations with pharaoh were the way with which God showed His presence.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to pray for God's interference in the lives of those Christians who are under persecution either in Egypt or elsewhere. (e.g. Sudan, Pakistan)

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Create a map, showing Egypt, Israel, and the area where the Israelites used to live in Egypt (see attached).

The map of Egypt

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 27

Date:

Aim: God's mighty hand will always interfere to support His people and deliver them from affliction, no matter how strong the persecutors.

Subject: Moses Leads the People Out of Egypt

Verse: “And brought out Israel from among them, For His mercy endures forever; with a strong hand, and with outstretched arm.” Ps 136:11-12

References: Ex 6-14

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. God appeared to Moses and guided him to deliver the Israelites after they cried out for help.
2. God showed His mighty hand against the most powerful nation on earth at that time.
3. God brought the plagues that were directed toward the most important elements of life in Egypt, and again showed the weakness of their gods.
4. God brought the plagues, one by one, to give the Egyptians a chance to accept Moses' request, rather than facing destruction.
5. God showed His total control over nature and life so that we always trust Him, regardless of how big our problems or how strong our persecutors.
6. The Egyptians brought on themselves the killing of the first born, by their utter disregard for God's request through Moses, in spite of nine severe plagues.
7. God still showed another mighty work to finish the deliverance of the Israelites, by parting the Red Sea.
8. Explain the symbolic aspects of this story.
Lamb - The Cross-
The Parting of the Sea - Baptism

Spiritual Exercise: Make the students think of a personal story (preferably), or something that happened to a family member or a friend, which showed God's mighty hand, and have them share it with the class next week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a list showing the ten plagues and a corresponding picture for each of them.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 28

Date:

Aim: To teach the students the spiritual depth of the Ten Commandments, and how we can follow them.

Subject: The Ten Commandments

Verse: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17).

References: Ex 19, 20, Mt 5, & R 17

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. That God revealed the Ten Commandments to the people in a mighty way, to get their attention about the importance of following His commandments.
2. That the Ten Commandments are for all people, everywhere and for all times.
3. Discuss with the students how Jesus Christ elevated the understanding of the Ten Commandments (Mt 5-7).
4. Discuss briefly with the students each commandment, and how it applies to our lives.

Spiritual Exercise: Let each student pick one of the commandments, and write a few paragraphs about how it can be applied in our lives based on the Christian understanding.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout that lists the Ten Commandments on two tablets.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 29

Date:

Aim: To give the students a great example of a female saint who showed us that God will accept our repentance, no matter how bad our sins, and will support us to make us saints.

Subject: St. Mary of Egypt

Verse: “Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Is 1:18).

Reference: Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.263, and attachment

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on: See attachment

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to examine their lives, repent, go to confession, and take communion next week. Ask them to pray to St. Mary of Egypt for her intercession if the devils brought to our minds how bad our sins are.

Audio & Visual Aids:

❖ An icon of St. Mary of Egypt



SAINTS OF OUR CHURCH

Saint Mary of Egypt

(6 Baramoudah /14 April)

On this day, in 137 A.M. (421 AD.), Saint Mary of Egypt, the hermit who lived for seventy-six years, had departed. She was born in the city of Alexandria, in about 61 A.M. (345 A.D.), of Christian parents. When she was twelve years of age, Satan led her astray and made her his net, through which he caught innumerable souls.

She continued in this Sinful conduct for seventeen years, until the mercy of God touched her life. She met people going to Jerusalem and went with them. Since she did not have enough to pay for the trip, she gave herself to the owners of the ship in return, until she came to Jerusalem, where she also went on, doing the same there.

Mary wished to enter through the door of the church of the Resurrection, but she felt a hidden power pulling her back, preventing her from entering. Whenever she tried to enter, she felt as though someone prevented her from doing so, and right away, she realized that it was because of her sinfulness. With a broken heart, she lifted up her eyes and wept, praying to Saint Mary, and asking her to intercede on her behalf before her Beloved Son. She felt encouraged and wished to enter with those entering, and nothing prevented her from entering this time. She prayed therein to God, asking Him to guide her as pleased Him.

She stood before the icon of the blessed and pure Virgin Saint Mary and asked her fervently to guide her that her soul might be saved. A voice came from the icon saying, *"If you cross the Jordan River, you will find rest and salvation."* She rose in haste and left the courtyard of the church. On her way, she met a man who gave her three small coins with which she bought bread.' She then crossed the Jordan River to the wilderness, where she lived for forty-seven years, eating the herbs of the desert.

Saint Mary of Egypt strove strenuously for seventeen years. Satan fought against her but, with the grace of God, she overcame him.

In the forty-fifth year of her life in the desert, Saint Zossima went to the wilderness for devotion and

asceticism during the holy lent, according to the custom of the monks there. While he was walking in the desert, he saw this Saint from a distance and thought that she was a shadow or a mirage. He prayed to God to reveal to him the fact about this mirage and he was inspired that it was a human being. He went toward the shadow, but it fled from him. When Saint Mary saw that he insisted on following her, she called him from behind a hill saying, *"Zossima, if you wish to talk to me, throw me a rag that I may cover myself, for I am naked."* Saint Zossima marveled, for she called him by his name, so he threw to her what she covered herself with, and she came to him.

After the greetings and the metanoias, she asked him to pray for her because he was a priest, after which he asked her to tell him the story of her life from the beginning. After she told him, she asked him to bring the Holy Eucharist in the following year so that she may partake of it.

On the following visit, he came to her and she partook of the Holy Sacraments. He then gave her what he had of dates and lentils, but she only took a handful of lentils and asked him to come to her in the following year.

When Saint Zossima came to Saint Mary in the next year, he found that she had departed. A lion stood beside her, and a written message on the ground which read, *"Bury Mary, the poor woman, in the dust of which she was created"* He marveled at the writing and the lion that was protecting her body, and while he was thinking of how he was going to dig to bury her, the lion came and dug a grave for her. He prayed over her and buried her.

When he returned to his monastery, Saint Zossima told the monks the Story of the struggle of this holy woman, and they all increased in



steadfastness in the divine mercy, and progressed in spiritual life.

May her prayers be with us, Amen

3- ST. MARY OF EGYPT

On my visit to the Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordan Ville, N.Y., I was thrilled to see the icon of St. Mary of Egypt occupying the principal place in the hall. In Paris there is a small chapel in the cathedral of “Notre Dame” carrying the same of the same Saint. Also in the museum of arts in Philadelphia, there is a wonderful icon for this Egyptian ascetic

IN THE WILDERNESS

At the beginning of Lent, the gates of the monastery by the river Jordan were opened, and the monks were going out singing their psalms. They crossed the river and scattered far and wide in different directions to spend the whole period of fast in the desert thinking of nothing except the fatherhood of God, devoting most of their time to the deepest fellowship with our Savior. On palm Sunday, they were accustomed to return to the monastery. Abbot Zosima went far and deep into the desert. He was contemplating the divine grace, which helped him to live in one of the monasteries of Palestine, from his childhood till his early fifties... He was on and of with thoughts of pride asking himself, “Is there a monk on earth who could be of help to me and show me a kind of asceticism that I have not achieved? Is there a man to be found in the wilderness who has surpassed me?”

Suddenly an angel appeared to him and led him to the monastery by the river Jordan, where he witnessed ascetic practice and angelic life. He was humiliated in his own eyes.

On the 20th day of his spiritual journey, and while he was praying, he caught sight of something that looked like a human form, with long silver gray hair...

“Is it an illusion?”

“Is it a ghost?”

“Is it the deceit of the devil? He turned his sight and realized that it was a human form, naked; its skin was dark as if burned by the heat of the sun. He was overjoyed, hoping to find one of the holy hermits of the wilderness, who devoted all their lives to fellowship with the true friend Jesus Christ, our Savior. He ran in pursuit of that figure but it began to run away from him. When he approached it, he shouted, “why did you run away from me, O servant of God! Wait for me, in God's name, I tell you. Why do you flee from such an old man as me?” As he said these words he saw as if the human figure had fallen into a hole among the rocks. He knelt down and began to cry as a child, and the echo of his crying filled the entire desert. “For Jesus' sake forgive me Abbot Zosima, for I cannot turn towards you. I am a woman and I am naked. Throw me your cloak so

that I may cover my body and turn to you and ask for your blessing!" He was astonished for she knew him and called him by his name ... He threw his cloak, she picked it up and covered her body. Then she turned to Abbot Zosima and said, "Why did you wish, Abbot Zosima, to see a sinful woman? What do you wish to learn or hear from me? He threw himself on the ground and asked for her blessing, but she bowed down before him saying, "Abbot Zosima, it is for you to give blessings. You have been blessed with the grace of priesthood, and for many years you have been standing before the holy altar and offering the sacrifice of the Divine Mysteries." But with tears he said to her, "O honorable mother, I see that you have died to the world. God granted you wonderful graces, for you have called me by name and recognized that I am a priest though you have never seen me before ... I ask you to give me your blessing for God's sake, for I need your prayers." In face of his supplications she was obliged to say, "Blessed be God who cares for the salvation of men and their souls." He answered, "Amen."

They rose up. Then she asked him, "Why have you come man of God to see such a woman who is naked and devoid of every virtue!?" Then she asked him about the Christian peoples, the shepherds, and the kings Abbot Zosima said: "By your holy prayers, O mother, Christ has granted peace to all; But I beseech you to pray for the whole world and for me the sinner."

She replied: "You who are a priest, Abbot Zosima pray for me and for all, for this is your calling. But as we must all be obedient, I will gladly do what you ask." Then she turned to the east and raising her eyes to heaven and stretching out her hand she began to pray for a long time. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, who opens the hearts of all men so that even he who is in the desert and does not see anybody, eagerly desires the salvation of the entire world. Though she was in the desert she was not in isolation from the church, but she was a living member, asking for all her brothers.

IN EGYPT

Waiting for a long time he looked up at her while she was praying; then he fell on the ground weeping and repeating many times: "Lord have mercy." He could see the woman's feet rising about a cubit from the earth as if she was flying. He doubted if she was a spirit or if her prayers were hypocritically said. At this moment she turned round towards him, lifted him up and crossed her body saying to him: "May God, O abbot Zosima, protect us from the evil one and from his snares, for his struggle against us is fierce!" Hearing and seeing this, he importunately asked her to tell him her story and how she had come to the wilderness, saying:

"I beseech you, for the sake of Christ our Lord who was born of the Virgin...hide not from me, your servant, who you are, and whence and when and how you have come to the wilderness. Tell me everything, that

the mighty works of God be made manifest...for you shall not tell me these things for the sake of vainglory or for some other purpose but in order to disclose the truth to me, who am sinful and unworthy. I believe that God for whom you live and whom you serve, led me into this wilderness to show me His ways concerning you. It is not in your power to resist the plans of God.” She replied, “I am much ashamed, my father, to tell you about my disgraceful life. Forgive me for God's...I am not running away from vainglory as you have thought, but your ears cannot hear my wickedness. You will run from me as if from a snake.” “I will tell you everything, in order that you may pray unceasingly for me, that I may find mercy in the Day of Judgment...” Then she I started to tell her story with tears running down her cheeks: “My motherland was Egypt. When I was 12 years old I rejected my parent's love and went to Alexandria.” When I remember how I lost my virginity there at the very beginning and gave myself up to sensuality, I become ashamed. It is better to recount about all this briefly, so that you should know about my passion and my love for pleasure When I was about 17 years, I lived like a fire of vice that burns people ... I seduced many, not for the sake of gain, but often when they wished to pay me, I refused the money. I did not believe in God, but I used to say: “I shall do just as I like, and no one will stop me.” Once I saw a large crowd of Libyans and Egyptians running towards the sea .I asked one of them, where these men were hurrying to, He replied, they were journeying to Jerusalem for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross of our Lord which was to take place in a few days I suddenly desired that I might go with them to have more new lovers who could satisfy my passion In fact, I had no money to pay for the journey or for the food but I had my body which they could take instead of payment How shall I narrate to you Abbot Zosima, what happened after this?!! I went to the shore and met some young men. I forced those miserable creatures to act even against their will I entangled many and many in my net I was the vessel of Satan II was not contented with these youths but I seduced others in Jerusalem In my stupidity, I used to boast that I could seduce many by my body, my shameful words, and impudent laughs.”

ON THE DOORSTEP

At last in Jerusalem I noticed a great crowd of pilgrims moving towards the church, which is built on the Tomb of Christ I was anxious to see what they would do there. I tried to enter the church with the crowd, which was struggling to get through the doors, but suddenly I felt some power pushing me away from the door All could enter easily but I could not; I felt that some force was pushing me to go back. At first I laughed secretly I thought this might have been because I was tired or because of my weakness, being a woman. I did my best and tried to enter and for the second time I was stopped. I was prevented from entering by a secret mighty force. Having repeated my attempt three or four times, I lost all my strength I went aside and stood in a corner of the porch .I began to weep and lament and beat my breast and to sigh from the depth of my heart “Why couldn't I enter? Were they my sins which prevented me from

entering?" Then I looked up over the door and saw an icon of The Most Holy Mary the "Theotokos," and the purity of her complexion put me to shame. Now all my past miseries were clearly exhibited before my eyes and my sins tormented me. Then I knelt before the icon and begged for another chance to follow my Savior. I asked the Virgin's help. I asked my Savior to save me and lead me in His way. I vowed that, as soon as I had seen the Holy Tree of the Cross, I would renounce the world and its pleasures and would go wherever He would lead me. As I prayed I found myself filled with confidence. I left the place where I stood praying and went again and mingled with the crowd, which was struggling to get through the church doors. Now I had got as far as the doors, which I could not reach before I entered without difficulty and found myself within the holy place. Throwing myself on the ground I kissed the Holy Cross with tears and trembling. I forgot myself until midday. At last I came out of the church and stood by the Icon of the Theotokos the Virgin, the place where I had made my vow. I shouted from my heart: "Glory to God who accepts the repentance of sinners through Thee O Loving Lady. What more can I say, I who am so sinful? It is time for me, O Lady to fulfill my vow, Now lead me by the hand upon the path of repentance." Then I heard this voice, and believed that it was for me, "If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest." Having heard this voice, I went and cried to the Theotokos, O Lady, forsake me not." With these words I came out of the entrance of the church and hurriedly set off on my journey. One of the pilgrims glanced at me and gave me three pieces of silver. I took them and bought three loaves of bread, which I took for my journey... I passed the gates of the city and went on my journey, in tears. At sunset I reached the Church of St. John the Baptist, which stood on the banks of the Jordan. I passed all night weeping in the church. In the morning I partook of the Holy Mysteries and went out to the shore and crossed to the other side. I found myself in the wilderness and all then up to this day I have been estranged from people, I have been living here cleaving to my God Who delivers all those who turn to Him, from all that defiles them and from all temptations that are stirred against them. Abbot Zosima asked her: "O lady, how many years have passed since you began to live in this wilderness?"

- ❖ About forty-seven, I think
 - ❖ Have you lived all these years without suffering, because of the change that occurred in your life?
 - ❖ You are asking me Abbot Zosima, about things that I tremble to speak about. If I call to mind all the hardships that I have overcome, all the terrible thoughts that have troubled me, I fear that I may come under their Influence once more.
 - ❖ Don't hide anything from me, my lady...
- Believe me, Abbot; I spent seventeen years in this wilderness fighting wild beasts. At first, life was extremely hard in the wilderness. I used to yearn for my past life, my friends, the good time we had spent together and for all the food and drink and the fine things I used to have in Egypt. Here in the wilderness, it was hard to find even a drop of water to drink. I grieved sorely and was faint from thirst and hunger, and from the heat of

the sun. Life was unbearable. I was often sick and I almost died. As the memories of my old life persisted in attacking me, I flung myself on the ground and, in tears, I begged the Lord to help me... How can I tell you about the thoughts, which urged me on towards lust once more? They were like a fire in my miserable heart, which seemed to burn it up completely and roused in me the desire for pleasures. Finally, I felt great peace in my soul; the Lord gave me what I wanted. I had mourned much for my wicked past and I was finally comforted by God... As Abbot Zosima heard her quoting extracts from the Scriptures, he asked her:

- And where did you learn the Holy Scriptures?

- I have not seen a human face since I crossed the Jordan, except yours today... I have not learned from books, but the Word of God Himself alive and acting, gives man knowledge, and this is the end of my story. As I asked you at the beginning, I now also beseech you by the Incarnate Word of God "to pray the Lord for me as I am a sinner. Having said this, she bowed her head for a moment, in meditation, then turned to Abbot Zosima again saying:

"I beseech you, holy father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, to tell nobody of what I told you until I am set free from this earth and now depart In peace. Next year In Lent, do not cross the Jordan, as is the custom in the monastery. Stay there in the monastery, for even if you wished to go out, it would be Impossible for you to do so. On Holy Thursday, wait for me on the banks of the Jordan with the life-giving Body and Blood of Christ in a sacred vessel." Then she disappeared in the depths of the wilderness. Abbot Zosima, falling upon his knees, and prostrating himself upon the earth on which her feet had stood, gave glory and thanks go God, and again crossing that wilderness, he returned to the monastery on the same day that was assigned for the return of the monks for a whole year he kept silent, not daring to tell anyone of what he had seen. He prayed God to see her again. That year seemed very long to the saint who wished if it could be shortened into one single day. When Lent began, he was very ill and lay in bed with fever, then he remained in the monastery as she had told him. On Maundy Thursday he took the life--giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and put into a basket some figs and dates and a small quantity of lentils that had been soaked in water. Having reached the bank of the Jordan he sat down waiting for her. He waited for a long time. Then he began to doubt that his unworthiness might have prevented her from coming or that she had come and not finding him, she had gone back. Then he raised his eyes to heaven and began to pray asking God that he might see the face of the ascetic by God's *will* After praying, he saw her coming on the surface of the water towards him, and when he wanted to prostrate himself before her she cried to him while still walking on the water; "What are you doing Abbot? You are a priest and you are carrying the Divine mysteries!!" With joy and peace she asked him to bless her and took part in the holy Communion She raised her arms towards heaven and sighed with tears, saying; "O Lord, now let Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word for my eyes have seen Thy salvation." She then looked towards the father and said; "Forgive me, Abbot for I have another favor to ask, go back now to

the monastery and may the Grace of God preserve you Next year come again to the same place where you first met me. Come and you will see me again for such is the will of God.” He answered her; “I long to go after you in the wilderness following your example.” He asked her to take the small amount of food that he had brought her She touched the lentils with the tip of her fingers and took three grains, put them in her mouth saying that the grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to keep the nature of the soul undefiled and again she asked him to pray for her. Then she crossed the Jordan passing over the water and disappeared in the wilderness, and he went off sighing sorrowfully. Another year passed and he again went into the wilderness. He reached the same spot but he saw her dead body lying on the sand. Zosima felt very sad and knelt down besides her, weeping for a long time, praying the psalms that are suitable for such occasions... After a little while, he began to wonder where he could bury her body. But he noticed something written on the sand near her head; “Abbot Zosima, on the night of the Lord's passion, Maundy Thursday, I went to my Savior. Bury the body of humble Mary in this very place. Let dust return to dust and pray the Lord for me...” Father Zosima was astonished how she returned to this place after her partaking of the Divine Communion last year on the same day at the same hour and died, and how her body remained without decay throughout the whole year. At that moment a lion came out of the wood, licked her feet and began to dig a hole large enough to bury the body. The father washed her feet with his tears, calling on her to pray for all, and then he covered the body with earth.

- 1- Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *St. Mary in the Orthodox Concept*, Melbourne 1978 p.6547.
- 2- Derwas V. Chitty: *The Desert, A City* London 1977, and p.2.
- 3- Palladius: *His Laus* .33.2.
- 4- *Ibid* 29: 1
- 5- The present Atripe, St. Shenute had established a monastery of nuns nearby and Elias may have been their confessor.
- 6- I have already written a small book, “St. Mary of Egypt” in English and Arabic Alexandria .1974.
- 7- Benedicta Ward *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Oxford, 1975, p192. Owen Chadwick *Western Asceticism*, London, 1978 p62, 87,121. Wallis Budge: *The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, London .1907.
- 8- A.J. Wenainck *Legends of Eastern Saints* Vol. 11. Leyden 1913. The legend, which probably goes back (in Coptic) to the sixth century, is valuable for the picture of Scetis that it gives us. The story of St. Hilary is a verified, historical fact accepted by many ancient and contemporary historians, in spite of what appears in it as fictitious elements. Her feast day is January 29 (Coptic Synxarium: Tubah 21)
- 9- St. Sophronius (7th century) *The life of St. Mary of Egypt* translated by the Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY.

The life of St. Mary of Egypt translated by the Monastery of the Veil of the Virgin Mary, Paris.

Lydia Kesich *They walked with God.*

القس يشوى عبد المسيح ، الشماس يوسف حبيب : القديسة مريم المصرية والأنبا زوسيماء القس .
إبراهيم حبيب المصري : قصة الكنيسة القبطية حـ ١
مكسيموس مظلوم : الدر الثمين فى أخبار القديسين .
منكمار الكنيسة القبطية .

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 30

Date:

Aim: To raise the awareness of the students about the uniqueness of human beings among all God's creatures as having a spirit, a soul, and a body.

Subject: Components of Human Beings: Spirit, Soul, and Body

Verse: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Th 5: 23

Reference: See text

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Human beings are unique creatures. "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gn 1:26).
2. Human beings have three components: (See verse above)
 - a. The body
 - b. The soul, which carries the breath of life to the body; all animals have this element which gives the body all the characteristics of life (i.e. growth, movement, reproduction...). "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lv 17:11). See Ec 3:18-20.
 - c. The spirit, which is the part from God, which makes us in His image (Gn 2:7). The spirit should lead the body, as the Spirit in turn should be led by God's Holy Spirit (Ga 5:16, Ro 8:14).
3. The Spirit has the following characteristics: logic, free will, holy, and eternal.
4. These unique characteristics of the spirit gave human beings their special place among God's creatures. We have logic (the mind) to understand and control the world (Gn 1:26). We have free will to do good or evil (Ga 5:17-18, 24-25), and thus we will give accounts to our deeds (Ro 2:6). We are holy because our spirit is coming from the Holy Spirit, and thus we yearn to do well and to unite with God in the spirit by worshipping Him (Jn 4:24 & Lk 1: 46A7). And we have eternal spirit that will unite with the body in the kingdom of heaven to live forever with Him (Jn 5:28-29).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to identify some of the great deed, which people do, but that actually originated from the Spirit of God who dwells in us.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Pass out a handout that lists the verses used in this lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 31

Date:

Aim: To explain to the students the meaning of the seven words on the cross, and how to benefit from them in our lives.

Subject: The Seven Words on the Cross

Verse: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

References: Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.227-236

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Quick summary of the events leading to the cross.
2. Jesus talked very little during the trial, but on the cross he taught us some great lessons.
3. Discuss with the students each word, and what to learn from these words, which impact our daily lives, or strengthen our faith.
 - i. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).
 - ii. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise" (Lk 23:43).
 - iii. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved, standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour, that disciple took her to his own home" (Jn 19:26-27).
 - iv. "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?'" (Mt 27:46).
 - v. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!'" (Jn 19:28).
 - vi. "So when Jesus received the sour wine, He said, 'it is finished!' And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit" (Jn 19:30).
 - vii. "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last" (Lk 23:46).

Spiritual Exercise: Memorize the seven words on the cross, and apply the first word during the coming week.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Prepare a handout, listing the seven words on the cross.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 32

Date:

Aim: To prepare our hearts to receive the Lord as our King.

Subject: Jesus the King and the Lamb of God

Verse: “Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel” (Jn 12:13).

References: Lk 19:28-44, Mt 21, Jn 12:13-19, Canadian Program, Grade 9 & 10, Year 1, p.223

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Jesus wept on Jerusalem because He knew that they would refuse and crucify Him, thus denying themselves the salvation and bringing destruction to the city.
2. The people received Jesus as their King with great joy; however, Jesus came to establish an everlasting heavenly kingdom.
3. Jesus also came to Jerusalem on the tenth day of Nissau, to show the world that He is the true Lamb of God, who would be sacrificed for our sins, thus fulfilling the meaning of the Passover. (Ex 12:3)
4. Jesus went to the temple and purified it, which brought on Him the wrath of the high priests and the rulers, and thus they started planning for His death.

Spiritual Exercise: Discuss with the students, how we can prepare our hearts, so that the Lord will always rule as the King of their hearts.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A picture of the Lord entering Jerusalem.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 35

Date:

Aim: To enlighten the students about some of the great blessings those were brought to us through the Resurrection of the Lord.

Subject: The Concept of Resurrection

Verse: “He will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil 3:21).

References: See Attachment

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

See Attachment

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to write a paragraph about one of the blessings brought to us by the Resurrection from their personal perspective.

Audio & Visual Aids:

❖ A large icon or a picture of the Resurrection



The Concept of Resurrection

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Death Was Not In God's Plan For Man:

When God created man, He created him for life. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living being (Gen. 2:7). God wanted him to have eternal life. But he brought unto himself death as a result of his sin, because the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"* (Rom 5:12).

Therefore, we rejoice with the resurrection, because it is a victory over death and a return of the nature of man to life. God has created man to live and not to die. The resurrection of Christ is a deposit to our resurrection and that is why the apostle Paul described Him as the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"(1 Cor. 15:20). Christ is the first fruit and we will follow Him. Someone may ask: How would Christ be the first fruit when many were raised before Him? Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath, from the dead (1 Kings 17:22), the son of the Shunammite woman was risen by Elisha after his death (2 Kings 4:32-36). Besides, Lord Jesus had resurrected three others from the dead: The son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus and Lazaous.

It is true that some people were raised from the dead before Christ, but they died again. They are still waiting for the general resurrection, which there is no death after it. The resurrection we mean is the way to eternity that has no end. We know that the life of man on earth is very short and if we compared it with eternity it is nothing. Eternal life is the beautiful dream, which all humanity is dreaming of.

The resurrection raises the value of man and assures that his life does not end with his death. It assures that there is a different life from that earthly one and we will live it by the will of God after the resurrection. Therefore we say in the Creed that we recite in every prayer, *"We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the coming age, Amen."* Thus we may say that the most important thing in the resurrection is what is after the resurrection.

The resurrection proves that the life of man has an extension in the other world, and death is just a stage in his life and a bridge between two kinds of life: one is earthly and the other is heavenly. No doubt that the other life is much better, because it is a life in heaven, high above the material. It is a pure life without sin. Moreover that eternal life is a life of fellowship with God and His angels and saints. The Holy Bible describes it, *"No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* (2 Cor. 2:9).

Mar Isaac the Syrian said, the foolish man. But the life.”

St Paul also said; “ *For gain...I desire to depart and* 1:21,23).

Those who believe in of life but as a new beginning



“The fear of death frightens the heart of righteous desires death as he desires

me, to live is Christ; and to die is be with Christ which is far better" (Phil

eternal life cannot see death as an end and a departure to a new life.

The resurrection has changed the look of people to death. It became a promotion and a strong desire of the righteous. When Christ trampled death by His resurrection, the power of death vanished and the saints feared it no more.

They also do not fear its causes like sickness or the plots of wicked people. But only the sinners who fear death because they did not repent and therefore they fear the judgment of God. Also, sinners who have their sinful lusts, fear death because they do not want anything deprive to them from these lusts.

Resurrection is closely connected with faith. Atheists do not believe in it. The believer believes in God's power to raise the body from the dead. God who created man out of dust and who created the dust out of nothing is able to restore life to the dead body and make it unite to its soul. But atheists do not believe in the existence of the spirit or the life to come or in rewarding and punishment

Faith in the resurrection leads to the life of and virtue. It leads us to be wise, careful because we will give account before God on every thought, word or work or St Macarius once said; “Judge my brother yourself before others judge you.” Unless there is resurrection, people would sink the life of carnal lusts and join the desperate philosophy of the Epicureans, *"Let us and drink because tomorrow we die"* (1 Cor. 15:32).

But those who believe in resurrection and get prepared to it, they control themselves well and train themselves spiritually to straighten their lives and grow in spiritual life and pluck out their shortcomings.

Loving eternity, made the righteous desire something greater and much better than this world. The world and all the things of the world do not satisfy Christians. Inside them there is something longing to the Father and the heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, the saints looked at this world as vanity of vanities and grasping of the wind. They desired the other world, which is full of pure love, holiness, peace and spirituality, in which God fills the hearts of the believers and He becomes all in all in their lives.

Also, resurrection contains comfort and compensation to people of God. He who finds no justice on earth will find his rights preserved in heaven, because the Lord will get justice to the oppressed. He who finds no comfort on earth, like Lazarus, will find rest and glory there, while the rich (unbeliever) man who lived in luxury on earth will be tortured there. So, the resurrection makes a balance in the life of everyone based on the fairness of God.

The resurrection will bring a great joy to all the friends and family members, gathering them together after the death had separated them from each other. Had the life would end at the grave, and there was no resurrection, our beloved ones who departed would have been lost forever.

The resurrection, also, gives us an idea about the unlimited power of God and His love. God is almighty and He can raise the bodies of the dead after they decay and return to dust, and to return them to their original image.

He will give them a glorious body, spiritual body, glorified and transfigured body. *“He will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Phil.3: 21).

God in His love did not want to live alone, so He created other beings to share with Him His glory forever. One of the enjoyments of the resurrection is the defeat of evil and all what sin has caused to man and to crown man with perfect righteousness.



SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 36

Date:

Aim: To review the life of the founder of the Coptic Church, so as to take him as an example of a true witness to the Lord.

Subject: St. Mark

Verse: “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” (2 Ti 4:11).

Reference: R4, Book 1, p.1-7.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. St. Mark is the founder of the Coptic Church, and the whole see of St. Mark in Africa, and thus has a special place in the hearts of us all.
2. He started serving the Lord at a very young age (Mk 14:50-52), in a house which is considered one of the first churches (Ac 12:12).
3. He started his missionary work with Barnabas and Paul (Ac 12:25), then with Barnabas alone (Ac 15:36-41). Eventually, he went by himself to Alexandria and many other cities.
4. St. Mark is the writer of the second gospel, which is believed to be the first written gospel.
5. The popes of Alexandria are the continuous successors of St. Mark. Pope Shenouda III is the 117th pope of Alexandria.
6. Go over the life of St. Mark and his martyrdom (See Reference above).

Spiritual Exercise: Get the class to cooperate in preparing a report about the moving of the relics of St. Mark from Venice to his Cathedral in Cairo in 1968. Have the students use articles, pictures, and eye witness accounts from family members.

Audio & Visual Aids:

❖ A big icon or a picture of St. Mark.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 37

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students that the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was a real event, through explaining the story of the two disciples of Emmaus.

Subject: The Two Disciples of Emmaus

Verse: “And they said to one another ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’” (Lk 24:32).

Reference: Lk 24 & Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.253.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The disciples were so terrified after the death of the Lord, so they locked themselves up, and some even tried to escape Jerusalem altogether.
2. Some of them did not even believe the story of Resurrection after they heard it from the women, and thought they may have seen ghosts not the real Christ alive.
3. Go over the story to show how patient and compassionate the Lord was in dealing with His two disciples, who were leaving Jerusalem rather than waiting to see Him.
4. Emphasize the points, which show that the Lord has a true body (they ate together, they knew Him as He broke the bread from the wounds in His hands).
5. The two disciples believed in the Resurrection and went back right away to tell the others, despite of the dangers of traveling at night.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to search some of the verses and events in the Old Testament, which refer to the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27), and report back next week about their findings.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ An icon of the Resurrection or a picture of the story if available.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 38

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the incredible efforts by the greatest missionary, St. Paul, and the tremendous amount of troubles he endured to proclaim the Gospel to the world. His example should encourage us to do our part in witnessing to others.

Subject: The Missionary Journeys of St. Paul (1)

Verse: “For so the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Ac 13: 47).

Reference: Ac 13-15 & Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.295

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ ordered His disciples to go and preach the word of God to the whole world (Mt 28:19-20, Ac 1:8).
2. After receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples spread all over the world spreading the "Good News."
3. The Book of Acts, which was written by St. Luke in the year 64, lists some of the missionary work of the disciples in the first few years of the life of the church (Ac 1:1-2).
4. St. Paul did the most by preaching to almost all the known world then. His work can be divided into three main missionary works.
5. Go over the main events of the first missionary journey of St. Paul (Ac 13:1-Ac 15:35).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to visit a member of the class whom did not attend today or has been absent recently.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- Show the students a map for the first missionary journey of St. Paul (attached)

CHRONOLOGY OF ST PAUL'S LIFE

<u>AD</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
3		Birth
8	5	Started School
13	10	Learn the Mishna
16	13	Learn the Law
18-23	15	In Jerusalem under Gamalael
23-33	20	In Tarsus as a Rabbi
30		Jesus' Crucifixion
30/34	30	Stoning of Stephen Paul's Conversion
34-37		In Arabia
37		First visit to Jerusalem
37-42		In Tarsus
42		In Antioch
44		Famine – Second visit to Jerusalem
43-47		First Missionary Trip Antioch - Seleucia - Salmis – Paphos – Perge – Antioch of Pisidia - Iconium – Lystra – Derbe – Lystra – Iconium – Antioch of Pisidia – Attalia – Seleucia – Antioch
49		Third Visit to Jerusalem w/ Titus Council of Jerusalem
49-52		First Missionary Trip Antioch – Tarsus – Derbe - Lystra - Iconium - Antioch of Pisidia – Troas – Neapolis – Phillippi – Thessalonica – Beroea - Athens – Corinth { Epistles to Thessalonica } – Ephesus – Cesarea – Jerusalem (Fourth visit)
53-58		Third Missionary Trip Antioch – Ephesus [Epistles to Galatians, Corinth I & II and Romans] – Corinth – Troas – Assos – Mitylene – Rhodes – Patara – Tyre – Cesarea – Jerusalem (fifth & last visit)
58		Arrest in Jerusalem
58-60		Jailed in Cesarea
60/61		Trip to Rome
61-63		Jailed in Rome [Epistles to Collossi, Ephesus, Philippi, & Phlimon]
63		Trial & Release
63-67		Trip to East, Crete and Spain [First epistle to Timothy & Titus]
66/67		Return from Rome – Winter in Nicopolis
67	64	Second time imprisonment in Rome [Second epistle to Timothy] Martyrdom

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 39

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the way that we will be living in heaven with glorious bodies, by explaining the story of the Ascension of the Lord.

Subject: The Ascension with Glorious Body

Verse: “Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil 3:21).

Reference: Mk 16:19-20, Lk 24:44-53, Ac 1:1-11, & Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.277.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ stayed 40 days after His Resurrection on earth, during which He appeared many times to the disciples. He proved to them that He indeed had risen, demonstrating the nature of His glorious body, and teaching them about their upcoming mission of establishing the church all over the world.
2. During His appearance, the Lord showed that the bodies after Resurrection will have a different nature (going through the locked doors), but will have the same features (showing His wounds to Thomas).
3. The Lord ascended in front of the disciples, showing again that the laws of nature on earth will not bind our bodies after resurrection, but rather have a different nature and freedom to conform to the new environment in heaven.
4. The Bible teaches us that we will be transformed in the Resurrection to be conformed to His glorious body (see verse above), and the story of Ascension gives us a glimpse of this fascinating fact.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to write a paragraph about what they would like to do when they first get to heaven.

Audio & Visual Aids:

An icon or a picture of the Ascension

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 40

Date:

Aim:

Subject: Revision

Verse:

Reference:

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

- ❖ This lesson should coincide with the week of final exams.
- ❖ Discuss with the class any topic you feel is most needed such as:
 - 1- How to prepare for the exam
 - 2- Pointers on how to score high in the exam
 - 3- Make sure to guide the students to always pray and ask for God's help
 - 4- The upcoming summer vacation, and how we can enjoy it by doing some beneficial activities.
 - 5- Any questions they may have about the previous lessons.

Spiritual Exercise:

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 41

Date:

Aim: To study the work of the Holy Spirit inside us as a helper and comforter.

Subject: The Holy Spirit the Helper

Verse: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever” (Jn 14:16).

Reference: Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.287

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Jesus Christ promised us on many occasions that He would send the Holy Spirit, after He ascends to heaven, in order to help the church in many ways (Jn 14:18, Ac 1:4-5).
2. The Lord fulfills His promise by sending the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4).
3. The Holy Spirit was behind establishing the church everywhere, by guiding and supporting the disciples in many ways (Ac 9:31).
4. The Holy Spirit was the inspiring force, which led men of God to write the Holy Scripture for the ultimate good, and benefits of humanity (2 P 1:20-21).
5. The Holy Spirit works in the believers in many ways:
 - a. Establish their sons hip to God (Ro 8:14, Jn 3:5-6).
 - b. Guide them to the truth (1 Co 12:3).
 - c. Repentance, renewal and purification (Ez 36:26-27, iCo 6:11).
 - d. Helping in prayers (Ro 8:26).
 - e. Giver of all gifts (1 Co 12:4-11).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize the Gospel of the Third Hour of the Agpya.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ A handout that lists the verses used in this lesson.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 42

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the incredible efforts by the greatest missionary, St. Paul, and the tremendous amount of troubles he endured to proclaim the Gospel to the world. His example should encourage us to do our part in witnessing to others.

Subject: Missionary Journeys of St. Paul (2)

Verse: "And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Ac 16:23-25).

Reference: Ac 15-18 & Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.305

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See comments 1-4 for the lesson, "Missionary Journeys of St. Paul (I)."
2. Go over the main events of the second missionary journey of St. Paul (Ac 15:36-Ac 18:22).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to approach a friend or a family member who does not attend the church or spiritual meetings and help him/her to go back to the Lord.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Show the students a map for the second missionary journey of St. Paul (attached).

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 43

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the great spiritual wealth in the Book of Psalms, and to encourage them to memorize and use parts of it in their prayers.

Subject: Psalm 1

Verse: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful” (Ps 1:1).

Reference: Any commentary on the Bible available in the Sunday school Library, or see attachment.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Book of Psalms was written by many holy people, but mainly by King David.
2. It contains great spiritual prayers and thoughts that cover all aspects of our lives.
3. Because of the great depth and broadness of the Psalms, the church is using them in the hourly prayers (the Agpya).
4. It is of great benefit to us to contemplate on the Psalms so that we can use them more efficiently in our prayers.
5. Go over the text of Psalm 1 verse by verse, and get the students to share their thoughts with the class.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to memorize Psalm 1. Ask them to pick one verse and write their contemplation on it.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Provide the students with a copy of Psalm I in large lettering.

1. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night
3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is:

I. A description of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The LORD knows those that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law which we are bound in duty to obey and the condition of the promise which we are bound in interest to fulfill. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the cause of this world or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice

of our standard and leader is original and fatal; but, if we were right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the companionship of evil-doers, and will not be led by them (V,1): *He walks not in the council of the ungodly, etc.* This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God must say to evildoers, "Depart *from* us (Ps. 119:115), and departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins (1.) He sees evildoers round about him; the world is full of them; they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters, ungodly sinners and scornful. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*- None reaches the height of vice at once. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God and living in the neglect of their duty to him: but they rest not there. When the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be *sinners* that is, they break out into open rebellion against God and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions, and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be *scorners* that is, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others and advocates for Baal.

The word which we translate ungodly signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust and at the beck of every temptation. The word for sinners signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin and set it up as their trade. The *scornful* are those that set *their mouths against heavens*. Thus the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them wherever he sees them. He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them. (1.) *He does not walk in the council of the ungodly*. He is not present at their councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel. He does not consent to them, *nor say as they say*, Lu 23:51. He does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully that we have reason to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. (2.) He *stands not in the way of sinners*; he avoids doing *as they do*; *their way* shall not *be his way*: he *will* not come into it, much less *will* he continue in it, *as the sinner does*, who *sets himself in a way* that is not good, Ps 36:4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are. *That he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions*. He *does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them* (Prov. 7:8), but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, (Prov 4:14, 15). He that would be kept from harm must out of harm's way. (3.) He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their

wickedness and please themselves with the sacredness of their own conscience. He does not associate with those that sit in close cabal to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful, (Ps 69:12). Happy is the man that never sits in it, (Hos 7:5).

2. A godly man, whom he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the guidance of the word of God and makes that familiar to him, (2.) This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly and fortifies him against their temptations. *By the word thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver*, (Ps 17:4.) We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God and with God himself in and by his word. *When thou awakest it shall talk with thee*, (Prov 6:22). We *may judge* of our spiritual state by asking "What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us?" See here, (1.) The entire affection, which a good man has for the law of God: His delight is in it. He delights in it, though it is a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good which he freely consents to, and so delights in, *after the inner man*, (Rom. 7:16,22.) All who are well pleased that there is a God must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance, which a good man keeps up with the word of God: *In that law doth he meditate day and night*; and by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love we love to think of, (Ps 119:97). To meditate in God's word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of

mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things and experience the savior and power of them in our hearts. This we must do *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thoughts should be inter-woven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumbers of every night. *When I awake I am still with thee.*

II. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such. (1.) In general, he *is blessed*, (Ps 5:1). God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessedness's are to him, blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When the psalmist undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy truly happy that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein that blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness (Rev. 22:14) but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty. (2.) His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude (v. 3): *He shall be like a tree, fruitful and flourishing.* This is the effect, (1.) Of his pious practice; he meditates in the law of God, turns that in *succum et sanguinem - into juice and blood*, and that makes him

like a tree. The more we converse with *the word of God* the better furnished we are for *every* good word and work. Or, (2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the lord, and therefore *he shall be like a tree*. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, [1.] That he is planted by the grace of God. These trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is *the planting of the Lord*, and therefore he must in it be glorified. (Isa. 61:3), *The trees of the lord are full of sap* [2.] That he is Placed by the means of grace, here called *the rivers of water* those rivers which *make glad the city* of our God (Ps. 46:4); from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigor, but in secret indiscreet ways. [3.] His practices shall be fruit, abounding to a good account, (Phil. 4:17). To those whom God first blessed he said, Be *fruitful* (Gen. 1:22), and still the comfort and honor of fruitfulness are a recompense for the labor of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the *vineyard*, they bring forth their *fruit* (that which is required of them) *in due season*, when it is most beautiful and most useful, improving every opportunity of doing good and doing it in its proper time [4.] That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay: *His leaf also shall not wither*: As to those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but, if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels thus won shall

never wither. [5.] That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. *Whatever he does*, in conformity to the law, it *shall prosper* and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish our-selves, and one another, to watch against sin and all approaches towards it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness; and, in praying o'er them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work and to furnish us for every -word and work.

4. The ungodly are not so: but we like the chaff, which the wind driveth away. 5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment, or sinners in the congregation of the righteous, 6. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is, I. The description of the ungodly given, (v. 4.1). In general, they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition: *They are not so*. The Septuagint emphatically repeats this: *Not so the ungodly; they are not so*; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground. 2. In particular, whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they are *like the chaff which the wind drives away* the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use

Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly so-ever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered nor looked after more. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but he is coming *whose fan is in his hand* and who will *thoroughly purge his floor*. Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and *fire* of divine wrath (Ps. 35:5), 50 unable to stand before it or to escape it, (Isa. 17:13).

II. The doom of the ungodly read, (v.5.1). They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted: They shall not stand in the Judgment, that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in their own colors, and accordingly every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honor, but their hope will deceive them: They shall not stand in the judgment, so plain will the evidence be against them and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. 2. They will be forever shut out from the society of the blessed. They shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, that is, in the

judgment (so some), that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, (Jude 14; 1) (Cor 6:2) Or in heaven. There will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, (2 Thess. 2:1). The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean nor unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, (Luke 13:27). The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be forever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his minister: may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat; see (Matt. 13:41, 49). That great day (so the Chaldee here calls it) will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here It is sometimes hard to do, (Mal. 3:18).

III. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, (v 6.1.) God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because the Lord knows their way; he chose

them Into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. 2. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends towards ruin and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or we may take it thus, The lord approves and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore, under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore It shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, accordingly as we are or are not accepted of God let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts (Jer. 12:3), knows their secret devotions (Matt. 6:6), knows their character, how much so ever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honor. Let this cast damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favor with our whole heart.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 44

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the incredible efforts by the greatest missionary, St. Paul, and the tremendous amount of troubles he endured to proclaim the Gospel to the world. His example should encourage us to do our part in witnessing to others.

Subject: Missionary Journeys of St. Paul (3)

Verse: “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Ac 20:24).

Reference: Ac 18-23 & Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.313

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. See comments 1-4 for the lesson, “Missionary Journeys of St. Paul (I).”
2. Go over the main events of the third missionary journey of St. Paul (Ac 18:24-Ac 23:11).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to approach a schoolmate and talk to him/her about the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation, and invite them to join the church and the Sunday school class.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Show the students a map of the third missionary journey of St. Paul (attached).

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 45

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students the Biblical foundation for the church position on abstinence, and to encourage them to remain steadfast in their behavior in face of the mounting pressures of the world.

Subject: Seminar: Abstinence

Verse: Do not lay hands on any one hastily, nor share in other people's sins: Keep yourself pure. (ITi 5:22)

Reference: Mt 5:27-30, Gn 39:9,1 Ti 4:8, 2Ti2: 16, Job 31:1,2S11:1-3 & Attachments.

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

- Abstinence, which is refraining from sexual activities until marriage, is a Biblical command. See references and attachment.
- The public school system and the secular media fought this virtue, and for years advocate many different ways to deal with the problems associated with teen sex (e.g. sex education, use of birth control methods)
- All these methods failed to stop the problems of teen pregnancies and the spread of STD's among them.
- Finally, the society represented by the Congress and the government, realized that the Biblical teaching about abstinence is the only solution to address the problem.
- Use the attached material to demonstrate to the students the above points. Emphasize that the Coptic Church does not embrace the virtue of abstinence only, as a conservative church, but rather by all other churches, and the society as a whole.
- Get the students involved by asking them to read to the class parts of the attachments.
- Use the attached real life stories to encourage the students to share with the class some of the stories, which they may know.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to pray that God give them the strength to face the temptations of the devil, and to promise Him to keep themselves pure.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- Give each student a copy of the attachments.

Self – Control and Abstinence For Marriage

What does your Creator have to say about sexual abstinence until marriage?

- 1 Thes. 4:3: "For this is the will of Yahweh, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality (fornication)..."
- Rom. 12:1-2 (KJV): "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Yahweh, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Yahweh, which is your reasonable service."
- Rom. 13:13: "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, nor in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy."
- 1 Cor. 5:11: "But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person ... not even to eat with such a one."
- 1 Cor. 6:9-10: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ... shall inherit the kingdom of Yahweh."

- 1 Cor. 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from Yahweh, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify Yahweh in your body."
- 2 Cor. 12:21: "I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and have not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced."
- Gal. 5:19-21: "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ... and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh."
- Eph. 5:5: "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and Yahweh."
- Phil. 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

1 Tim. 1:9-10:	"Realizing the fact that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for ... immoral men and homosexuals ... and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."
2 Tim. 2:22:	"Flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
1 Pet. 2:11:	"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."
Acts 15:28-29:	"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed from idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."
Rev. 21:8:	"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
Rev. 22:15:	"Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."

All quotes are from the New American Standard Version except for Romans 12:1-2. His name, Yahweh, *American Heritage Dictionary* (and see also "tetragrammaton") has been restored in lieu of the title, God.

Why would He give these commandments about sexual abstinence until marriage?

One answer: We were all designed so that our sex drive, which is a very strong drive, begins when we are approximately twelve, thirteen or fourteen. Yet, we were also designed so that we cannot marry and legally exercise our sex drive until years later, maybe even when in our twenties, when we become economically and emotionally able to be responsible for a family. What happened? Did the Master Designer make a big mistake? If not, what did He have in mind?

Why would He design STD's?

Should not strong character be an ultimate goal of parents for our children? Do we, as parents, design checks and balances for our children to motivate their proper choices, which, in turn, produce their strong character? For example, we want them to learn obedience and caution. So, we tell them (a commandment?) not to play in the street. Stay in the yard. And, we design appropriate, unpleasant consequences if they violate our commandment. Why? Because we do not love or care for them? Or, because we do indeed love and care for them?

What does sexual abstinence until marriage have to do with character building?

If we can learn to control our sex drive—a most basic and early drive, then do we not learn self-control? And, if we develop the character trait of self-control in the most basic of drives, do we then have the foundation for self-control in drugs, alcohol, anger, abusiveness, eating,... etc...?

Why is He interested in your character?

If a young man has learned self-control from the young ladies around him, who use their talents of purity, grace, beauty and charm to motivate him to develop gallantry (courtesy, honesty and respect) toward women, will he then be able throughout life to say "No" to that flirt who comes across his path from time to time? Will he show respect, kindness and honesty toward his wife and family? Will he exhibit gallantry toward women?

If a young man uses his talents to plant high expectations and self-respect in the young women who come across his path, will these young ladies in turn make the best of mothers, wives, and cornerstones in their communities? And, the character traits they learn from him will amply enable them to say "No" to those "handsome flirts" who tempt them to accept anything less than purity for themselves, their families, friends and communities.

Yes, we can use our talents to help others develop strong character for life if we ourselves have developed strong, upright character, especially during our teenage years as we exercise self-control and remain pure for our wedding, as represented by the white wedding gown. Yes, our Creator is very interested in our character. He wants us to set high standards of strength for those around us so that our communities, states and nation will, in

turn, be strong, firmly established, honest, respectful, kind and pure.

How can you receive His righteous character, a character which enables you to always make the right choices for purity and enjoy the resultant benefits?

We harvest that which has been planted. Farmers of our generation use, sow and harvest seed which was passed to them via their forefathers. We likewise have that which our parents have passed to us—good character or poor character, self-control or lack of self-control. Thankfully, many of us have received excellent character traits from our parents. But, if some of us have not received the "seed" of self-control and good character from our parents, what can we do? We can "find a new father" . Impossible? No. We can be born again of The Almighty Himself. We then take on His character with all of its resultant self-control, benefits, and great responsibility. You will be amazed when the "sperm" of His Spirit connects with the "ovum/egg" of your spirit and you become a "new person" with His character. How? Read about it in your Bible:

John 1:12: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of Yahweh, even to those who believe in His name.

Romans 3:23: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Yahweh.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of Yahweh is eternal life in Messiah Yahshua our Lord.

John 3:16: For Yahweh so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Romans 10:9-10: that if you confess with your mouth Yahshua as Lord, and believe in your heart that Yahweh raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

And, what will be one of the first signs from your Creator-Redeemer that you are now His child? He will probably ask you to honor your earthly father and mother even more. And one way, in particular, for you to do this is to ask them to approve, or reject, that special person you think you would like to marry. If you do, this is truly a sign (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16) that you are indeed His child with His character. And, when you plant seeds of honor in your parents by committing your future spouse to them for approval or rejection, might you expect to reap or harvest honor back from them?

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Food for Thought



Imagine what the world would be like if no one EVER had sex outside of marriage.

What would be different? It would possibly eliminate the following:

- **-Teen/crisis pregnancy** [single mothers, juvenile delinquents*, families on welfare, abortion, loss of future plans or desires, emotional stress, broken hearts]
- **-Extra-marital affairs** [divorce, children losing a home with 2 parents, emotional trauma]
- **-Rape** [except the cases of rape between husband and wife]
- **-Pornography** [the actors wouldn't do the act in order to make the movie, it weakens marriages]
- **-Incest**
- **-STD's** [if everyone only ever has one partner, there's nothing to catch.]

Think of how different the world would be without all of these things. No one could possibly measure the effects of the things listed above, especially the secondary effects. The Lord's commands are meant to help us. The more we can follow them, the better it is for us. And even if this cannot be achieved on a global scale, at least you can try to make your life as free of these things as possible.

*70% of all juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes.

Benefits of Abstinence

1. More **self-respect** and more respect for each other.
 2. **Security** that you're not being pursued for sexual reasons.
 3. Greater chance of **faithfulness** in marriage, and **trust** in your partner's ability to control him/herself with other people.
 4. Chance to develop **more depth** in relationships.
 5. **Less worries** regarding pregnancy, birth control, STD's, emotional betrayal, etc.
 6. **Peace of mind and joy** in the knowledge that you are obedient to God in this area of your life.
-

The Steps

[I have written these from my perspective as a Christian woman. But that does not at all mean it only applies to Christians. This is good for ANYONE no matter what his or her religious convictions.]

1. Seriously commit to your decision to be abstinent. This is for YOU, and no one else can do this for you.

2. Acknowledge responsibility for your body and what you do with it. You can control yourself.

3. Only date people who share and respect your views, you need them to work WITH you, not AGAINST you. [This one is ENORMOUSLY important, a definite key to abstinence.]

4. Be sure you're not advertising what's not on the market, dress accordingly. Also, remember, if someone treats you as though you owe them sex, they're wrong. They're treating you no better than a prostitute.

5. Avoid movies, TV shows, web sites, magazines, music, and conversations that dwell on or remind you of sex. "That's ridiculous!" you might be saying. Well, think of it as a BRAIN DIET. The more you feed that part of your brain, the more difficult it will be to remain abstinent. If you were on a diet, you wouldn't hang out in a bakery. That would be foolish. This may sound unrealistic, but it's not as difficult as you might think.

6. Keep your clothes on. If you can't get to it, you can't get in trouble with it. It's that simple.

7. Beware of back rubs naps together, etc. Getting horizontal can inch you closer and closer to things you never planned on doing.

8. Keep control. Drugs and alcohol don't make you less responsible for what you do with your body. YOU still have to bear the consequences of your actions, no matter how unintentional they were.

9. Always keep in mind that this is not forever. You are just holding out now for something better in the future. It'll be worth it.

10. Constantly assess yourself and find your points of weakness, then avoid them. You know best what works for you, and since you are doing this for yourself, you'll try to do it well.

11. Never stop trying. Mistakes might happen, and each day must be approached with a new awareness of your options. There's no such thing as absolute failure or success. Good choices yesterday don't mean you can let down your guard, and bad choices today don't mean tomorrow has no hope.

12. Be realistic about your future with someone. Just because you think you'll marry them now doesn't mean you will. Nothing is guaranteed until you are at your wedding. Emotions and intentions don't justify physical relationships.

13. Remember there is NEVER a point of no return. It's never too late to begin trying or to try again. No matter how many mistakes you feel you've made in your past, each day is another chance.

14. PRAY often for the Lord's strength. You don't have to wonder if this is God's will, you know it is. He's on your side and wants you to succeed, He will do His part, but you must do yours.

Written by a man who has experienced sexual relationships and abstinent relationships. See how he compares them.

The following information was taken from the [Focus on the Family](#) website:

"Thank you, safe sex."

"Here are some of the results of 25 years of addressing this problem with the "safe sex" ideology:

Ten percent of all 15 to 19 year-old females become pregnant each year.

More than 80 percent of pregnant girls under age 17 who give birth and keep their babies end up on welfare, costing society a staggering \$21 billion a year.

Three million new cases of STDs among teens are reported each year.

Up to 29 percent of sexually active adolescent girls have been found to be infected with chlamydeous.

A study of sexually active college women showed that 43 percent acquired HIV infection within a 3-year period."

No amount of birth control can prevent emotional betrayal and hurt.

LA TIMES 3/1/97

Clinton Frees \$250 Million For Sex Abstinence Teaching

Education: Program

Will stress that extramarital intercourse can be harmful. Initiative is mandated in welfare reform legislation.

BY MELISSA HEALY
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON -The Clinton administration on Friday opened the coffers of a \$250-million program designed to teach Americans that engaging in sex before marriage "is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects" and that abstinence from extramarital sex "is the expected standard" of human behavior..

The new initiative, mandated by the sweeping 1996 welfare reform bill and outlined for states by the Department of Health and Human Services on Friday, is expected to spur a nationwide rush to develop courses that teach abstinence.

States are expected to focus their efforts on "those groups which are most likely to bear children out of wedlock," according to the guidelines presented to the states. Based on existing birth data, that focus signals that minority and low-income communities will become of the new teaching efforts.

California would command the largest slice of the newly available funds. Proposed state programs that meet the strict standards of the abstinence-education initiative could receive as much as \$5.7 million in the fiscal year that begins in October.

For the state, which allocated \$60 million for family planning programs fiscal 1996, the new source of funds designed to combat and out-of-wedlock pregnancies could prompt a significant shift in spending. To receive the federal funds provided by the welfare reform legislation, a state must put up \$3 for every \$4 the federal government provides.

Tim Wildmon's op-ed piece in
USA Today, 1/6/98

Abstinence is Answer

OPPOSSING VIEW:

Don't send sagas. Sex outside marriage is just plain wrong.

BY TIM WILDMON

Why are we afraid to teach our youth that sex outside of marriage is wrong? Most of us - liberals and conservatives included - would tell our youth it is better for them to avoid a sexual relationship until they are married. We tell them about sexually transmitted diseases. We tell them about unwanted pregnancies. We explain to them the consequences of their behavior. To this extent, I applaud the efforts of The Urban Institute in its attempt to reach the young male population of our country who often escape responsibility when they get a young girl pregnant. But nowhere in the press release "Involving Males in Preventing Teen Pregnancy" is abstinence mentioned.

However, any form of sex education that does not begin with the premise taught by the Bible - and all major world religions - that sex outside marriage is sinful in the sight of God, is fundamentally flawed. If we remove God and the Bible from the issue, are left without a moral guide to human sexuality.

So then, what's really wrong with any type of sexual activity, including behavior involving unmarried teen-agers? We are left with the cause-and-effect argument alone as our hope for shaping behavior. And what young person ever thought, "It could happen to me"?

This is not to say we shouldn't make clear to young men and women that sex has consequences. But if we ever hope to return to the days of few teen-age pregnancies' abortions and sexually transmitted diseases, then we must have a stronger point of persuasion than just telling them about the potential fallout from sex.

We send a convoluted message to a generation looking for guidance. Even if we encourage them to avoid having sex, we hand them a condom on the way out of class. That's like teaching teens traffic laws in driver education and then handing them a radar detector as they complete the course. Or teaching them to just say no to drugs and giving them a pack of clean needles.

We must recognize that the moral teachings of the Bible - such as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount - have been given to us for the good of the individual and the society. These teachings should be lauded and esteemed, not under-mined, dismissed and ignored.

Tim Wildmon is vice president of the American Family Association. Tupelo. Miss.

COLUMN ONE

Chastity Makes a Comeback

Abstinence-only programs for teens are changing the face of sex education today. While conservatives relish the achievement, liberals are put on defensive.

By LYNN SMITH Timer Staff Writer

YORBA LINDA-Thanks to some inappropriate talking and staple throwing, the uniformed 13- and 14-year-olds at Bernardo Yorba Middle School have been made to sit for roll call. When they are quiet, the teacher introduces today's guest speaker, a friendly looking woman in a short skirt, who also, they are told, suffered the consequences of imperfect behavior.

Her problem, however, was sex.

Some kids look alarmed, others shake their heads in sympathy, as Mary Slosted, 42, leads them through her roller coaster life of childhood molestation, sex at 16 in the back seat of a Volkswagen, two abortions, depression, suicidal thoughts, anorexia and overeating, marriage and divorce and, finally, redemption through sexual abstinence.

After her divorce, she tells the students, she didn't have sex for nine years until she remarried at age 37. Then, she confides to a few snickers, it was an exciting "all-night affair." Slosted represents Choices, a private, Fullerton-based program that teaches students they should wait until they are married to have sex. Programs like Choices, whose 20 speakers brought its message of chastity last year to 17,000 students in Orange County, are changing the face of sex education in the United States.

If teaching sexual abstinence sounded hopelessly dated a few years ago, federal and state governments now bless it. With \$500 million in public funds, hundreds of new programs are instructing children that premarital sex will likely have "harmful psychological and physical effects" and that condoms and other contraceptives are unreliable. Even California, the only state to reject federal money for abstinence-only programs, has funded Choices with about \$400,000.

As such programs proliferate, they are challenging the long-established trinity of sex education--human sexuality, safe sex and birth control. This turn of events has led some religious conservatives to proclaim victory over what they see as the corrosive effects of the '60s. "The sexual revolution came and went and sex lost," declares Leslee Uruuh, president of the National Abstinence Clearinghouse in Sioux Falls, S.D., which has counted about 1,000 abstinence programs nationwide. "This is our moment in time."

In the last two years, the federal government has funded 698 new abstinence-only programs and 21 new media campaigns with state matching funds. In Chicago, where teen pregnancy rates have soared to 40%, a new curriculum adopted last fall teaches abstinence as the best choice, rather than one of several options. Sweetwater, Texas, population 12,000, has created a position for an "abstinence education coordinator."

For the first time in years, liberal sex educators are on the defensive. They insist they have always believed that young people should delay having sex until they are physically and

emotionally mature. But, they warn, the prevalence of teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease makes it imperative to fund programs that tell teenagers how to protect themselves and others.

Because sex education touches on deeply held moral beliefs, it has always been a volatile subject in the United States. Sarah Brown, director of the private, nonpartisan National Campaign to Prevent Pregnancy, identifies some of the issues that such programs inherently raise: "The roles of men and women. Feelings about the sanctity of children. What does sex mean? What's the role of sex in marriage? People start talking about abstinence and all of a sudden they're having a discussion about the American family."

The irony of the current debate is that school programs alone are unlikely to dent problems of teenage sexual behavior and pregnancy, says Brown, whose organization supports research-based efforts through the media and community organizations as well as schools. "In the great cultural landscape of teenagers, they're a very small part. Most teachers who offer them are not very well trained. The notion that six hours in two years can make a huge dent on something as important as adolescent pregnancy is naive."

Lobbyist Instrumental in Leading Movement

If there were an architect of the abstinence-only movement, it would be a rumpled and graying 47-year-old lobbyist named Robert Rector. A policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank based in Washington, Rector has focused on illegitimacy as a source of social problems and is considered a leading thinker among religious conservatives. In 1994, when the Republicans swept into Congress poised to reform welfare, one senator's aide recalled, "Robert had a proposal in hand, and abstinence was apart of it."

Conservatives' concern about family breakdown was running so high, says Jennifer Marshall, a former colleague at Heritage, that "a lot of us who worked on the welfare reform bill really felt that whether or not people went back to work was not even as important as the status of marriage and the family."

When Sen. Lauch Faircloth (R-N.C.) approached Rector to help draft the 1996 federal Welfare Reform Act, the policy analyst suggested the bill set aside funds to teach that sex outside marriage is wrong.

"We were looking for programs helping children practice self-control when they're minors," Rector says, "but also helping them understand the role of self control in marriage in their adult lives. This is really not an issue solely about what teenagers are doing in the back seats of cars. It's an issue about the breakdown of adult relationships between men and women."

Rector says that when he surveyed school programs that stressed abstinence, he found "essentially condom-delivery programs with a little bit of abstinence tacked on to the front. We felt we had to create some true abstinence programs to see what they could actually do."

Led by Rector, representatives from the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council, a Washington-based family values advocacy group and others worked for months to draft tightly worded

language that would prevent liberal-minded administrators from using potential funds for comprehensive sex education programs.

The measure said programs can receive money only if they teach the social, psychological and health gains to be realized by refraining from sexual activity; that abstinence is the expected standard for all school-age children; that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity; and that sexual activity outside marriage is likely to have "harmful physical and psychological effects." Funds cannot be used to endorse birth control.

Tucked into the miscellaneous Title IX of the welfare legislation, the item escaped the scrutiny of sex education lobbyists, who were surprised to see the proposal appear from the oversight and investigations subcommittee of the House Commerce Committee.

"This was in one of the dead-of-night provisions," says James Wagner, president of Advocates for Youth, an advocacy group that favors comprehensive programs. "There were no hearings on this prior to enactment."

At first, members of Planned Parenthood urged state legislators to "just say no" to the money. Nevertheless, in the first two years of the five-year program, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded matching grants to all 50 states. Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana, Indiana and Georgia adopted the provisions into their own education laws.

Led by the Democrats, California lawmakers rejected the abstinence-only program, partly because its own abstinence-only program was found to be ineffective and because the state already has a \$70-million initiative in place to reduce teen pregnancy. Half of California's two-year share of the matching grants, \$5.75 million, is about to be returned to the federal government, according to state sources.

Official reviews show that the federal funds have set in motion moderate as well as extreme elements. In Arizona, programs aim to "change a culture" about out-of-wedlock sexual activity and target adults up to age 45 as well as children. On the other hand, Massachusetts has used the funds exclusively for an advertising campaign targeting preteens and parents.

In Utah, even a Planned Parenthood affiliate has tapped into the money for a school program called "Growing Up Comes First," that teaches "maturation" issues to 10- through 12-year-olds and their parents. Lynda Ion, director of Planned Parenthood's community services, says the program stresses respect, self-knowledge and candor about sexual issues. "We're not going to tell the kids they're going to hell."

Long-Term Impact of Sex Education Unclear

Sex educators like to say that everyone gets sex education; if not from the classroom, from the informal curriculum of parents and friends, movies and TV, the lunchroom and the playground. "The question is never sexuality education yes or no," says Debra Haffler, president of the Sexuality Information Education Council of the United States. "The question is whether it's left to chance or taught by trained teachers in a comprehensive program that covers a range of attitudes and skills that young people need."

Still, the long-term effect of formal sex education is unclear because what passes for sex education can differ radically from state to state, not to mention teacher to teacher. Depending on where they live and the prevailing political winds, children might still be hearing biological facts

from the gym coach, practicing refusal skills in a Planned Parenthood class or going down to Safeway to buy condoms as a homework assignment.

No matter what the course, teachers' values or embarrassment can't help but "ooze out of their pores," says sex educator Lynda Madaras. As a result, she says, teenagers rarely hear what advocates in both camps say they need most: how to craft meaningful relationships from the complex ambiguities of everyday life.

As the age gap between puberty and marriage has grown over the years, most sex educators have come to see sexual activity among young people as inevitable. Recent surveys, however report that previously unprecedented rates for sexual activity among teenagers have started to drop. Now, less than half of all high school students have sex, the average age of first intercourse was 16.3, up from 15.8 in 1997, according to the Durex Global Survey. Teen pregnancies, abortions and births have also declined. On the other hand, 3 million new cases of STDs are diagnosed among teenagers each year, and half of all new HIV cases occur among those under age 25.

"In general," says Madaras, "kids today who have it together, have it a lot more together. But a lot more kids are slipping through the cracks than ever before."

Contrary to popular images, teen sex is rarely sexy, Madaras says. Some have sex to be popular; to achieve status, or to prove they're not gay. "For most kids," Madaras says, "having sex is like holding their nose and jumping into an ice-cold pool."

Some liberal sex educators admit that abstinence is a subject many students need to hear more about. Dr. Drew Pinsky, co-host of the raunchy and irreverent MTV and syndicated radio show "Loveline," champions' abstinence as the best choice for teenagers' emotional health. Most girls under age 18, he says, are not prepared for an intense emotional bond. When they have sex too soon, they risk depression in addition to pregnancy and disease. Young men, he says, can become clingy if they have sex before they are "fully developed and

Thousands of Teens Vow To Wait

HALF A MILLION TEENAGERS are expected to make public pledges to stay sexually pure until marriage as part of a nationwide abstinence campaign called True Love Waits.

Originally sponsored by the Baptist Sunday-School Board, the year long campaign has attracted youth leaders from several denominations and Para-church organizations including: Assemblies of God, Church of Cleveland, Pentecostal Church of God, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, The Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth for Christ, Youth with a Mission, Reach out Ministries, Students Discipleship Ministries and Son

Life Ministries. In addition, well known Christians authors James Dobson and Josh McDowell and contemporary Christian recording artists Michael W. Smith, DC Talk, Petra and Lisa Beville have expressed support for the campaign.

As part of the campaign teenagers are asked to sign covenant cards first before their parents, then in a more public setting at church. The covenant card states: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter a covenant marriage relationship. "The program also includes a five-step approach of family worship times, special church services, associational and state rallies, and a display of signed covenants at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Florida, in June 1994.

The campaign, begun in April, grew out of a concern "that adults were unintentionally communicating a message to teenagers that we, as adults, had given up on them and their generation," said Richard Ross, project coordinator. "Unintentionally, we had communicated that we expect them to be sexually active. The problem with that is that teenagers experience self-fulfilling prophecies."

Ross says the campaign sends another message to teenagers that "you're perfectly capable of making choices and making promises." He said it would give teenagers who choose to stay away from sex the knowledge that they are not alone.

For those whom already been sexually active, the message is that God forgives and that they can start over with a clean slate vowing to remain sexually pure, "from this day forward."

During a campaign in Oklahoma, one teenage girl told a crowd at a True Love Waits rally that she already has a deep love for her husband, though she doesn't yet know who he is, "I have written him sealed letter which says I love him enough to wait for him I will give it to him on our wedding night," she said.

Another girl said the success of her marriage would not be the right man, but "me being the right person."

CHRISTIAN MUSICIANS SUPPORT

As part of the campaign, a group of contemporary Christian musicians are producing a 10-song audiocassette focusing on God's original design for sexuality.

Featured on the tape, entitled "True Love Waits," are original compositions "I Don't Want It," by Christian rappers DC Talk: "Old Enough to Know by Michael W. Smith:" Love," by Petra and others. The tape was scheduled for release October 15.

"We've got to understand that the sex game is not game. It's Life and death now," Petra lead singer John Schlitt said. The father of four added, "I'm scared for my kids. If we don't get serious about {this issue}, then who will?"

INFORMATION

The Baptist Sunday-School Board has a toll free number for more information about True Love Waits – 1800-LUV-WAIT. The campaign kit, audiocassette for Christian sex education resources can be ordered for \$3 by calling the BSSB customer service line 1-800-458-2772

LA Times
Sunday, January 08, 1994

Youth at Baptist Convention Pledge Chastity Till Marriage

ANAHEIM – More than a thousand teenagers at a Baptist convention signed cards vowing to remain virgins until marriage, joining other youths nationwide who have taken similar pledge of celibacy.

Virginity is the greatest gift you can give your future mate Seth Rodriquez, 17, said last week to-cheers from other teenagers of the Southern Baptist State Youth Conference.

Rodriquez was one of about 1,200 convention goers who signed “True Love Waits” cards pledging themselves to God and promising to remain chaste.

Other churches and organizations have joined the program. By July the coalition hope to gather 500,000 signed pledges for display in Washington.

Rick Parll, Youth Pastor at El Torro Baptist Church. Said he sees the campaign as a way to get youths thinking about the sacredness of their sexuality.

“My goal is to get them to make sexual choices now instead of waiting until they’re in the back seat of a car,” he said.

-Associated Press

Christians Society Today
January 1994

Girls regret sexual activity

According to ABC’s Primetime Live, sexually active teenage girls wish they were virgins again. The Prime time news magazine aired a segment on their September 9 show dealing with epidemic of teen pregnancies.

Sawyer cited statistics (no sources) that by the end of the ninth grade 33% of American girls have had sexual intercourse and 70% by the end of high school. She supported this contention with interviews of several sexually active teenage girls some as young as the eighth grade and having as many as 10 different partners.

At the end of the segment, Sawyer reported, “every single one of these sexually active girls confided with us they wish they’d said ‘no’.”

USA Weekend
3/25-27/94

Top Athletes tell Kids to Save Sex for Marriage

Some of the world’s most talented athletes have a message for kids across the nation: *Save sex for marriage*. Athletes for Abstinence includes basketball’s A.C. Green and David Robinson; football’s Reggie White, Darrell Green and Barry Sanders; and Olympian Dave Johnson. In addition to speaking to student groups, Athletes for Abstinence has produced a rap documentary video entitled *It Ain’t Worth It*.

Catholics join Baptists in abstinence program

The two largest religious bodies in the United States are both now actively involved in a nationwide campaign designed to encourage teenagers and college students to remain sexually pure until marriage. (See AFA Journal, 11-12/93)

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc. recently announced

Boys Too, Should Pledge To Wait for Sex

Dear Ann: I’d like to comment on your column about the virginity movement. In general I agree with ER’s letter and our reply endorsing the movement. I along with you, hope it can extend to teenagers of all religions.

I found it odd, however, that the parents give their daughters gold bands to wear and ultimately present to their husbands on their wedding night as a token of their virginity why only the girls? Isn’t virginity just as important for a boy? What token of his virginity will he bring to

his bride? This part of the movement smacks the old double standard and weakens the entire concept.

-J. S., Dayton Ohio.

Dear Dayton: You've made a good point. Here's another reader who picked up on it also offered an excellent suggestion.

Dear Ann: I was interested in the concept of "true Love Waits" and wish to comment. Families need to take part in public ceremony in order for their children to take the no-sex-until-marriage pledge.

I made my son a pledge ring out of colored thread from a pattern that came in the mail. He listened while his dad and I explained why we waited as until marriage to have sex, and then he made a pledge that he, too, would wait as he put my homemade ring on his finger. That ring will be given to the woman he chooses to be his bride.

This was done in the privacy of our home with no religious overtones. We made our own rules based on the fact that we are intelligent, civilized human beings.

-J. M., Citrus Heights, Calif..

Dear J.M.: Beautiful. Thank you – and thanks, too, to all who wrote. The mail was truly uplifting.

LA Times
Monday, September 18, 1996
DEAR ABBY: Abigail Van Buren

Many Teenagers Find It Easy to Say No To Sex

Dear Readers: Last Wednesday I devoted my column to the third in a series of responses I received from readers when I asked them to say no to sex. Today we'll hear from the teenagers.

Dear Abby: I'm a 13-year old girl and I too am being pressured to have sex. The boy has been my best friend for as long as I can remember. I know I should wait, but it's hard to say no. I tell him, "Being a teenager is tough enough. I don't want to risk STDs or getting pregnant." Girls shouldn't have sex until they're ready to commit. It makes life too complicated. I'm signing my name out please don't print it.

-WANTS TO WAIT
Puyallup, Wash.

Dear Abby: I'm only 13, and I said no before the guy even asked me. I told him. "I'm too young and I'm not planning on having sex until I'm married." With Aids out there, that's a good plan to me and I encourage other teenagers to wait.

-13 YEARS OLD
Milwaukee.

Dear Abby: I'm a 16-year-old virgin. I have been asked several times if I would have sex. I asked each boy, "If I were to get pregnant, whom would you deal with it? Would you drop everything to support the baby?"

A lot of girls I know think they'll lose their guy if they say no. If that 's how it is, what do they think he'll do when he hears they're pregnant or have a disease? When I know my baby will be brought up in a loving home with the help of a good father, that's the day I'll take the leap and not before

- CARRIE FROM
Knoxville, Tenn.

Dear Abby: I'm a teenage girl getting ready to enter college, and I've had plenty of experience saying no. The most important thing to remember when you say no is to really mean it. Be serious and if you have to leave the location. You'd be surprised how many guys understand when you say no.

This is probably what your parents and teachers have already told you. It's all true it really works But only if you speak plainly. If a guy doesn't stick around after you say no, he was probably only after sex in the first place.

- SAYING NO
Hampton, VA.

Dear Abby: My ex boyfriend asked me for my sex on many occasions, and every time I had the same answer "NO" How did I do it? By sticking up for myself and what I believe in. By knowing I did not have to if I did not want to; by realizing I was not prepared for such an intimate relationship; and by asking myself, "Do I really want this?"

Some other advice for other teens like me; If you are doing it for him, because he supposedly wants to show his love for you don't sacrifice yourself for his satisfaction. It's not worth it.

Now advise for parents; Please talk to your daughters about sex. Tell them they don't need to do it with a guy to prove their love. We need your assurance more than anything. You may use my name.

-DAISY YOKLEY

Dear Abby: I'm a 19-year-old virgin and plan to remain a virgin until I'm married.

When my boyfriend and I began dating, I told him upfront my views on premarital sex. He didn't take me seriously at first and tested me, which led to a big fight. He now understands that I do not believe in sex before marriage and he respects me for it.

My advice is honest, open and straightforward about your vows in the beginning so there will be no misunderstanding, and if he can't accept it- dump him.

- A PROUD VIRGIN

Dear Abby: I'm a teenage girl getting ready to enter college, and I've had plenty of experience saying no. The most important thing to remember when you say no is to really mean it. Be serious and if you have to leave the location. You'd be surprised how many guys understand when you say no.

This is probably what your parents and teachers have already told you. It's all true it really works But only if you speak plainly. If a guy doesn't stick around after you say no, he was probably only after sex in the first place.

- SAYING NO

Dear readers: Next Wednesday I'll devote another entire column to this important subject. Stay tuned.

- To reach Abigail Van Buren Write to
Dear Abby
PO Box 69440
LA CA 90069

LA Times
Wednesday, September 11, 1996
DEAR ABBY: Abigail Van Buren

Fifty Ways to Say 'NO' to a Lover

Dear Readers: Last Week I devoted two days to wonderful responses I received from readers telling how hey just said "no" to sex. Today I'm devoting my column to more of responses readers sent regarding this important question.

Dear Abby: How should teenage girls say "no" to sex? My answer: Be honest.

After seeing many of my friends regret losing their virginity, I decided I wasn't ready to have sex, and if that's what he was looking for, he should go elsewhere.

Well, he stayed. And now, two years later – we're engaged to be married. I'm living proof that honesty is the best policy.

-BETH PAILTHORPE
Marietta, Ga.

Dear Abby: I thought you might enjoy my daughter Aimee's way of saying "no" it was printed in the December 1994 issue of reader's Digest.

While attending a small, conservative college, my daughter worked as a veterinarian's assistant. When she transferred to Texas A&M University in College Station, I began worrying about how she would deal with the raging hormones of the young men on campus.

"No problem, Mom," she said. "I always introduce my dates to my cat, Ralph. Then mention that I neutered him myself."

Her father's comment about our daughter's method was, "she probably doesn't have many second dates."

-LINDA BARNETT
Irving, Texas

Dear Abby: I joined the Air Force when I was 19, so I got a lot of practice saying “no.” Most of the guys I dated said they didn’t believe the rumors that I didn’t put out, and I knew that some of them dated me just to prove to themselves that they could score.

Once the conversation got around to sex, I was pretty straightforward and said I didn’t believe in premarital sex. Sometimes the guys would get angry, but they never pushed me. A couple of guys called me a tease, but in the military any girl who doesn’t put out is either a “tease” or a ‘lesbian.” That gets the mate ego off the hook for his failure to conquer.

My most successful phrase was used when he kissing get out of hand. I would say, “I have stop signs, not yield signs.” And I followed it with, “When I say an area of anatomy is off limits, I mean, don’t go there.” It usually got a laugh and eased what could have become a tense situation.

A couple of years ago I ran into one of my old boyfriends, and as we were catching up he asked if I had given in before marriage. He then told me that he’d thought about me often throughout the years, as he compared others’ morals to mine. Then he said he really respects me and wished more girls were like that.

I know you’ll get thousands of responses, but if you print mine, please sign me...

-NO REGRETS

Dear Abby: My standard replies to a boy who wanted sex was, “Do you want to be a father?” That usually stopped him cold. Then I would say, “I don’t want to be a mother either.” And that was usually the end of it.

Once in a while I’d run into someone who carried a condom in his wallet. Then, I just had to give a firm “NO.”

I have passed on this strategy to several girls over the years and they’ve always thanked me for the tip. I hope this helps your readers.

**-JANIS MINER
Pittsford, NY**

Dear readers: Next Wednesday I’ll devote my September 18 column to more responses from readers. Stay tuned.

- To reach Abigail Van Buren Write to
Dear Abby
PO Box 69440
LA CA 90069

LA Times
Wednesday, September 11, 1996
DEAR ABBY: Abigail Van Buren

Boys Need Lessons in Saying No, Too

Dear Abby: I have been reading your letters on how to say no to sex, and have been cutting them out to share in a few years with my daughter. You printed some great one-liners and comebacks to use as need. However, they were primarily addressed to women. Also urgently needed by men and teenage boys is arsenal of comebacks to counter the usual locker room banter

of, "Did you score last night?" or, "You mean you've ever gone to bed with a girl?" Peer pressure for young today is greater than Please ask your readers provide my son with some verbal ammunition to approach and finesse this pressure with a sense of humor-and his dignity intact.

- MOTHER OF A PRE-ADOLESCENT

Dear Mother: Tell your son that because a classmate claims to have sexual experience doesn't necessarily mean he has. It is not unusual for a boast to be untrue.

One-way to handle the question, "Did you score last night?" might be to respond, "I didn't score last night because I didn't play last night. But if I had-I would not talk about it."

You are not the only reader who voiced concern about sexual pressure on teenage males. Read on:

Dear Abby: I appreciated the letters you printed from people about how to say no to sex. I work with a teen pregnancy prevention program as a certified Family Life Educator and I assign your column to the group for discussion and ideas. Teens appreciate your "real" approaches to their issues. Please ask for letters from guys on how to say "no." Guys are the other half of the problem when it comes to unwanted teen pregnancy, and they need support and role models to behave responsibly. There are advantages for both sexes in having the courage and confidence to behave responsibly when it comes to sex, Think of the positive feedback that might be generated from a column with the head, "How Macho Guys Say 'No' to Sex".

- Bette Schloesser
RN BSN, Marshfield, Wis.

Dear Ms Schloesser and all of the readers who wrote to Echo similar sentiments: I would be pleased to hear what young men have to say on this important subject.

Dear Abby: I am disturbed that the responses to your "just say no to sex" column were exclusively from women, To me, this one-sided representation only serves to reinforce the double standard. When are young men going to take responsibility for their own sexual behavior? Why are young women still burdened with the sole responsibility of decision-making when it comes to sex? And finally, why are we not hearing from teenage males who are virgins?

Abby, young men need to be taught to respect women regardless of their virginal status. Young people in general need to hear that there is only one "first time." When young people feel self-worth arid self-respect, they in turn respect and value others, which helps them make responsible choices. If you have not already asked young men to share their views, I suggest you do.

- KATHY KIRK MALTERS
MSW, Brainerd, Minn.

Dear Ms. Kirk-Malters: The original question posed to my readers was "how do you just say no?" I asked both sexes to respond, commenting that people of all ages (and both sexes) also struggle with this dilemma. The responses came almost exclusively from women and girls, offering advice only for girls.

To reach Abigail Van Buren Write to
Dear Abby
PO Box 69440
LA CA 90069

LA Times
Sunday, October 20, 1996
ANN LANDERS: Los Angeles Times

Dear Ann: May I respond to the teenager from Tenaflly, NJ who was not impressed by the Sex Ed Videos she saw in school? She said they were stupid. I am educator for Planned Parenthood and teach pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention in public schools. In my classes, I quote a study commissioned by seventeen magazine and the Ms. Foundation that is most revealing. While the teen from Tenaflly is correct when she says girls can be extremely aggressive, here is what the study found:

After interviewing 500 males and 500 females nationwide, ages 13 to 21, 73% of the girls said they would have sex but only because their boyfriends pressure them. Of the 67% of the girls behave aggressively because they want to get asked out, but when it comes to sex, it is the boys who are pushing for it.

Meanwhile, the girls complain that they get the bad reputation and the boys are considered studs. The study also showed that boys are pressured by their peers to have sex and are considered wimps if they don't score. Another startling statistic: One in five people will get a sexually transmitted disease by age 21. I find this scary in the light of the fact that teens are now one of the at-risk groups for getting HIV/AIDS.

Please, Ann, tell every teenager who reads your column to keep those sexual impulses in check. They have many years ahead during which they can be appropriately sexually engaged. For now, they should cool it and just enjoy being kids.

- L. W., Sacramento

Dear Sac: Thanks for a solid message. And now I'd like to add a word to my teenage readers who are sexually active. Please be aware that protection, which is of the utmost importance, is not always totally reliable. Condoms, the most convenient and most often used method, are not 100% fail safe. They can break or come off. The failure rate is about 17%. So dear teenage readers keep these figures in mind when you find yourself going into hormonal over drive. It's better to be safe than sorry.

Dear Ann: My husband has been a pastor for more than 15 years and has officiated at dozens of weddings. He has no set fee for his services and simply tells a couple that whatever they wish to give him will be appreciated.

“Richard” spends a great deal of time preparing his remarks, not to mention the time spent at the rehearsal and the actual wedding. It is obvious that many weddings cost a small fortune, what with the flowers, music, photographers, refreshments, champagne and five tier weddings cake.

When the wedding is over, more often than not, my husband is not paid for his services. In some cases, he doesn’t even get a thank-you note from the bride and groom.

LA Times
Friday, November 22, 1996
DEAR ABBY: Abigail Van Buren

If it’s Worthwhile it’s Worth the Wait

Dear Abby: I lost my virginity in my mid-teens to a young boy who then informed me that he already had a girlfriend. In the 15 years since, I’ve had dozens of failed relationships. They were all characterized by the same mistake becoming intimate too quickly.

To cope with the pain, I wither jumped into new relationships to forget or abstained from them for years. Alternating between pain and loneliness is not much of a choice.

I’m well educated and pretty sharp about a lot of things, but I was slow to slow down. While my own painful experiences cannot be erased, perhaps parents and young people can be made aware that the music, media and the lack of family involvement carry our relationships along at speeds detrimental to our physical emotional and mental well being.

Last month I began dating a delightful man. We have spent many hours talking and laughing without revealing more about ourselves than makes us comfortable and we have done no more than hold hands. It is by far the sweetest relationship I have ever known.

- **Wiser Now**

Dear Wiser: It takes courage to examine the reasons we behave the way we do, and you are to be commended for it. That which is truly worthwhile requires time and effort.

To reach Abigail Van Buren Write to

Dear Abby
PO Box 69440
LA CA 90069

LA Times
Wednesday, September 25, 1996
DEAR ABBY: Abigail Van Buren

Forget Diplomacy - Just Say No

Dear Readers: Over the past three weeks I devoted each Wednesday's column to the intelligent and heartfelt responses I've received since I asked readers to tell me how they just said "no" to sex. Today's is the last in this series.

Dear Abby: How should a girl diplomatically say "no"? She can say, "Take me home and we'll see if it's OK with my parents." Or, "Let's wait until I get my blood test back." Both suggestions should cool the young man's ardor.

But if the situation has progressed so far that sex is the next step, the girl has already gone far beyond the point where she should have said no, and there's no longer a way to be diplomatic or pleasant.

I offer some suggestions on what to say then, and the young lady should speak loud and clear: "Take me home. What's the matter with you? My daddy will make you a soprano!" "When were you last checked for sexually transmitted disease?" "Did you know my father likes to come out here and see who's making out?"

I hope these suggestions prove helpful. Hang in there, Abby. You make the world a better place. I'm an avid fan, but please don't print my name, I'm...

- A MALE Dentist
IN Missouri

Dear Abby: Our daughter has given "promise ring" to her three daughters. Each ring was presented on an evening when one of the boyfriends was present. When each girl accepted it, she made a promise to her parents; to us (her grandparents) and to God that she would not have sex before marriage. They never take the ring off.

Perhaps this is simplistic, but a girl can display her ring and repeat the promise she made, should the need arise.

- Geri Waltman
Grand Meadow, Minn.

Dear Abby: I'm 24 year old. I've been pregnant and have had an STD. I know firsthand how difficult it is to say "no." It's not a matter of being rude. It's a fear of not being liked if you don't have sex, not being aggressive enough to refuse and wanting someone to make you feel "loved." Abby, it's scary to say no, especially if you have low self-esteem. But I've finally learned to do it. Sometimes I still feel self-conscious-and scared too. But that's natural. What's not natural is being 16 or 17 or 18 and being alone and pregnant or having AIDS.

It's OK to be rude if you have to be, and it's also OK to say "no." If you feel like you can't say "no," that's when you have to muster up yourself confidence and say, "Who cares if this person doesn't like me? I like myself and care enough about myself enough to refuse."

- SAY YES TO YOURSELF

In Minnesota

Dear Abby: My advice to women and girls who want to avoid unwanted sexual encounters: tell guys up front that you're not ready for sex. Avoid sexual situations. Stay out of bedrooms, back seats and dark corners. Use your head and stick with the group. Don't use alcohol or drugs, or the drug will be making the decision-not you. Be as rude as you have to be and don't worry about it. Your long-range plans for yourself are important-and they'll be better served if you tagged "rude" rather than "easy."

Listen to me: I made every mistake in the book, and my children and I paid terrible price for it. You young women are our future. You are beautiful. You are important. Your lives are worthwhile. Take care of your lives and the children you will someday have, Please!

- LEARNED THE HARD WAY

Dear Readers: Thank you for your eloquent and caring letters I was touched by how many of you wrote to share your experiences in the hope that they might help someone else. I regret that space limitations prevent me from printing them all.

To reach Abigail Van Buren Write to
Dear Abby
PO Box 69440
LA CA 90069

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 46

Date:

Aim: To give the students a great example of a youth that lived in a foreign land under tremendous pressure, but he stood fast in his faith in God, and in following His commandments

Subject: Joseph in Egypt

Verse: “There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gn 39:9).

Reference: Gn 39-50

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. A quick review of the life of Joseph until he ended up in Egypt.
2. Emphasize the conditions under which he lived in Egypt: a wealthy country, in a wealthy house, a young man alone, a slave, surrounded by a corrupt society with totally different morals.
3. Show how the above conditions would give excuses for many, but not for Joseph, who refused to commit sin because of his strong belief in God and His commandments (see verse above).
4. Explain how Joseph initially suffered in prison, because of his obedience to God's commandment
5. Show that God will always come through with His help to His children in due time, and in a great way

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to use the verse above throughout the week whenever they are tempted by the devil (the underlined part).

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Find some pictures showing a typical mansion and a prison during the time of pharaohs.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 47

Date:

Aim: To educate the students about the position of Christianity on protecting the environment, thus encouraging them to do their share.

Subject: Christianity and Protecting the Environment

Verse: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” (Gn 2:15).

Reference: See Attachment

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. God created the earth and all what in it in the best shape to fit the life of human beings, “and God saw that it was good.” (Gn 1:25)
2. God cares about His creation. (Mt 6:26-30)
3. God entrusted us, being the crown of His creation, to take care of the whole creation by protecting and preserving the environment to ensure their survival. (Gn 2:19)
4. God taught Adam and eve the nature and characteristics of the animals so that people can appreciate and use them wisely. (Gn 2:19)
5. Go over the material in the attachment.

Spiritual Exercise: Arrange for a trip to an aquarium, a botanical garden, or a zoo. Make sure to make the students aware of the amazing beauty and greatness of all of God's creation

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Show the students some pictures of extraordinary scenic places, exotic animals or plants.



The Church and Contemporary Social Issues

H.G. Bishop Serapion
Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services

THE ENVIRONMENT

God created the heavens and the earth, with all the living creatures therein, He then created man as the crown of all this creation. After God completed the Creation, He described what He made as being "very good". The beauty of the Creation is not only in the greatness of the created beings, of whom man is foremost, but also in the order and harmony which God placed between these creatures and themselves, and between them, nature and the surrounding environment.

God brought the beasts and the birds to Adam for him to name them (Genesis 2:19). They included what are currently called savage beasts and ravenous birds. There was no fear or enmity between man and the living creatures, because Adam had not yet fallen into sin. God gave Adam the responsibility of caring for the earth and looking after it. God also created the plants and arranged the waters (Genesis 1:5, 6).

This beautiful picture of the relationship between man, nature and living creatures, which the divine inspiration presents to us in the book of Genesis, has not continued. Man disobeyed God, and as a fruit of this disobedience, the earth became cursed and began to produce thorns. Enmity entered the relationship between man and the creatures, of whom the serpent was foremost (Genesis 3:15). Since this time, the struggle between man and the environment in which he lives began, whether it was with nature, with respect to the weather, the waters, the rivers and the winds, or with respect to the other living creatures.

Through the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave us the image of man's relationship with the environment in its original image. The Holy Bible presents to us the image of nature which submits itself and serves the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ is the friend of nature, He cares for it, directs it and uses it in His teachings and in His works.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples, and all those who believe in Him, the authority over nature (Psalm 16:18). The proclamation of

salvation is a proclamation to return to the original relationship between man and the environment. That is why it is not amazing that the Lord Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to spread the joyful news to all creation, by saying, "...preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The history of the Church presents to us many examples of saints who lived in peace with savage living creatures in harsh, natural circumstances. These people, however, presented their lives with holiness, as an example of the original image of the relationship between man and the environment.

The subject of the relationship of man with the environment is a subject with which the whole world is concerned these days. Topics involving crops and agriculture, such as: environmental pollution, deterioration of the ozone layer, drought, the rise of the earth's temperature and genetic engineering, preoccupies the interest of the world and expresses the imbalance which is occurring in the relationship between man and the environment.

While we are on the verge of the twenty-first century, the world senses its great need for introducing a system to organise its interaction with the environment. The Church is invited to assist the world to know and conform to the divine system which God placed for this relationship.

The world expressed its disturbance and concern for systematising its relationship with the environment through the calling of a global conference that was organised by the United Nations in June, 1991 in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, under the name of 'United Nations Conference on Environment and Development'.

The leaders of over one-hundred nations gathered at this meeting, which was called 'The Earth Summit', under the shadow of the famous statue of Christ the Saviour, which stands at the top of the city of Rio De Janeiro. They discussed

the dangers that threaten the future of the Earth as a result of what man does to his surrounding environment.

More than 1400 representatives of non-governmental organisations also attended the conference. Its events were covered by more than 9200 journalists, which made it the largest global conference in history. At a venue close to where the Earth Summit was held, representatives of over seven thousand national organisations from all over the world, who are concerned with the issues of the environment, held a Global Forum, expressing the concern of the nations over these issues.

During this international event, the Church had a clear presence. Through the World Council of Churches, the Orthodox and Protestant Churches contributed in the plenary meetings for

this Summit, which lasted for two years. Representatives from the World Council of Churches attended the Summit amongst the non-governmental organisations.

The World Council of Churches organised an Ecumenical meeting in Rio De Janeiro during the meeting of the Earth Summit, to transfer Christianity's point of view on these issues. One-hundred and seventy-six people from fifty-four nations participated in this Ecumenical meeting, representing seventy Churches, amongst which was the Coptic Orthodox Church. As for the Roman Catholic Church, it participated formally in the Earth Summit through the Vatican.

What happened at this international meeting? What is the role of Christianity in environmental issues? This will be the subject of our upcoming discussion in the next issue.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 48

Date:

Aim: To give the students a great example of youth that lived in a foreign land under tremendous pressure, but they refused to bend their beliefs, and were eventually triumphant with the help of God.

Subject: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

Verse: “Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!’” (Dn 3:28).

Reference: Dn 1-3, Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.321

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The three youth and Daniel were captured by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and were sent to live in the king's palace.
2. The king wanted to prepare them for high positions in his kingdom by training them in all aspects of life in the royal court.
3. Explain the great temptations they were subjected to in the palace: they were the select few who were brought from a conquered land of Judea; they were young, strong, and handsome, living in a faraway land from their nation, living in some of the wealthiest and most lavish palaces on earth, with the promise of great jobs and bright futures not to be matched anywhere.
4. Also explain the grave consequences if they would fail or refuse to obey the orders: immediate death by a ruthless ruler.
5. Nevertheless, the three youth and Daniel gave a great example that we should stick to our beliefs, no matter what, and God glorified His name by saving them in a miraculous way.

6. Not only did God save them, but also they were promoted, and received the utmost admiration from the king and his people, and the Lord God was glorified in the whole kingdom.

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to examine their lives, identify some areas where they bend their beliefs under pressure, and then determine in their hearts not to compromise these beliefs again.

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Bring the psalmodia and read to the students the hymn about the three youth.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 49

Date:

Aim: To raise the awareness of the students about the ways youth get trapped into gang activities, and how to avoid them

Subject: Seminar: Gangs

Verse: “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood” (Pr 1:10,16).

Reference: See attachments

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. Use the material covered in the attachments to discuss with the problem of the gangs.
2. Strongly emphasize on the importance of totally stay away from any involvement with them.
3. Ask them to immediately seek counseling if they feel that they are being pushed to join a gang.

Spiritual Exercise:

Audio & Visual Aids:

Parent Resource Guide

By Steve Nawojczyk
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Information on this page:

- [Warning Signs](#)
- [Advice to Your Kids](#)
- [Tips for Parents](#)
- [Tips for Parents/Educators](#)
- [Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Steve Recommends](#)
- [Other People and Programs That Work](#)
- [Worthy Ways to Get Involved](#)
- [Return to Main Page](#)

ATTENTION PARENTS: The following identifiers are for your use as a guideline only. Exercise caution in assuming that your child is involved in gang activity if one or more of the signs are present. If one or more signs are present, communications with the child are crucial in determine the level, if any, of the child's involvement.

WARNING SIGNS

You should be concerned if your child:

- (1) Admits to gang involvement;
- (2) Is obsessed with one particular color of clothing or shows a desire for a particular logo over and over;
- (3) Wears sagging pants (this in and of itself is not indicative of gang activity);
- (4) Wears excessive jewelry with distinctive designs and may wear it only on either the right or left side of the body;
- (5) Is obsessed with gangster-influenced music, videos and movies to the point of imitation;
- (6) Withdraws from family with an accompanying change in demeanor;

- (7) Associates with undesirables and breaks parental rules consistently;
- (8) Develops an unusual desire for privacy and secrecy and may completely rearrange living quarters to create more privacy;
- (9) Uses hand signs while with friends and practices them at home;

Or there is evidence or the appearance of:

- (10) Physical injury (such as being beaten) and then child lies about the events surrounding the injury;
- (11) Peculiar drawings or language on school books (may appear later as tattoos or brands);
- (12) Unexplained cash or goods, i.e., clothing and jewelry; or
- (13) Possible use of alcohol and drugs with attitude change.

ADVISE YOUR CHILDREN THEY SHOULD NOT:

- (1) Associate with gang members or "wannabe/gonnabe" gang members;
- (2) Identify or communicate with gangs;
- (3) Hang out near or where gangs congregate;
- (4) Approach strangers in cars who appear to want information or directions;
- (5) Wear gang-related clothing where gangs are known to gather or traverse;
- (6) Wear initialed clothing such as BK - British Knights - a/k/a "Blood Killer" in high crime areas;
- (7) Use words like "Crab" or "Slob" (localized lingo may develop) anywhere gangs may be; i.e., malls, sporting events, etc.;
- (8) Attend any party or social event sponsored by gangs or their associates;
- (9) Take part in any graffiti activity or hang around where graffiti is present; or
- (10) Use any kind of finger or sign language in a public place.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Impress upon your child the importance of school and good grades.
- Spend quality time with your children.
- Get involved in your child's school activities.
- Establish rules, set limits and be consistent, firm and fair in punishment.
- Encourage good study habits.
- Respect your child's feelings and attitudes and help them develop self-esteem.
- Watch closely for negative influences.
- Improve your own self-esteem so your children can model themselves after the most important "role model"... YOU.

TIPS FOR PARENTS/EDUCATORS

- Help children develop self-control.
- Help children deal appropriately with problems.
- Get involved in community oriented prevention and intervention programs. Urge others to become involved. Volunteer at your child's school. Gangs are a community problem and their influence does not stop at any particular boundary.
- Listen to your children. Communicate with them about their concerns and fears.

GANGS: FROM SOCIAL GROUPS TO VIOLENT DELINQUENTS

In the past, researchers frequently used the terms traditional gangs, established gangs, or youth gangs to typify the gangs that had been operating in neighborhoods (hoods) for more than 10 years ([Lal, Lal, & Achilles, 1993](#)). Newer terms, such as clique and set, are now often used to identify a gang or an offshoot of a gang. All these terms for gangs have the same meaning in the following discussion.

Structural Characteristics

Nationally, youth gangs and their activities have been a recurrent and visible indication of intense disorder in society. In essence, changes in gang structure parallel the structural changes in society. For example, gangs became more violent as a result of increased violence in society in general.

A review of current literature on gang research reveals that the classical works conducted in the 1920s-50s by sociologists such as [Thrasher \(1927\)](#), [Shaw and McKay \(1931\)](#), [Tannenbaum \(1939\)](#), [Cohen \(1995\)](#), and [Whyte \(1955\)](#) are still being cited for their theoretical significance. That early research, subsequent work in the 1960s-80s ([Spergel, 1964](#); [Moore, 1978](#); [Ban & Ciminillo, 1977](#); [Miller, 1977](#); [Haskell & Yablonsky, 1982](#)), and the findings from recent studies ([Campbell, 1990](#); [Taylor, 1989](#); [Huff, 1990](#); [Lal et al., 1993](#); [Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-Wierschem, 1993](#)) have produced various definitions and structural characterizations of gangs. The following are the most often-cited gang characteristics from this body of literature:

- Members are typically young teenage males of similar ethnic or racial backgrounds (usually from disorganized families in the inner-city).
- Loyalty and adherence to a strict gang code (i.e., the gang is more important than anything) is mandatory.
- Cohesiveness among members increases as recognition from society increases.
- Loyalty and camaraderie are solidified by participation in group activities that are often antisocial, illegal, violent, and criminal.
- Goals, identified roles, and responsibilities are clearly established and defined (they are often unspoken but are understood by all members).
- The chain of command is hierarchical.
- Identification with a local territory (often referred to as gang turf, hood, or barrio) is commonplace in the neighborhood as well as on the school campus.
- Recruitment is an ongoing process, especially at school.

Characterizing present-day gangs (1980s-90s) is not a simple task because they are more diverse and complex than gangs of earlier times. In addition, today's gangs are distinguishable from gangs of the past in the following manner ([Campbell, 1990](#); [Huff, 1990](#); [Lal et al., 1993](#); [Taylor, 1993](#)):

- Younger active members (some as young as eight- or nine-years-old).
- Evidence of ethnic and racial crossover in multiethnic neighborhoods.
- An insurgence of female gangs.
- Established cliques or sets in suburban communities.
- Acquisition of large sums of money from illegal drug markets and prostitution.
- Rampant use of drugs and alcohol.
- Violent membership.
- Use of sophisticated communications devices and automatic weapons.
- Employment of guerrilla warfare-like tactics.
- Total disregard for human life as evinced by the senseless deaths of innocent victims.

Cultural Distinctions

Gang culture can best be understood by examining the behaviors and activities of gang members. Members behave in ways that set them apart from the mainstream culture. These behaviors serve not only to segregate and sustain the gangs, but they also add an allusion of mystery and glamour that is sometimes referred to as "the lure of the gangs." Non-gang members who become infatuated with gang culture are said to be "romancing the gang." Gang distinctiveness is most noticeable in: attire and paraphernalia; identifying marks such as tattoos; posturing; modes of communication; beliefs, attitudes, and general trends in thinking; and activities (especially recruitment). The term gang mentality is often used to describe these characteristics (particularly members' attitudes and trends in thinking) and connotes more than a simple commitment to gang values: it is a willingness to do anything (even die or commit murder) the gang demands without question. Members refer to this mentality as "being down for the hood," or being "loco" (crazy) for the gang.

Traditional youth gangs and their individual members do not simply "appear" in neighborhoods and on school campuses. Their patterns of behavior are established over time through an evolutionary process ([Lal, 1991](#)). In their significant research on juvenile delinquency, [Haskell and Yablonsky \(1982\)](#) described three prototypes of gangs that may evolve from groups of youths who hang out together: the social, delinquent, and violent gangs. These prototypes provide the basis for discussion on patterns of gang development in current research. Present-day gangs have evolved past the social stage and are defined as either delinquent or violent depending upon the type of membership and their activities ([Taylor, 1988, 1989](#); [Lal et al., 1993](#); [Thornberry et al., 1993](#)). School officials are most likely to encounter delinquent gang type activities on campus, such as intimidation, extortion, burglary, face-to-face confrontation, fights, and recruitment rituals.

Members proceed through four developmental stages in the evolutionary process: the wannabe (one who wants to be a member) or the gonnabe (one who is probably destined to be a member), which is a more recent term for wannabe; the peripheral (one who hangs around the gang, and may or may not engage in activities); the affiliate (an actual member also known as a "gang banger"); and the hard-core (one who lives only for the gang, is "down for the hood" or a real "vato loco"). The activities of gang members determine their position in the evolutionary

process. For example, members engage in minor gang activities, such as hanging around, flashing gang signs, graffiti writing and claiming territory, before they become involved in serious hard-core illegal infractions, such as assaults, drug trafficking, and murder ([Lal, 1991](#)). Some recruiting practices bypass these simple activities; in such cases, hard-core members emerge overnight.

Like the rites of passage most teenage males experience, potential gang members are required to prove their worthiness by coming through some type of ritual before achieving actual membership. In the past, ritualistic practices were simple; recruits would fight several members to demonstrate their daring and desire to join. Even the term designated for this practice, courting, has a ritualistic connotation. Being courted-in or -out (also known as jumped-in or -out) as a way of joining a gang is currently being used by less violent gangs.

Initiations for the seriously delinquent and violent gangs consist of more than a simple fight; participation in theft, gang rape, drive-by shooting, and even murder is common for today's recruit. Because the focus of today's gangs has dramatically shifted from the protection of turf (at the very least) to the protection of drug markets, the course of recruiting has also shifted. In gang neighborhoods with heavy trafficking in drugs, prostitution, and the sale of sophisticated weapons, the control and acquisition of financial profit from these markets has become one of the paramount reasons for gang membership ([Taylor, 1989](#); [Padilla, 1992](#); [Lal et al., 1993](#); [California State Office of the Attorney General, 1994, 1995](#)). These and other sources reported that youths who have a propensity toward delinquent behavior are four times more likely to engage in illegal acts and violent crimes as gang members than they would as non-gang members. Moreover, the likelihood of gang membership increases if youths are exposed to family, community, and school risk factors such as these:

- Dysfunctional family conditions (e.g., poor parenting skills, continuous violent and abusive practices by adult members, drug and alcohol abuse, and a family history of gang membership).
- Deteriorated environmental conditions (e.g., depressed socioeconomic circumstances and a history of gangs in the neighborhood).
- Poor performance in school (e.g., serious academic and attendance problems and failure to engage in positive peer relationships and/or activities).

Extent of Gang Activity

It is no secret that gangs and their antisocial activities have been increasing at alarming rates in communities and on school campuses nationwide. From the 1920s to the present day, gang activity has not only increased and intensified, it has done so with notoriously senseless crime and violence.

A comparison of data collected in two distinct studies demonstrates the startling increase in gang membership in the U. S. over a ten-year period. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice ([Needle & Stapleton, 1983](#)), there were approximately 1,000 known gangs with a combined membership of 50,000 operating in the U.S. by the end of the 1970s. In

contrast, by the end of the 1980s these numbers increased to approximately 5,000 gangs with an estimated membership of 250,000 ([United States Department of Justice, 1994](#)).

Both studies cited several reasons for this expansion, such as population growth, urban sprawl, high unemployment, augmented mobility of gang members, and new drug markets. Whereas the major well-established gangs of the 1970s (and earlier) generally operated from bases within their traditional neighborhoods (in highly populated, urban, low-income, and racially isolated areas), gangs of the 1980s were beginning to expand their bases of operations across the states (to less populated, suburban, middle-income, and racially integrated areas). Recent data on gangs reveal that they have become entrenched in all types of American neighborhoods, more so than at any other time in this nation's history.

A comparison of statistics in Los Angeles (LA) County-often considered the "gang capital" of the nation-provides a local perspective. In 1988, the National School Safety Center reported that there were 600 gangs in existence, with a membership well over 70,000 in LA County alone. The LA County Sheriff's Department reported that there were 1,130 known gangs with approximately 150,000 members operating in LA in 1993. This pervasive expansion gives new meaning to the term alarming rates, and suggests that current efforts to curb the gangs have been less than successful.

Other urban locations, such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Newark, and New York City, have experienced similar increases in the number of gangs and gang membership. But the problem is no longer just confined to urban areas. The existence of gangs, through importation or creation, in suburban and other less populated locales, once virtually free of gangs, has signaled the beginning of a frightening reign of gang activity. Cities such as Phoenix (AZ), Long Beach (CA), Sacramento (CA), Stockton (CA), Jacksonville (FL), Kansas City (KS), Dallas (TX), Houston (TX), and Portland (OR) have been regularly struggling with gangs and their activities.

Impact and Consequences of Gangs in Schools

Discerning the effects of the expansion of gangs in neighborhoods is relatively simple. Law enforcement agencies, especially those with a gang detail, customarily maintain accurate gang data and readily publish or release this information to the media. Unfortunately, this is not often the case at schools. School administrators are not usually quick to acknowledge the existence of gang activity; so accurate gang statistics are not forthcoming. This reluctance hampers efforts to ascertain the extent of gang activity at individual schools. On a district level, differences in perceptions, lack of standards or policies, and inaccurate reporting practices result in skewed statistics. (For an overview of school reporting of violence in general, see [ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, in press](#)).

Students more readily acknowledge the existence of gangs in school than do adults. In 1991, the U. S. Department of Justice conducted a nationwide survey of students to ascertain certain facts about school violence ([Bastian & Taylor, 1991](#)). This study reported that 15 percent of the students stated that gangs were active on their campus. Moreover, 16 percent indicated that they

had witnessed gang members engaging in threatening acts against a teacher. Similarly, the California Student Substance Use Survey, conducted by the State of California ([California State Office of the Attorney General, 1994](#)) revealed that an average of 17 percent of students from grades 7 to 11 were involved in gangs at one time or another during their life.

Although school officials estimated a very small portion of their total student body population to be gang affiliated, they also indicated that responding to gang activity required excessive amounts of time and resources ([Lal et al., 1993](#)). Maintaining a safe and secure school where gang activity is prevalent requires special tactics. Some large school districts have followed the lead of local, state, and Federal agencies and formed task forces to tackle the problem. District members believe that collaborative efforts among law enforcement, schools, families, churches, and social agencies are fundamental to gang prevention programs.

There are benefits for the gang members staying in their neighborhood schools. [Lal \(1991\)](#) reported that an overwhelming majority of members wanted to stay in school because they could congregate and discuss their activities in a social arena, uphold their reputation as an established gang, flaunt their accouterments, display their strength of membership, provide protection for their members, intimidate other students, recruit potential members, and sometimes engage in criminal or violent acts. But, of course, these benefits for the gang have negative consequences for all students, school personnel, school safety, and the overall educational process.



SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 50

Date:

Aim: To demonstrate to the students that the Old Testament contains many symbols that explain the role of the Holy Virgin Mary

Subject: Symbols about the Virgin Mary in the Old Testament

Verse: “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

Reference: R 5, p.83-89 (attached), Canadian Program, Grade 9, p.331

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

See Attached.

Spiritual Exercise: Have the students learn a part of any Theotokia that talks about one of the symbols of the Virgin Mary mentioned in this lesson

Audio & Visual Aids:

❖ Show pictures of the symbols used in this lesson.

Types and Symbols of St. Mary

In the Coptic hymns

1. The Tabernacle:

The Theotokia of Sunday calls St. Mary "the second dome, the holy of holies at the Tabernacle etc."

At the Annunciation, angel Gabriel said, "the power of the Most High shall overshadow (episkiazein) you" Luke 1:35. The same verb "episkiazein" (in Hebrew "shakan" means "dwelling"), was used for the Tabernacle, where God was dwelling among His people, and at the moment of Christ's transfiguration, where the Lord was present among two of His disciples and three of His disciples, a cloud covering them in shadow.

According to the book of Exodus (40:35') Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle because the, Lord abode (shakan) in it and the glory of the Lord filled it. Thus, St. Mary is the True Tabernacle, where God Himself dwelt among His people.

If Moses was unable to enter it because of God's glory, who can enter the mystery of St. Mary who bore God, Himself in her holy womb?

"Who can declare: how honorable is the dome (tabernacle) of Moses, who made it at Mount of Sinai!

O Mary, the Virgin,
You are assimilated to the tabernacle!
You are the true dome,
Wherein God dwells!" *Theotokia of Sunday*

2. The Ark of the Covenant:

Ex 25:10-16

St. Mary is assimilated to the Ark of the Covenant, made of incorruptible wood, inlaid with gold inside and out... "And You, Mary; also put on the glory of divinity inside and out."

Theotokia of Sunday

The Ark of the Covenant, representing the presence of God, remained three months at the house of Obed-edom before David brought it to his house (2 Sam. 6); and St Mary, who bore the Lord Himself, remained also three months at the town of Judea.

The bearing of the Ark simulated the joy of the people and caused David to make joyous leaps, dancing before the Lord (2 Sam. 6, 1 Chron. 15:29); and the arrival of St. Mary simulated the joy of Elizabeth and caused the babe, John the Baptist, to leap within his mother's womb. The verb "leap" (skirtan) used in St. Luke 1:41, 44 is the same used for David's joy before the Ark, and it is used the Holy Scripture to indicate the leaps of joy which accompany the coming of the Lord (Ps. 114:4, 6; Wisdom 9:9; MaL 4:2) and for heavenly joy (Luke 6:23).

St. Mary, the True Ark of God, became the cause of the rejoicing for all creatures:
"Hail, the Theotokos, the rejoiced of Angels!"

Theotokia of Tuesday

"They offered honor to you,
O city of God,
For you became the dwelling place of those who are rejoicing!"

Theotokia of Wednesday

3. The Cover of the Ark:

EX 25:17-22

The cover of the Ark was called in -Hebrew "Sekina" which means, "dwelling place," for it represents Gods seat of mercy. Two Cherubim overshadowed this. God appeared between the Cherubim in blue (symbol of heaven), and from there He used to speak to Moses.

St. Mary is this cover, a type of the Church, where God sits on His Throne of mercy among His people, and it is filled with His heavenly creatures:

"Two icons of Cherubim, made of gold,
Overshadow the cover continuously, with their wings.
They overshadow the holy of holies, in the second dome!
Thousands and. ten thousands (of angels) overshadow you
Also, O Mary!
They praise their Creator,
Who took our likeness..."

Theotokia of Sunday

4. The Vessel of Manna:

EX 16:33

"You are the pure golden vessel of Hidden Manna,
Wherein is the Bread of Life,
Which came down from heaven and granted Life
To the whole world..."

He came out from the Father,
And you have born Him immaculately,
He gave us His precious Body and Blood,
That we may live for ever!"

Theotokia of Sunday

In the Old Testament God fed His people with Manna, but then He also gave us the Rational Manna, he who descended from heaven into the Virgin's womb. The Lord Himself says, "Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the Bread, which comes from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eats of this Bread, he shall live forever: and the Bread that I will give is my Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". (Jn 6:49-51)

It is noteworthy that St. Mary was not merely a vessel but the Hidden Manna received from her body...

5. The Golden Lamp stand:

Ex25: 31-46

"You are the pure golden lamp stand, that bears the ever-lightened Lamp.
He is the unapproachable Light of the world...
Who was incarnated of you without adulteration...
All heavenly choirs cannot be compared with you,
O golden lamp stand...
He who dwelt in your womb O Mary the Virgin, gives light to everybody in the world!
He is the Sun of Righteousness,
Whom you bore,
And who healed our sins..."

Theotokia of Sunday

St. Mary became superior to all heavenly creatures because of the True Light she bore. He shines, and no creature can behold His essence!

6. The Burning Bush:

"The bush which Moses saw in the wilderness, was flaming,
But its branches were not consumed;
It is a type of Mary the spotless Virgin.
For the Word of God came and He was incarnated of her.
The Fire of his Divinity did not consume her womb, and she was virgin even after her childbirth.

Theotokia of Thursday

The bush was not only unconsumed, but also grew green and blossomed beautifully (Exod. 3: 1-3). In the Armenian rite we find the same idea:

“You, who was inflamed by the Sun like the bush, but was not consumed, gave to men the Bread of Life, and interceded for us that Christ might blot out our sins”.

For Benediction

St. Ephram also says "She bore Christ in her virginal womb as the bush on Mount of Horeb bore God in its flame."

Pope Theodosius of Alexandria mentions the words of Christ addressed to His Father concerning His mother at the moment of her death, saying:

“Receive from me, O my Gracious Father,

The bush, which received the Fire of Divinity and was not consumed

I offer you, O my Father, a royal gift today, even the soul of my Virgin Mother. (1)

7. Aaron's Rod:

“You are truly more superior than Aaron's rod,

You are full of grace'

What is the rod, but "Mary"?

The rod is a symbol of her virginity.

She conceived and brought forth the Son of the Most High - the Word Himself - without human seed.”

Theotokia of Sunday

The lifeless rod blossomed forth (Num. 17:8) as a symbol of St. Mary who brought forth “Life.”

8. Jacob's Ladder:

Gn 28:12-13

“You are the ladder seen by Jacob,

Which is fixed on earth.

It rose very high to heaven,

And the angels were descending on it!”

Theotokia of Tuesday

9. The Rational Mount:

“The living Word of God Came down on the Mount of Sinai to give the Law...

He also came down within you, O rational mount...”

“He is the Stone, which was cut from the Mount seen by Daniel.

No human hand touched Him.

The Word of the Father came down and was incarnated of the virgin without human seed, to save us...”

Theotokia of Tuesday

Other types and symbols;

The daily hymns mention other types and symbols of St. Mary, such as: Aaron's censer, Ezekiel's gate, Noah's Ark, God's city, light cloud on which God sits (Isa 19:1), New Jerusalem Etc...

(1) The Falling Asleep of Mary 6:18.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 51

Date:

Aim: To educate the students about the purpose and content of the letters of St. Paul, to explain to them one of the letters as an example of the epistles.

Subject: The letters of St. Paul & The Epistle to Philemon

Verse: “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I say” (Phm 21)

Reference: Attachment & The Epistle to Philemon

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

- ❖ St. Paul wrote 14 letters, which are included in the New Testament. The church reads a part of the letters in the mass.
- ❖ Some of the letters were written to churches, in response to questions, worries, and difficulties they were experiencing with these as his starting point, he ranges widely over the vital issues of Christian theology, explaining the faith. The letters also contain teaching about Christian virtues and moral life.
- ❖ The rest of the letters were written to his disciples to guide them in how to lead the church, and they include also teaching on wide range of issues.
- ❖ Go over the Epistle to Philemon (see attachment).

Spiritual Exercise: Ask the students to read one chapter a day from one epistle, in order, and write the verse they like the most. In two weeks they will cover the 14 epistles. Ask that you see their selection of verses

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Bring enough Bibles for the class. Go over the Epistles of St. Paul with the class.

Philemon

Does Christ really make a difference in relationships? Does He really bring healing and the resolution of old grievances? Does He really surmount differences in social and economic status? The letter to Philemon offers powerful evidence that He does!

.....

THE BACKGROUND OF THE LETTER

Philemon provides a window on the story of Onesimus, a runaway slave, and Philemon, his master. The story begins with Paul's arrival in Ephesus. According to Acts 19:8-10, his work there for more than two years produced spectacular results: "all who dwelt in Asia [Minor] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

Among those who responded to the gospel was Philemon, a wealthy man of Colosse, perhaps one of the many merchants doing business in the thriving economy of Ephesus. Philemon took his newfound faith back to Colosse and started or at least hosted a church in his home—perhaps the same group of believers to whom the letter to the Colossians was written (Col. 4:7-9).

Like most wealthy citizens of the Roman world, Philemon owned slaves. Scholars estimate that perhaps half the population of the empire may have been slaves. One of Philemon's slaves was Onesimus, possibly from Phrygia, the mountainous region in which Colosse sat. Whether Onesimus stole from his master, tired of his bondage, or thought he could take advantage of his master's new religion of love and grace, we don't know, but for some reason he ran away. ♦

THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

Years later, Onesimus surfaced in Rome—where he ran into Paul! The apostle was living in rented quarters (Acts 28:30), perhaps in the

Greek-speaking section in south Rome, where Onesimus would likely have gone. Like his former master, the fugitive turned to Christ and began growing in the faith. Paul came to regard him as "my son . . . whom I have begotten while in my chains" (Philem. 10), indicating a close relationship of mutual affection.

But Paul faced a dilemma. Should he hold onto him? The fellow proved useful and loyal. That's what Paul wanted to do (Philem. 13). But by law he was required to return the runaway slave to his master, or at least turn him over to the authorities. Yet what would happen to this new believer, his spiritual son and friend? Would he be punished or sold? Could Paul live with himself, knowing that in a sense, he had betrayed the man?

Paul's solution was to send Onesimus back to Philemon—but not without protection. He assigned an associate named Tychicus to escort the fugitive back, and to carry three letters—two general ones to the believers in Colosse and Laodicea (Col. 4:16), and a personal one to Philemon. As the latter makes clear, Paul was leaning heavily on his history with Philemon. He was also counting on the master to demonstrate spiritual maturity by forgiving the slave and accepting him as a brother in Christ. No doubt Philemon's standing among the community of believers would add further leverage, as people would be closely watching his response. ♦

THE REST OF THE STORY

The letter to Philemon gives us only half of the conversation between Paul and Philemon. We don't know Philemon's response or what happened to Onesimus upon his return.

However, the name Onesimus appears among letters written by a bishop named Ignatius in about A.D. 110. Ignatius of Antioch was arrested and taken to Rome for trial. During the journey, he wrote a letter from Smyrna to the church at Ephesus in which he addressed the new bishop there, whose name was Onesimus. Many believe that this man was the same Onesimus who, as a slave, had run away from Philemon but later came to faith and returned.

Whatever the case, the Onesimus-Philemon story holds a number of significant lessons:

- It shows that in Christ, there is always room for reconciliation and a second chance for people.

- It illustrates how God works behind the scenes to bring people to faith and restore relationships.
- It shows the power of the gospel to work at a distance and effect change from city to city, coast to coast, and continent to continent.
- It shows the value of mentoring relationships, the way that older, seasoned believers can help younger followers of Christ work out problems and conflicts.
- It shows a measure of irony behind God's patience and providence: He had to send Onesimus thousands of miles away from his Christian master in order to bring him to faith!
- It shows that in Christ, people can change. Consider the many stages that Onesimus went through: from slave, to thief and runaway, to refugee, to convert, to penitent, to brother, and possibly to bishop. ♦

PERSONALITY PROFILE: ONESIMUS



PERSONALITY PROFILE: PHILEMON



SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grade: 9

Week: 52

Date:

Aim: To give the students an example of the life of the Apostolic fathers who were the bearers of the torch of faith after the apostles.

Subject: Saint Ignatius of Antioch (50-107 AD)

Verse: “Do not fear any of those things in which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulations ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10)

Reference: See Lesson

Subject Matter & Method:

Focus on:

1. The Apostolic fathers are the early church fathers who lived in the age of the holy apostles and were their disciples.
2. St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was one of the apostolic fathers and is believed to have been a disciple of St. John the Evangelist.
3. It is said that St. Ignatius was the child whom Christ set in the midst of the disciples as an example of humility. As Ignatius grew up, his love for his Lord increased, and his faith grew. His one ambition was to teach people about Christ. So the Apostles made him Bishop of the Church at Antioch.
4. Ignatius was zealous in his work. He wrote letters, which aimed at strengthening the Churches in the Christian faith, as he had learnt it from the Apostles themselves. And indeed, through his life and teaching, he was able to win many pagan people to Christ.
5. On his way to fight the Persians, the Emperor Trajan passed through Antioch. There he met Ignatius, and the following conversation took place:

E: Are you Ignatius Theophorus?

I: Yes.

E: What is the meaning of your name?

I: Bearer of God.

E: And do we not also bear our gods to the wars in order to be victorious?

I: How do you consider these graceless statues gods?

E: Are you blaspheming against our gods?

I: Know, Oh King, that there is no God but one, the creator who became man in order to save us. If you believe in Him, you will be truly happy.

- E: Let alone this senseless talk, and do what will save your life and win you favor in my sight: offer a sacrifice to my gods, and I shall make you the greatest of my priests.
- I: May God increase your wealth, Oh King. But I cannot do what you ask, for I am the priest of my Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him alone I offer my daily sacrifice.
6. The Emperor was so angry that he condemned him to exposure before the wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater. When his Christian friends knew of his fate, they went to see him off with tears in their eyes.
 7. On his way from Antioch to Rome, where the execution took place, he wrote seven letters. Of these, five were addressed to the Christian communities of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna—cities in Asian Minor that had sent representatives to greet him as he passed through. The other letters were addressed to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and to the Christian community of his destination, Rome.
 8. The letters are an important source of information about the beliefs and organization of the early Christian church. Ignatius wrote them as warnings against heretical doctrines, thus providing his readers with detailed summaries of Christian doctrine. He also gave a vivid picture of church organization as a community of love gathered around a presiding bishop assisted by a council of presbyters (elders) and deacons. He was the first Christian writer to stress the virgin birth and to use the term catholic church to mean the faithful collectively.
 9. Extracts from the letters of Ignatius: "Let your holy way of life chasten hypocrites and evil-doers. Conquer their hatred and unfairness by love and justice; their cruelty, by patience and prayer; and their treachery, by faithfulness. For the sake of Christ, bear injustice, loss, and persecution. Indeed, for His sake I bear all this, preferring my bonds to the treasures of the world. I rejoice in my sufferings for Him. Pray for me that I may find rest in heaven".
 10. Before leaving for Smyrna, he wrote to the Romans, saying: "I am bound with chains for the love of Christ. But I fear that your love for me will bring me harm. I do not want you to prevent my death. For if I am depriving of martyrdom now, on account of your love, it may be very difficult to be martyred later. I long for martyrdom in order to prove myself a Christian, not only in word, but also in deed. Let me then be thrown to the beasts. And may the beasts eat up all my body, so that its remains will be a burden to no one.
 11. When Ignatius arrived at Rome, the believers there were happy to see him; but their happiness soon turned to sadness when they learnt of his fate. He stretched out his hands and blessed them. He prayed for the Church. And when he had finished praying, the soldiers took him to the amphitheater and set upon him two hungry lions, which ate him up, leaving only his bones. These were taken to Antioch. May the blessings of his prayer be with us, Amen.

Spiritual Exercise: Have the students search for the names of other Apostolic Fathers, and write an essay about the life of one of them

Audio & Visual Aids:

- ❖ Show a picture of a saint, and a book that contains his seven letters