

HOLY ZEAL

By
His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA III



**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

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INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of lectures given in various meetings and conferences on the ministry during the sixties and seventies.

We present them to you so that they might be included in the courses for those who are preparing for ministry, but they are also suitable for use in meetings of deacons and those already committed to serving, besides making good presents for them at various religious festivals and other such occasions.

This book makes a useful sequel to the book 'Discipleship' which we have recently published. We are also hoping to publish, God willing, other books on the ministry, to make a series which would be nice for you to follow in sequence.

The book which is before you speaks about the nature of holy zeal, and about its incentives and necessary attributes, drawing examples from the Bible and the lives of the saints. It distinguishes between the true zeal, which is holy, and that which is false and wrong, and it also contains a number of other topics on the ministry and service to God.

POPE SHENOUDA III



CHAPTER ONE

HOLY ZEAL AND HOW IT WORKS

Zeal is a fire that burns
He prays and weeps and becomes depressed
Positive action
Wrestling with Good
Encouraging the weak
Going along with them step by step
Partnership with God

Zeal Is A Fire That Burns :

Holy zeal is a fire burning in the heart of a believer which impels him, with great enthusiasm, to strive his hardest for the purpose of saving others and building the Kingdom .

Just as it was said about our Lord and Master, that He: "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* ", (1 Tim. 2:4) so too, the person who is aglow with holy zeal wants everybody to be saved. He not only **wants** it, but **works** for it with all his might and all his feelings, without letting up, like David the prophet, who said:

*" Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house,
Or go up to the comfort of my bed;
I will not give sleep to my eyes
Or slumber to my eyelids,
Until I find a place for the Lord,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. "*
(Ps. 132:3-5).

Thus someone whom holy zeal has set ablaze, never lets up or rests, until he finds a place for the Lord in the heart of everyone, so that by all possible means he might save some. (1 Cor. 9:22).

This zeal is a fire in the heart of a person who is aglow with the Spirit, whose heart is kindled with love of God, love of people and love of the Kingdom. So, full of fervour he works earnestly to fulfil his holy desires, to save others and spread the Kingdom.

What a wonderful thing it was that when God wanted to send His disciples out to minister, the Spirit descended upon them like tongues of fire. This was how He kindled

them for service, so that their words in preaching the gospel became words of fire, as if they were flaming arrows, setting hearts ablaze and stirring consciences, and not returning empty. (Isiah 55:11). A speech of the apostle Peter's on the day of Pentecost led three thousand to faith (Acts 2:41). It was by this burning spirit and this holy zeal, that the Kingdom of God came with power.

It is that fire about which our Lord Jesus Christ said: "*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*" (Luke 12:49).

This was the fiery action which began on the day of Pentecost and continued, and it was strengthened by this, that the saintly apostles stood before the full force of the Jews and the Romans, bearing witness to their faith, "*with all confidence, no one forbidding him*". (Acts 28:31), "*and great grace was upon them all*" (Acts 4:31-33).

How beautiful are the words of the Psalm: "*Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flames of fire*". (Ps 104:4).

If you are a fire that burns, then you can be a useful servant of God's, for the Bible says to those who serve, "*fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*" (Rom. 12:11) because our Lord God himself was called "*a consuming fire*". (Deut. .4:24).

The word of God was also in the heart of the prophet Jeremiah "*like a fire*", (Jer. 20:9) and he could not remain still or keep silent despite all the trouble that befell him. The Lord said to Jeremiah: "*I will make My words in your mouth a fire*" (Jer. 5:14). And Jeremiah cried out:

*" Oh, my soul, my soul!
I am pained in my very heart!*

*My heart makes a noise in me,
I cannot hold my peace". (Jer. 4:19).*

Then there was David the prophet who said: "*Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach t you have fallen on me". (Ps. 69:9).*

"It is as though the insult, O Lord, which is directed to You, or Your church, or Your people, by wrongdoers, falls upon me personally", is what David means. When Goliath insulted the army of the living God, (1 Sam. 17:26) David actually felt this, and he did not rest until he had removed that dishonour.

Zeal is the state of a heart that is fervent, ablaze with love of God, which wants God's love to reach every heart. A person with such a heart loves God and wants all people to love Him too.

The heart of such a person burns for the glory of God and for spreading His word. It wishes the Kingdom of God to spread until it embraces all people and all places. It wants to see faith entering every heart, so that no one loses his share in the Kingdom.

Someone who possesses zeal is a person kindled by fire. **His speech is like a flame in its enthusiasm, and his prayers are like fire in their impact. His service to God is like fire in its effectiveness and far-reaching extent.**

By his zeal he kindles hearts, sets feelings ablaze, strengthens the will, and impels his listeners towards repentance and the Kingdom, by arousing their conscience .

In contrast, we have those who speak in a feeble, half-hearted way which convinces no one, which yields no fruit, and which shows none of the fervour of the Spirit.

An example of this lukewarm and unproductive word is the rebuke given by Eli the priest to his sons. He said to them: *"Why do you do such things? For I hear evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons; For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress"*. (1 Sam. 2 : 23-24). Such words lacking seriousness, firmness or vigour, had no effect on them, and the Bible goes on to say that Eli's sons *"did not listen to their father's rebuke"*. (1 Sam. 2:25). Thus they exposed their father to the wrath of God.

Another example is Lot's warning to his relatives in Sodom. In his way of life among them, there was neither force nor strength to give his words effect. He had previously seen their evil ways, but had lacked that holy zeal for the commandments of God to do anything about it. He had even given them his daughters as wives and become related to them through marriage. Therefore, when he said to them: *"Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!"*, they did not listen, in fact the Bible goes on to say: *"But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking"*. (Gen. 19:14).

On the other hand, there is the example of the apostle Paul who, according to the Bible, in spite of standing accused before the governor Felix, *"he reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come"*, and Felix was afraid. (Acts 24:25). The same kind of situation occurred when he spoke before King Agrippa, and that unbelieving king was unable to resist the force of Paul's words. Then Agrippa said to Paul, *"You almost persuade me to become a Christian."* (Acts 26:28).

Zeal is an effective force in which there is an earnestness and solicitude for others, there is nothing feeble or lax about it.

The Bible says: "*Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully*" (Jer. 48:10). Thus the servants of God have always been characterised by zeal, working as hard as they can, with all their might, and going to every length. I hope to describe this in a section of its own later, under the necessary qualifications of zeal.

The Lord said to His disciples: "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*". (Matt. 4:19).

What a fisherman is supposed to do is to search for the places where the fish are, and in which it is possible to make a catch. Then he has to lay the bait and cast the net and patiently stick at his task, as St Peter said to the Lord Jesus Christ: "*Master, we have toiled all night...*" (Luke 5:5). So there is labour and effort involved in the matter, but it ends in joy when the net is filled with fish.

The apostle Paul was so zealous that he used to go on preaching until after midnight. (Acts 20:7). There is the well-known story of Eutychus who went to sleep as Paul talked on and on, and fell out of the window. (Acts 20:9).

Our Lord Jesus Christ used to preach all day to the people till the sun went down (Luke 9:12). So we too, then, ought to use all our energy and make every effort for the salvation of others. As the apostle said of his own ministry, "*In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness, often in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness*". (2 Cor. 11:27)

The servant of God who is aflame with zeal, is not content only to labour, but rather:

He prays and weeps and becomes depressed:

He prays and says *"Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Your Kingdom come..."* May You, O Lord, rule every heart. May You rule the peoples and the nations and over those lands where unbelief is widespread, where they have begun to lose all sense of the existence of God. May You become the Lord of everyone who does not yet know You and know Your love for mankind and Your wondrous salvation.

One might find an individual whose heart has been set ablaze by zeal, but who, on feeling that he has nothing to embark on and no direction in which to channel his zeal into productive activity, can only stand before God and weep.

He might, for example, stand before a map of Asia and weep for the hundreds of millions who do not know God: a thousand million Communists in China do not know God, and likewise some five hundred million in India, and more than two million in Japan... and there are so many who still worship Brahma and Buldah and Confucius! Indeed, where is the Kingdom of God represented in this continent in which our Lord Jesus Christ was born?!

When, O Lord, will what the psalm speaks about come to pass: " *The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*" (Ps. 24-1).

And what can we say about the Red Indians, and about the primitive tribes in central and southern Africa?

And if such a person is unmoved by the plight of these distant foreigners, then his heart might well burn for those who are Christians only in name who lead a life of permissiveness and materialism, who have no links with God or the Church, and who do not lead a spiritual life!

And what about those Christians who change their religion and live as atheists ... ?! How and when can they all return to God?!

At this point, holy zeal takes possession of their hearts, like the prophet Jeremiah when he said: *"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people"*. (Jer. 9:1).

He wept day and night for those whom sin had killed, whom Satan had led astray, who had chosen another road and became liable to destruction.

We see how the prophet David was overwhelmed by depression and tears for the sinners who had gone down the slippery slope to corruption, when he said to the Lord, in his zeal: *"My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore Your words". "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law ."*. (Ps. 119:136).

Let us also remember here the prophet Samuel when he grieved for Saul. When the Lord rejected Saul: *" And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night"*. (1 Sam. 15:11) *"Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel"*. (1 Sam. 15:35).

We recall here, too, the striving of the Father Confessors for their children.

The apostle Paul says about this: *"Obey those who rule over you and be submissive for they watch out for your souls. as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief..."* (Heb. 13:17).

This is how a Father Confessor is in his zeal for the salvation of his children. He weeps for the sinner, grieves for him, fasts for him and prays long **mataniyas** (prostrations in prayer) for him. And he humbles himself for the sake of that person's salvation. He prays for each one of his children: "Lord have mercy on so and so. O Lord, forgive him and look kindly upon him. O Lord, help so and so, and save him from such and such a sin. Do not let him perish, O Lord, or be lost... O Lord, O Lord..."

Throughout day and night, he always feels sadness and pain in his heart for his spiritual children. He wishes he could say as the Lord said to his Father: *"While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, Those whom You gave Me I have kept them and none of them is lost..."* (John 17:12).

Positive Action:

At this point we might recall Nehemiah's zeal and how much it accomplished.

When Nehemiah heard from some of his brothers that the wall of Jerusalem had been breached, and its gates burned with fire, and that its people were in trouble and disgrace, he showed his zeal for the Lord saying: *"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. and mourned for many days. I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Then I said Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power."* (Neh. 1:4-10).

But Nehemiah was not content just with praying and lamenting, he wanted to do something.

So he decided to speak to the king on that matter. Since Nehemiah was a cupbearer for the king and held a sensitive position, his depression could not go unnoticed. When the king asked him why he was unhappy, he answered: *"Why should my*

face not be sad when the city the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" and he continued: "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs that I can rebuild it". (Neh. 2:3-5).

Thus Nehemiah's zeal was not just a passive reaction, it was a positive, productive and active one. So he travelled and gathered his people and organised the work of rebuilding. Then he said his famous phrase: *"Come and let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be in reproach". (Neh. 2:17).*

In the course of the rebuilding, Nehemiah endured many troubles and insults from his enemies, but he resisted strongly and his workers were with him. *"with one hand they worked at construction and with the other held the weapon."* (Neh. 4:17) until the rebuilding of the wall was completed in 52 days (Neh. 6 : 15), after which Nehemiah devoted himself to spiritual reforms and leading the people to repentance. (Nehemiah Chapters 8 - 10).

In fact the zeal of the heart can lead a person to depression and to weeping for the sake of sinners, just as it can also lead him to mission work in bringing people to faith and repentance. When St. Paul entered Athens it was said of him that: *"his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols". (Acts 17:16).* Thus he used to speak to whomever he met in the market place every day, and entered into discussions with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. He spoke at the Areopagus as well as in the Jewish synagogues.

Apollos, who was also aglow with the Spirit, did the same: *"He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit and taught accurately the things of the Lord... he vigorously refuted the Jews publicity, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ". (Acts 18:25-28).*

Another aspect of zeal is that of wrestling with God.

Wrestling With God:

An example of this rather strange situation is that in which the prophet Moses found himself when God told him that He would destroy His people if they worshipped the golden calf. So when Moses put all his fervour into interceding for them and asking God to forgive them their sins, they were not destroyed. His fervour reached such a point that he said: *"Lord, why should Your wrath burn hot against Your people..? Yet now, if You will forgive their sin - but if not, I pray, blot me out of the book which You have written"*. (Ex. 32:11 & 32).

What Moses meant was: I do not wish to enter the Kingdom of heaven alone. Either You forgive them, or I perish with them if they die, and You wipe out my name from the book which You have written ... !! Just see the extent of Moses' love and zeal. This is why God said to him, before punishing the people: *"Now therefore let Me alone so that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make you a great nation"*. (Ex. 32:10).

I can't help being amazed at the words, *"Leave me alone"* which the Lord said to Moses, almost as if Moses were clutching hold of Him and not letting Him move..!

Are You saying to him, O Lord, "Leave Me alone?!" Yet who can hold onto You? Who can restrain You, when You are the Almighty God?! 'It was Moses' love for his people and his zeal for their salvation which caught hold of the Lord, and prevented Him from destroying them. Look at what Moses said to Him. *"Turn from Your fierce wrath; and relent from this harm to*

and Your people. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac..." (Ex. 32:12-13). "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say: He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them the face of the earth?" (Ex. 32:12).

This, then, is wrestling with God, which involves supplication, intercession, eloquence, conviction, love for others and a holding fast to God to 'prevent' Him from destroying them...!

When I was a little child who didn't understand very much, I imagined that Jacob, the father of fathers, was the only one who wrestled with God and said to Him: *"I will not let You go unless You bless me"*. (Gen. 32:26). But here we have Moses saying the same thing to Him, *"I will not let You go... I will not let Your anger burn against Your people. I will not let You destroy them, I will not let You go until You pardon them and relent..."*

"You must pardon, You must forgive and if You do not wish to forgive them then wipe my name from the book in which You've written".

This is the zeal of a heart that does not want anyone to perish, and *"who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"*. (1 Tim. 2:4). This is the zeal of one who wrestles with God for the salvation of all, even those who worshipped the golden calf, and said: *"This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"* (Ex. 32:4).

This zeal of Moses' reminds me of something St Paul said: *"I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"* (Rom. 9:2-3).

What he means is: if, through my being cut off from Christ, they could be united with Him, then I would rather be thus deprived so that they could be one with Him!! What greater love, in the field of ministry, can there be than this?! And what zeal for sacrificing oneself for the sake of others is more profound than this? It shows real love and compassion for them.

Those children of God who possess zeal have to wrestle with God on behalf of the Church and for the sake of the salvation of every soul. They cry aloud to God saying: "**Rise up, O Lord God, and let all Your enemies be scattered... and let all those who hate Your holy name flee from Your sight**".

As for your people, though, may they by Your blessing, in thousands upon thousands and ten thousands come to do Your will.

"Help, Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men". (Ps. 12:1). Rise up and act, for You are the hope of him who has no hope, and the support of him who has no support. Come and help us Lord, for "**we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything**". (Luke 5:5). You are our strength and You are our support, without You we can do nothing. (John 15:5).

One of the spiritual ways in which holy zeal acts is to encourage sinners, so that they are not overcome by despair, and do not lose heart.

Encouraging Weak:

How beautiful and profound are the words of St. Paul. "*_comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all*". (1 Thess. 5:14).

The most dangerous weapon which Satan uses is to make the sinful person feel that it is no use, that sin has taken complete control of him, and that he has no way out!

And through this despair, Satan leads him to resignation and to remaining as he is in his wrongful situation, without a way of repenting or becoming saved.

The person who is full of zeal, however, for the salvation of souls, opens before sinners the door of hope, and gives them a push towards it. He blows on the faltering wick, just in case there is enough life in it to burn again. He binds up the bruised reed in case it might stand upright again, and he says to everyone: 'Do not be afraid. God will never leave you. God's divine help will work along with you. There are many solutions to your problem. God is able to solve it'. In this way he gives that person a push of encouragement just as the two angels did to Lot to make him leave Sodom. (Gen. 19:15-16). We remember, then, the words of the apostle:

"Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees!" (Heb. 12:12). And to help you in this, use all possible love, compassion and patience... and take as your example those whose situation was worse than yours and whom God was able to save.

It is also by holy zeal that those engaged in ministry are stimulated and strongly encouraged. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ used to encourage His disciples by saying to them: *"let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid"*. (John 14:27). *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"*. (Matt. 28:20). *"...they will deliver you up to the councils and scourge you in their synagogues... But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how and what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks*

in you". (Matt. 10:17-20). "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered". (Matt. 10:30).

Through such encouragement as this, they were filled with zeal and served fearlessly.

See how God encouraged Jeremiah in the Old Testament, when He said to him: *"Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you... I have put My words in your mouth... I have made you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land... They will fight against you but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord 'to deliver you'"*. (Jer. 1:8-19).

In much the same way, the Lord encouraged Paul: *"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack to hurt you"*. (Acts 18:9-10).

The Lord also gave the same kind of encouragement to Moses when the latter made an excuse that he was not eloquent. The Lord said to him: *"Now therefore go; and I will be with your mouth and teach you what shall say... take this rod in your hand with which you shall do the signs "*. (Ex. 4:10-17).

Even the strongest people need encouragement at times, as happened to the prophet Elijah, when he fled from Jezebel. (1 Kings 19).

If the heat of zeal grows cool, some encouragement can rekindle it.

If the prophets like Jeremiah, Moses, Elijah, the apostle Paul and the other apostles needed encouragement, as we have just shown, then how much more do sinners who have fallen need it?!

If you come across a sinner who seems unable to repent because he has come to enjoy and even like sin, say to him:

"You will not always find that you love to sin, for the grace of God will act within you and save you from wanting to do wrong. And there will come a time when you will hate it and despise it. God will not let the Devil fight you forever without mercy. God will definitely stop him before he goes too far. So do not be afraid".

" A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked."
(Ps. 91:7,8).

There are some individuals who live a life of righteousness, but yet fear that they will not be able to follow that path to continue it to the end. And there are those who are surrounded by temptation and who fear that they do not have the capacity to resist, or hold out against it... To both these types explain the action of God's grace and the Holy Spirit. And tell them that God will never leave a human being all on his own, even if temptation or trials beset him for a time. God's grace will surely reach out to him and save him.

Encourage them with the words of Jeremiah, when the enemies surrounded the city: *"Don't be afraid... Those who are with us are more than those who are with them"*. (2 Kin. 6:16).

In this way, sinners will not become afraid, but will stand firm. And besides encouraging sinners, one must also go along with them step by step.

Going Along With Them Step By Step:

Being strongly zealous does not mean imposing a life of perfection on others, as if people were capable of behaving perfectly!

This is what the Scribes and Pharisees tried to do, and our Lord Jesus Christ rebuked them because *"For they bind heavy burdens hard to bear and lay them on men's shoulders, but they, themselves, will not move them with one of their fingers"*. (Matt. 23:4). By doing this they were shutting the Kingdom of heaven in men's faces. They, themselves did not enter, nor would they let those who were trying to enter go in. (Matt. 23:13).

Zeal does not mean finding fault with others for not behaving according to some ideal, exemplary standard, but rather it means helping them to keep on aspiring to it.

It means giving strength to the faint-hearted, hope to the despairing, and confidence to whomever imagines that the life of righteousness is beyond him. It means taking every person's hand and raising him to the level at which we should like to see him. That involves taking away his fears and demonstrating to him that the spiritual life is easy and possible...

This only comes by patiently going along step by step with the beginner and the penitent.

There are numerous examples of this in the Bible: such as what the apostles said at the first holy assembly, which they called in Jerusalem, about receiving the Gentiles into the faith. This is what our saintly forefathers said in their compassion, kindness and wisdom: *"we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God"*. (Acts 15:19). *"But that we write to them, to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual*

immorality, from things strangled and from blood..." (Acts 15:20). Thus the apostles did not put before the Gentiles lots of commandments that would make their way difficult.

This is why St. Paul also said to the people of Corinth: "***And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you milk, and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it***". (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

Holy zeal does not mean trying to make the beginner travel the whole spiritual road in one go; for that is impossible in practical term. But rather it means taking him by the hand and going along with him step by step until he arrives on the right path. Then the more enjoyment he finds in a developing spiritual life, the more he will long to progress and bring it to fulfilment. This will not come by controlling him or ordering him in various ways, but will come through natural unfolding. Our forefather Jacob spoke well when he said of his tender flocks that were nursing their young: "***If they are driven hard all ... will die***". (Gen. 33:13).

Even our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now*". (John 16:12). Thus He went on to tell them everything, only at its right time, when they were able to understand and take it in. The principle which the Lord used was "*when the time had fully come*". (Gal. 4:4).

So zeal does not mean sternness in leadership and giving guidance. Nor does it mean that those who have knowledge should pride themselves over those who are weak and incapable. And it certainly does not mean that you ask the beginner to reach the summit straightaway, otherwise you will give him a thorough telling off in the name of holy zeal. Every human being has his own level, "*as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith*". (Rom. 12:3). So we do not demand that

everyone be on the same level in regard to zeal, but that each one should reach his potential according to his gifts and opportunities.

Perhaps he is unable to manage it at the present time, but may well be able to do so at a later date.

Therefore, do not check anyone's aspirations. Just encourage everyone and be prepared to go along with one who is young in faith step by step until he matures, and with the one who is weak, until he gets strong... without thinking yourself superior, or priding yourself like a Pharisee. Be sympathetic and encouraging rather than obstructive and disparaging. Do all you can to build up the weak person, not tear him down.

Along with encouraging those who have done wrong, and going along with them step by step, you need to put before you a spiritual principle which is important in understanding this point, **always aiming at making it easier for people to live according to God's Commandments by raising the people to higher standards, not by being lax and over-tolerant and diluting the Commandments to bring them down to man's level of sin.**

We say in the liturgy of the divine Mass, "facilitate for us the way to godliness". Just as a successful teacher makes it easier for his pupils to understand his particular branch of learning, so the one who facilitates the way for others to carry out God's Commandments, without being over-indulgent or too permissive or allowing them to break His laws, is also successful in his ministry. Therefore let your zeal be mixed with wisdom, and remember what the Bible says: *"he who wins souls is wise"*. (Prov. 11:30).

But let us move on now to another point concerning how zeal works, which is how it acts along with God .

Partnership With God:

No one can save another person except by means of God himself, For motivating hearts and awakening consciences is part of the activity of that very God. For it was God who said: "*Let there be light*" and there was light, (Gen. 1:3) and who said: "*for without Me you can do nothing*". (John 15:5).

Thus any action on behalf of saving souls can only be done in partnership with God, which is why the apostle Paul said about himself and his colleague Apollos: "*we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, you are God's building*" (1 Cor. 3:9). The individual himself, must have already made contact with God, in order to bring others to Him.

Let us take iron and magnetism as an example.

A magnet can attract iron, and when the iron becomes magnetised it can, in turn, attract another piece of iron towards it. And if they should meet a third piece of iron, that will be attracted to them too. So a piece of iron, that is in contact with a magnet, can itself attract another piece. But if it is not in contact with the magnet, then it cannot do that. Even a piece of iron that weighs a ton cannot attract a tiny nail unless that huge mass is magnetised. Yet a magnetised nail has the power to attract; even though it is small.

Another example is that of an electric light and an electric current.

You can find electric lights which are very beautiful, very powerful and of quite an exquisite type, which emit a light that gives people great joy to see. But in actual fact, such lights can only give light as long as they are connected to an electric

current. If they are cut off from the electricity supply then they cease to work; their usefulness, beauty and attractive shape are worth nothing.

So too will all your zeal be in vain if you are far away from God, who is the source of power.

Thus, in spite of the disciples' zeal in spreading the Kingdom of God, the Lord said to them: "...tarry in the city (Jerusalem) until you are endued with power from on high". (Luke 24:49). And He went on to say, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall witness to Me...*" (Acts 1:8). And that is how it was. The apostles only began their ministry after the Holy Spirit had descended on them.

Do you think that the apostles' zeal would have been enough to make their ministry successful, without the Holy Spirit coming upon them?!

No, it definitely would not have been, for ministry depends entirely on partnership with God, who acts **in** us, **with** us and **through** us. "*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain*". (Ps. 127:1). It was Paul who "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God gave the increase*". (1 Cor. 3:6).

Paul commented on this matter, saying: "*So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God, who gives the increase*". (1 Cor. 3:7).

So have a close look at your zeal then, and ask yourself if it is working with God?

If you lose that link with God, you will not be able to connect anyone to Him, however zealous you might be, because

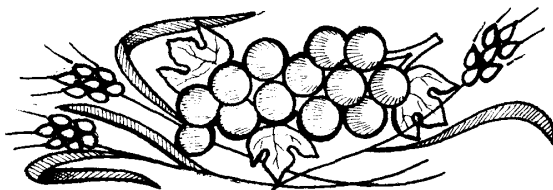
"...whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him". (Mark 4:25).

So **we** must love God in order to make others love Him. And we must obey His commands so that we will be able to explain to others, in practical terms, how His directions should be obeyed.

Truly what humility God shows, that He takes us as partners in His activity. Yet how lazy and idle we are in return!

God is able to save the whole world without us. But out of His loving humility He took us as His partners; we who are weak and sinful! So how can we ignore this grace of His and be so sluggish and idle in working for Him? And why don't we show such fiery zeal, like Him?!

This is really strange. But what is more baffling is that we sometimes even obstruct the growth of His Kingdom, which we do by our negativity, our struggles against each other in the ministry, by our lukewarm attitude and by our taking the keys to the Kingdom and not entering, and not letting those who want to enter do so, and by our human rivalries, which are all so remote from the true spirit of zeal and service!!



CHAPTER TWO

MOTIVES OF HOLY ZEAL

1. Love of God and His Kingdom
2. Love of People and Compassion for them
3. The example of the apostle Paul
4. Don't stand by and watch
5. The value of the individual soul
6. The importance of saving souls
7. Obstacles to zeal

There are many things which motivate holy zeal, some of which are concerned with God, and some with man, while others are concerned with the activity itself and with the individual's soul.

Love Of God And His Kingdom:

Whoever loves God, wants everyone to love Him. His heart becomes kindled with zeal when he finds people far away from God and those who love him. He wants everyone and everything to be God's. *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness the world and those who dwell therein"*. (Ps. 24:1).

Whoever loves God wants the Kingdom of God to spread, and for God to enter every heart and every home in every city. So he cries out day and night from deep within his heart, "Thy Kingdom come", and cannot bear it if there is anyone resisting God or fighting against His Kingdom. Thus he works with all his might to attract everyone to God's Kingdom.

Whoever loves God, naturally loves God's children. He wants them all to be saved, so that none goes astray or perishes. Every soul that he meets is precious to him, because it is one of God's children who are, after all, created in the image and likeness of God.

Whoever loves God, finds pleasure in bringing joy to God's heart. But how might he do that? The Bible says, *"There is joy of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:10).

So if you wish to bring joy to the heart of God in the presence of His heavenly angels, try to lead someone to repentance. God says: *"Let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found"*. (Luke 15:23-24).

Anyone who loves God, likewise obeys His commandments. And God's command says: "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*". (Matt. 6:33). And what else? It says, "*Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life*". (John 6:27). Therefore, we must seek the Kingdom of God with all our strength and feelings, and must offer to the children of God the everlasting food that they need for eternal life.

Love Of People And Compassion For Them:

Your deep concern for people springs from your love for them, and your desire for their salvation.

So let them feel your love. Be friendly to them and make them love you, then they will come to love the holy life which you lead and they will want to be spiritual like you; for it is your spirituality which attracts them to you and which will attract them to God. Trust that love will have a strong and great effect.

Our Lord Jesus showed His love to tax-collectors, and would sometimes eat with them, while the Pharisees looked down on them. But in the end it was Christ's love which was victorious, and which won them over.

As a consequence of your love for others, you will feel concerned about their eternal fate. There are certain verses in the Holy Bible which can only strike terror into a man who is trying to serve God, because his love for his brothers makes him fear for them, lest they should come to a grievous end on the last day, as our Lord said: "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*". (Matt. 25:41).

Wretched indeed will be those who will enter the everlasting fire to join Satan and the rest of the devils, in that place which the Book of Revelation referred to as, "***in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death***". (Rev. 21 . 8).

This is where "*the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars*" will be found. (Rev. 21:8).

If we were to imagine some of our brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances, or any human being for that matter, having such a fate, how terrible it would be. This is the fate which our Lord spoke of when he said: "***There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth***". (Matt. 13:50).

"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just and cast them into the furnace of fire...", "*as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age*". (Matt. 13:49, 50, 40).

How difficult it is for us to come to terms with what our Lord said, that at the end He might say: "*I never knew you. Away from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*"(Matt. 7:21-23). This is what He will say on the Last Day to those who did not do the will of the Father who is in heaven. Our Lord also said to the foolish virgins: "*I tell you the truth, I don't know you.*" (Matt. 25:12).

The more we bear in mind the verses relating to eternity, the more we are likely to fear for our brothers. There are the verses concerning everlasting torment, the outer darkness, and the rich man being tortured in that eternal fire, crying out to Lazarus for a drop of water to cool his mouth. (Luke 16:24).

It is then that we get concerned, and fear for those who might perish, and be barred from the presence of God and His angels to be thrown into eternal torment, without hope and without any prospect of release...

So the question is not just that of zeal for the Kingdom of God, this zeal also carries within it love of God, love for people and deep concern for their eternal fate.

It is a love that strives for the salvation of those souls which are threatened by eternal destruction. As St. Peter the Apostle said: *"receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets... searched diligently, and prophesied of the grace that would come to you"*. (1 Peter 1:9-10).

The Example Of The Apostle Paul:

Out of his love and concern for others, Paul said: *"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"* (2 Cor.11:29) by which he meant that if anyone was ill, it was as if he himself were ill too, in sympathy with that person. And if somebody stumbled and fell in his spiritual life, Paul would be deeply concerned for him, so that such person, for whom Christ died, might be saved from becoming spiritually languid and instead; regaining his original fervour.

St. Paul used to apply all ways and means in order to bring others to salvation. And he said concerning this: *"For though I am free from all men, and I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews, I became as a Jew that I might win the Jews. To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God but under the law toward Christ), that I might win those who are*

without law... I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some". (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

It was a fight on behalf of other people, in which the apostle sought all appropriate means in order to bring them to salvation. The important thing was that they were saved, by whatever way it happened to be. As St. Jude said: *"Be merciful to those in doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh". (Jude v. 22-23).*

Don't Stand By And Watch:

We cannot stand by and watch the world perish!

We must do something practical to save it, as long as we are able... You can't see a fire burning a house and stand by and watch. You can't see a blind man fall into a ditch and say, as Cain did: *"Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9).* Look at what the apostle James said: *"Therefore to him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, to him it is sin". (James 4:17).*

If you know what to do, do it. And if you don't know, then ask those who do, or hand over the particular task to those who know. Don't ever be totally passive, for being passive is incompatible with being loving and being zealous... To be passive would be as if you did not care about people's salvation!!

The Value Of The Individual Soul:

The person who is kindled with holy zeal for the salvation of others, has come to appreciate the value of the human soul - any soul...

He feels the value of the individual soul for which Christ died, just as the good shepherd searches after one lost sheep, until he finds it and bears it safely home on his shoulders rejoicing. (Luke 15).

An example of this is the way our Lord strove to save the woman from Samaria.

He travelled a long distance for her sake, even though He was tired, hungry and thirsty, so that the Bible said of Him: "*Jesus therefore being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour*". (John 4:6).

One of His disciples could well have asked Him, "Why are we going to all this trouble?! She's only a sinful and worthless woman!" But the Lord would have replied: "*But she is My daughter, and I have come to call sinners, not the righteous, to repentance*".

When His disciples called Him to eat, He said to them: "*I have food to eat which you do not know... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me...*" (John 4:32, 34).

"My food is this soul: by its salvation I am nourished. By saving it my appetite and thirst are satisfied, and I find rest and refreshment".

It was because of His preoccupation with saving this woman that the Lord Jesus was able to ignore food, though He was hungry, and ignore drinking, though He was thirsty. And that is why He cared nothing about His personal comfort despite being tired and exhausted. The only thing that was in His mind was how to save that woman, and how to save the Samaritans.

This is true zeal for saving souls.

Christianity does not just focus its concern on whole groups of people, but is concerned also for each individual soul.

Love does not allow the individual to wander off and get lost in the midst of a great crowd of people. In Christianity, every person feels that God cares specially for him, and that the Church also cares for him in the same way.

Our Lord Jesus used to work in the midst of large crowds, as for example, when He spoke to all the people in the sermon on the mount. And also when He performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, there was a crowd of some five thousand listening to Him.

Yet our Lord Jesus, in the midst of the crowd, showed His concern for Zacchaeus. Though the crowd was pressing in on him, our Lord turned to Zacchaeus, paid him special attention, called him by name and entered his home. And our Lord said: *"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham"*. Our Lord justified his attention to Zacchaeus by saying: *"the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"*. (Luke 19:10).

Are you like Him: do you seek to save that which might otherwise have perished?

The Importance Of Saving Souls:

Whoever realises the importance of continuing Jesus' work of saving people will find his heart fired with zeal for this great undertaking, about which we remember St. Peter when he said: *"receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls"*. (1 Peter 1:9).

The apostle goes on to say that this was the salvation for which the prophets *"searched intently and with the greatest care"*. (1 Peter 1:10). And St. Paul says: *"How shall we escape if we neglect so a great a salvation?"* (Heb. 2:3).

Our Lord considered that whoever exerted himself in this sphere was working with Him. For He said: *"He who does not gather with Me scatters"*. (Matt. 12:30).

Do you gather with Christ, or scatter? Do you gather these lost souls and bear them home upon your shoulders joyfully, in order to bring them together into the Kingdom? God wants those who will gather like Christ, because the harvest is great, but the workers few. Thus the Lord commanded us to make this request part of our prayers, by saying:

***"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labours into His harvest "*. (Matt. 9:38).**

Are you one of these workers? Are you trying hard to prepare a place for the Lord in the heart of everyone, bearing in your mind that the world has many people serving its materialistic and worldly values, and who in fact rival each other in its service, while those who serve the Lord by doing His work, are few in number? And even if there appears on occasions to be many, it may well be that they are not actually of very good quality.

The salvation of souls is more important to God than the act of creation: for what would the use of the world and all its creatures be if it went to hell?! We may perhaps recall that the act of creation cost God nothing but the issuing of an order, like His words, for example, *"Let there be light"* and there was light. (Gen. 1:3). But the act of salvation cost Him the incarnation, the release of His essential being, the pains of the

cross and death, and all that the act of atonement and redemption required.

Therefore, the Lord's resting after saving the world from sin and death, was more important than His resting after the process of creation. Sunday was more important than Saturday, and so it became the Lord's day.

The act of saving a soul is more important than a miracle of raising a dead body to life. For the act of saving a soul, is in fact a form of raising from the dead, but here it is a raising to life of a lifeless spirit, which is of more importance than bringing a dead body back to life. Didn't the father say on the return of the prodigal son, *"For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found"*. (Luke 15:24). And the apostle St. James said concerning this: *"he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins"*. (James 5:20).

The Devil does his utmost to lead souls to death, using every kind of trick and temptation, and every snare, to catch them. But then we stand on the opposite side ready to save souls from death. And we are working with God in this situation, as St. Paul said. (1 Cor. 3:9).

Because this is the work of God, his angels and saints, it is of special importance. It is the work of the apostles, the pastors and the teachers, and of all the ranks of the clergy. And it is also the work of all those who minister in the Lord's Vineyard, and of the souls of the righteous in their intercessions. All are working for the sake of the Kingdom of God, to make it spread, and to save every soul. It is actually an activity which every Christian is called upon to do according to his abilities. St. James the apostle said: *"Therefore to him who knows the good and does not do it, to him it is sin"*. (James 4:17). So do whatever you can for the Kingdom,

trusting that God will work with you. If you do not **try**, then this will be counted a fault against you...

Perhaps an important aspect of this work is the reward which is promised in return. Look at our forefathers the apostles, for instance, to whom our Lord said: *"When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"*. (Matt. 19:28).

If you say, however, that this only applies to the apostles, because they were of a very high rank, then let me tell you about Daniel's prophecy about those who work to guide and help sinners. It was prophesied that: *"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turned many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever"*. (Dan.12:3).

They will shine like stars... what a great glory! This is how we find the Lord, in the beginning of the Book of Revelation, when John described Him as being in the midst of the seven lamp stands, which represent the seven churches, holding in His right hand the seven stars which are the angels of the seven churches.(Rev. 1:13, 16, 20).

Another important aspect of the salvation of souls is that it is a cause of joy to the Lord.

In the story of the lost sheep, we see that on finding it the Lord, *"He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing"*. (Luke 15:5). And in the story of the prodigal son, when he returned, his father slaughtered the fatted calf and told his servants to prepare a feast, *"So they began to be merry"*. (Luke 15:24). And he said to the other brother, *"Let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found"*. (Luke 15:23).

Then in the parable of the lost coin, the Bible tells us that when the widow found it, she didn't just rejoice on her own, but called her friends and neighbours saying: "*Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I lost*". (Luke 15:9).

So if you feel that you have saddened God in the past by your sins, try now to make Him happy by your repentance and by trying to save others.

If there is joy in heaven "*over one sinner who repents*", (Luke 15 : 10) then how much **more** rejoicing there will be over those who bring many others to righteousness. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if you were to please God and bring joy to the hearts of his angels, by working to save souls? And at the same time you would be making up to God for those years which the locust ate away from your life and that of others. (Joel 1:4).

Just think, our forefather Abraham held a party for three angels (Gen. 18), but you can give a cause for celebration to all the angels of heaven by your holy zeal participating in the work of saving others, guiding them and rescuing them from sin or ignorance, or from unbelief or permissiveness.

Obstacles To Zeal:

There are various obstacles which some people put in the way of service to God, which prevents them from being aflame with holy zeal. Ironically, these obstacles might well be clothed in spiritual garb, so that the person's conscience feels at ease about it, whilst in fact he is alienated from the action of holy zeal. So what are these obstacles?

1. Some might justify that their concern for the salvation of their own soul would let them too preoccupied to be concerned for the salvation of others.

However, to save your soul, you should have love for others, and concern for their soul salvation. So how can you be saved if you don't love others and do your best to save their soul ?

I don't mean by this that you should think of yourself more highly than you ought (Rom. 12:3) and set yourself up as a preacher or teacher to one and all, when you don't have enough knowledge and experience! But think of yourself with sober judgement according to your possibilities and talents.

If there is anyone whom you find you are unable to guide, then pray for him.

Praying for the salvation of other people is something which everyone can do, and requires no special talents or abilities! So strive with God in this matter, and also put yourself along with those who need to be ministered to and who need to be prayed for.

I would also add that there is a difference between the monk who shuts himself away in a life of seclusion, silence and worship, and a person who lives in the world, and who is aware of what people need and who cannot close his heart before them. (1 John 3:17).

2. Others might give as an excuse that being zealous would make them lose their peaceable and humble nature, as if being peaceable and modest meant that a person had to be immobile and inactive, or cool and never grow hot! Did St. Paul lose his meek and mild temper when he became furious to see the city of Athens full of idols? (Acts 17:16). He acted and

behaved in accordance with holy zeal, yet at the same time he retained his gentle character.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we learn how to be humble and gentle, (Matt. 11:29) was acting under the influence of holy zeal when he twisted together a rope and purged the temple. He reproached the people, drove out the animals and overturned the tables of the money changers. And He said to them: "*My house will be called a house of prayer*", but you are making it a den of robbers. (Matt. 21:12).

Leading a spiritual life doesn't mean leading a passive life, for the spiritual life is a positive force in which one's virtues are brought to maturity and perfection, without any conflict or contradiction between them.

A person can be humble and gentle-mannered, yet at the same time be zealous, courageous and determined. He uses each of these virtues at the right moment and in such a way that it does not conflict with his other virtues. It is just like a father who gives his son love at one time, and patronises him at another, without feeling any contradiction.

We might cite the prophet David as an example of someone who showed both zeal and a mild, peaceable nature.

David was undoubtedly meek and gentle, for it says in the psalm: "*Lord, remember David and his afflictions how he swore to the Lord*". Even so, it says in the same psalm, that David made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob: "*I will not go into the chamber of my house or go up to the comfort of my bed - I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob*". (Ps. 132:1-3). So here we have the depth of holy zeal conforming with a meek and humble manner.

We could mention the prophet Moses as another example of zeal and meekness combined.

As far as having a gentle temper is concerned, Moses was said to be "*_ a very humble man, more humble than all men who were on the face of the earth*". (Num. 12:3). And yet Moses, this mild and humble man, blazed with zealous wrath when he saw the people worshipping the golden calf. And he burned that calf, smashed it to pieces and scattered its ashes and rebuked Aaron the chief priest. (Ex. 32:19-20).

3. **Other people might give an excuse that they haven't been called to this form of serving God.** But in reply to this, I would say that for a full consecration of one's life to God's service, one undoubtedly needs a vocation and a clear call, like becoming a priest, for example. For the apostle said: "*No man takes this honour to himself; but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was*". (Heb. 5:4).

Another example of this is being a prophet or apostle.

There are some individuals whom the Lord calls clearly to serve him, as He did with the prophets Moses (Exodus 3), Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1) and Samuel (1 Sam. 3:10) and as the Lord did in the case of the twelve disciples (Matthew 10).

There is another kind of person, however, who may not have had such a clear call, but who finds himself truly aflame with love for serving God which he cannot resist. And this inner fire is a divine call through the action of God's grace within that person. The Lord will have stirred him from within.

This is, of course, providing that the aims of that person's actions are healthy, that his means are spiritual, and that in his service to God he is not acting independently from the Church.

In the case of such a person, even if he makes a mistake in his method or means of doing something, the Lord will restore this error somewhere along the way, and will send him someone to teach him on how to make his aims correct and avoid being self-centred.

Holy zeal, then, is part of the action of divine grace within the heart; so zeal in itself does not require a call; it is rather a holy feeling which should be in everyone's heart.

The form of action which this zeal takes may, on some occasions, require a call of some kind. But whoever lives under the guidance of a spiritual father can be guided in his actions by this father. Thus both his zeal and his activity will be under guidance and supervision.

There are situations when a call might be considered equivalent to a command, or to be an obligation of brotherly love.

If you are walking along and come across someone who is drowning, or in a burning building, or who is blind, do you have to be **told** to go and guide the blind, or save the drowning, or contact the fire brigade ... ?!

No, not at all. For the heart that burns with love, burns with zeal to save, and the word of call here is merely a formality. The call that is in the heart is above such formalities.

Here we might recall the example of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10). Did the Samaritan make an excuse that he hadn't received a call to act as he did, or that it wasn't his official job to help, such as the priest's or the Levite's?! Or when he saw the wounded man, did he take "*pity on him and bandage his*

wounds?" (Luke 10:33-34) This is how it is then in many kinds of ministering. And we might go on to mention at this point.

4. Others might say that spiritual work is not their concern but the responsibility of the various ranks of the clergy.

Of course they are right, it **is** the responsibility of the clergy, but the priests cannot do it all on their own. They must have everyone helping and cooperating with them. Just as it is also true that the procedure of shifting off the responsibility onto someone's hand means that one is ignoring one's personal responsibility, which should rise spontaneously from love and concern lest others should perish. Does the responsibility of others excuse you from acting out of love, whenever it is in your capacity to do so?!

So be concerned about your brother's well being. And do all you can to win souls for the Lord. Beware of repeating Cain when he said, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Gen. 4:9). For you are your brother's keeper. You protect him by love and caring. You protect him by your heart and speech, by your efforts and by your prayers, and by getting into any trouble for his sake. Do not leave one of your brothers go astray, if it is within your power to save him. Because God will call us to account for the souls of our brothers on the Last Day. Especially those who found no one to stand beside them, whom we pray for in the midnight absolution, when we say: "Remember, O Lord, the feeble and rejected, and those who have no one to remember them".



CHAPTER THREE
THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS OF HOLY
ZEAL

1. Zeal based on knowledge
2. Accompanied by a good lifestyle
3. Constructive not destructive
4. A strong and courageous zeal
5. A fruitful and active zeal

Not all zeal is holy zeal, there are false kinds of zeal, such as that which is not based on knowledge, that which is not religious, that which is unfruitful, that which is destructive, and that which is abusive. So we must mention what the necessary conditions of holy zeal are.

1. Zeal Based On Knowledge:

The apostle Paul spoke critically of this wrong type of zeal, which the Israelites showed. *"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge"*. (Rom. 10:2).

So there is false zeal, then. But what is it like? What are its causes and how can it be recognised?

Perhaps one of the most important examples of this false type of zeal is:

1. The zeal of Saul of Tarsus when he persecuted the Holy Church.

Speaking about himself, he said that *"as for zeal"* he was guilty of *"persecuting the church"*. (Phil. 3:6). And he also said: *"although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"*. (1 Tim. 1:13). He had been persecuting Christianity out of a good intention, but in ignorance of the right faith. Thus he said to the Jews: *"taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law and was zealed toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women"*. (Acts 22:3-4).

Another example of zeal being used for the wrong purpose is:

2. **The zeal of the Jews and their leaders against the twelve disciples and the apostle Paul.**

The Bible tells how, *"the high priest rose up and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison".* (Acts 5:17).

It also says, *"when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul".* (Acts 13:45),

When Paul and Silas began preaching the gospel at Jason's house in Thessalonika, the Book of Acts says: *"But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the market-place, and gathering a mob set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason and sought to bring them out to the people".* And they said of Paul and Silas *"These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and These are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king - Jesus." and they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things".* (Acts 17:5-8).

So here we find a zeal that is not based on knowledge, but is channelled into false accusations, stirring up unrest, resisting the faith and trying to harm others...

Yet it is an enthusiasm with a religious motive behind it; and those who are under its influence imagine that they are doing what is holy, while they are really going against the truth and using false means and lies. Perhaps another good example of this is what our Lord Jesus said to His disciples:

3. " a time is coming that whoever kills, you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2).

Into this category also comes the whole history of Jewish persecution of Christianity (and also the Roman), and other forms of persecution over the centuries. It was of this that our Lord spoke when He said: "*they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings*" "*All men will hate you because of Me...*". (Matt. 10:17, 18, 22). There is also the example of :

4. The vow which the Jews made to fast until they had killed Paul.

What happened was that more than forty of the Jews made a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath, "*they would neither nor drink till they had killed Paul*". (Acts 23:12). This is obviously a wrong vow to make, arising from a bad kind of zeal.

Some of the apostles and prophets even made the mistake of being over-enthusiastic in the wrong way, and we might mention here, as an example:

5. The apostle Peter's zeal in cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant.

During Christ's arrest, Peter was overcome by fervour out of his manly honour and love for his master, and so he, "*stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 'Put your sword back in its place', The Lord Jesus said to him, 'for all who take the sword will perish by the sword'*". (Matt. 26:51). Although Peter's impulse here was well-intended, his method was wrong .

6. The zeal of Moses was originally like this wrong kind of fervour.

At the beginning of his time, before God had trained him in how to combine gentleness and firmness, it happened that after Moses had grown up: *"he went out his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand"*. (Ex. 2:12). His zeal was well-intended, for it was the defence of the oppressed, but his method was wrong because he used violence and killed.

7. Another example of zeal being used wrongly is that of the apostles James and John

who, when one of the Samaritan villages refused to accept the Lord, said: *"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them?"* (Luke 9:52-54). But the Lord rebuked them saying: *"You do not know what manner of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them"*. (Luke 9:56). The zeal of James and John was inspired by love and respect for their good teacher, their Lord and Master. But it was mistaken in its method and for seeking revenge.

8. Then there is the case of Joshua's zeal for his teacher Moses.

It was known that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp. But Joshua became jealous and flared up in indignation on behalf of Moses, his teacher. Yet when he asked Moses if he could have permission to stop the two from carrying on, his teacher corrected him saying: *"Are you zealous for my sake? Oh that that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"* (Num. 11:29).

Let us always remember the words of the apostle to the people of Galatia: *"It is in a good cause to be zealous, in a good thing always"*. (Gal. 4:18).

Another characteristic of holy zeal is that it must be:

2. Accompanied By A Good Lifestyle:

Holy zeal will never have a good impression on other people unless it is accompanied by a good lifestyle in those who are zealous, so that they may become for others a good example and standard for them to emulate.

This is why we find that the apostle Paul was aglow with zeal to save souls. Yet at the same time he said to the Corinthians: *"Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you... who will remind you of my way of life in Christ ..."* (1 Cor. 4:16-17). So Paul commissioned his disciple Timothy whom he had trained to follow his lifestyle, saying to him: *"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance"*. (2 Tim. 3:10).

It is a fact that what we, very often see, has a much greater effect on our spirituality than what we hear.

What people see of your life and model of behaviour has a bigger impact on them than what they hear of your sermons and advice. And if the will of God, which you defend so fervently, is not put into practice in your life, then it is in vain and will make all your zeal in its defence quite useless!

We must love God in order to make others love him. We must present them with a way of life, not just instruction. We

must present the will of God in a practical lifestyle and not just in theoretical teaching. God must first clothe our hearts, and then we can influence the hearts of others.

Beware of being only signposts on the spiritual path.

Anyone who travels on the desert road from Cairo to Alexandria sees signposts on the way directing him to Alexandria, and telling him how many kilometres remain. These signposts only lead him to the city without actually bringing him **into** the city. So don't be like this, just pointing people in the direction of a life with God, but without actually living that life yourself.

Don't be like the bells which call people to come to church, but which never enter the church themselves.

Don't just stand along the road pointing people to the right direction, which they should follow in order to reach God, but actually travel that road yourself, walking or running towards God. Then let whoever wishes to walk with you or run, in order to reach God, do so. Don't be content just to be a signpost .

The Scribes and Chief Priests were also signposts on the road. After all, they led the Magi to Bethlehem where the Messiah was to be born. They examined their Scriptures and said: "*for this is what the prophet has written*". (Matt. 2:5-6). And so the Magi went to Bethlehem, saw the Messiah and knelt down to worship Him and offered Him gifts. But the Scribes who had directed them didn't go themselves, and didn't see Christ or offer Him presents ... !

We want people who have reached God and made contact with Him themselves in order that they can bring others to Him.

We want people who have seen Him, and touched Him and experienced Him; who have loved Him and known for themselves the delight of living with Him, so that they can say to others: *"Taste and see that the Lord is good"*. (Psalm 34:8). Or at least people who have had the experience that the woman from Samaria had when she saw Christ and spoke with Him, and who then said to the people, *"Come, see..."* (John 4:29).

If you have not tasted the food from heaven, how can you describe it to others?!

If your heart is empty of God, how can you call others to love Him? If your eyes are dry, how can you talk to them **about tears? And how can you explain the life of victory if you are still fallen in the state of sin? How will your words have any power to convince your fellow?** So listen then, to what our Lord said: *"... whoever does and teaches these commands he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven"*. (Matt. 5:19).

The Lord put practice before teaching. And in the same way Paul wrote to his pupil Timothy telling him: *"take heed to yourself and to the doctrine continue in them. for in doing this , you will save both yourself and those who hear you"*. So here we see Paul instructing his disciple to *"watch his life"* before concerning himself with doctrine... (1 Tim. 4:16).

Acquire the fruits of the Spirit, and then people will taste your fruit and like it.

Instead of speaking to them about *"love, joy and peace"* and the other fruits of the Spirit, (Gal. 5:22) let them see those fruits in their lives. Present them with Christianity - by your example - as a life of joy and peace...

A stumbling block which sometimes happens is that some people who are seeking to serve the Lord imagine that having a spiritual life means being serious all the time and going round with a subdued expression. They neither laugh nor smile, and they speak with intensity and determination. But by doing so they cause an obstacle to those who see them, who then say to themselves: **"If we travel the road to God, will we turn out like that too?!"**

Does our life with God mean that we should live in constant gloom, raising before us a banner saying, *"a sad face is good for the heart"*. (Eccles. 7:3). And is that the correct interpretation of this verse?!

But if they see you as a righteous and holy person, who is at the same time happy, rejoicing *"in the Lord always"* (Phil. 4:4) with a peaceful heart, speaking with others with a smiling face rather than a gloomy one; then they will feel encouraged and begin to like what they see of the spiritual life, and not fear it.

Purity of lifestyle makes zeal bear fruit.

Another aspect of the necessary conditions of holy zeal, which also springs from a good lifestyle, is that zeal is:

3. Constructive Not Destructive:

Some people imagine that holy zeal is a kind of revolution aimed at setting everything right, and that this revolution must be accompanied by noise, unrest, insults and destruction ... !

In reality this is fervour without being godly, because it is devoid of any spirituality or divine wisdom. The apostle James condemns such zeal, which he refers to as 'envy' saying: *"But if*

you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there". (James 3:14-16).

Being ambitious for improvements and setting everything right is something desirable; but it is not good if it involves ending up with disorder. It must be done only by wisdom and spirituality and in a positive way. St James describes this wisdom and spirituality thus: *"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit... Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness". (James 3:17-18).*

Therefore Christianity condemns fervour that is destructive and abusive.

Being zealous for the truth does not mean that you insult sinners or bombard them with rebukes or hurt them, because it is perfectly possible to defend the Truth in a constructive and positive way. For we are not speaking merely about zeal, but about holy zeal. And that which is holy cannot be compatible with a destructive or abusive manner.

Holy zeal is that which rescues the sinner from his sin, not that which crushes him.

To save is better than to condemn. Building up the soul by virtue, is better than crushing it by hurtful criticism, insulting its reputation and tearing its feelings to shreds, or using any other means of insulting or humiliating someone, under the name of zeal!!

Holy zeal isn't shouting or making noise or fuss, and it isn't just speaking, but it is a positive and beneficial way of acting on behalf of what is good and on behalf of others, whilst adhering to holy methods. It is a spreading of the Truth in a just way, in which no mistake is made; with no fuss, no quarrelling or antagonism.

It is like the flame that cooks well, not the flame that burns the food.

It is not a raging tempest which sweeps away whatever is in its path roughly and mercilessly. Neither is it a 'bitter envy', as James described it. Anyone who serves the Lord, who could be described as having zeal, is *"eager to do what is good"*. (Titus 2:14).

Likewise, zeal is unassuming, it does not puff itself up or think too highly of itself.

It feels the pains of sinners, and sets about trying to save them, with love, gentleness and humility. As Paul said to the leaders of Ephesus: *"Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears"*. (Acts 20:31). So Paul warned them with tears, not with arrogance, pride or harshness...

Zeal strives for the sake of others, not to crush them. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ did, who said that He had come not to condemn the world, but to save the world. (John 3:17). He also said: *"the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them"*. (Luke 9:56). Therefore, holy zeal is a merciful, delivering zeal, whose aim is to save.

It is a zeal which goes out to meet, to convince and to follow up, which removes obstacles and solves problems.

Instead of blaming sinners for not following the right path to walk, it makes it easier for them by helping them to walk along the way and love it and by strengthening their determination and will.

Another aspect of the qualities of holy zeal is that it is:

4. A Strong And Courageous Zeal:

Some people may like modesty and humility and aspire to these qualities, but unfortunately they sometimes think that humility and mild tempered conflict with strength and courage!

This is a fatal mistake. All these Christian virtues are represented in the mature character, nothing is lacking. Our Lord was both gentle and humble; besides being strong and bold. What a beautiful thing David said about holy zeal: "*I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings and will not be ashamed*". (Ps. 119:46).

Holy zeal is a fire, and fire has power and heat.

The words of a server who is characterised by zeal are like a word of fire, "*that goes forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void*". (Is. 55:11). But what is more, the word of God "*is living and powerful, and Sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit...*" (Heb. 4:12).

When that person prays for the sake of God's ministry, his prayer is a fire that burns, for "*fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*". (James 5:16). Such prayer is able to stand before God, struggling and overcoming... and to take from Him a strength which fires the ministry and gives it success.

When the zealous server rebukes, he is like a fire; and when he gives advice, he is also like a fire. And if he deals with some matter, then he does so with strength and God's grace, without becoming slack or indifferent. He is a person whose heart, thoughts, expressions and feelings are ablaze. And his action has powerful results.

Zeal isn't just following a routine or doing a duty, it is strength. It is a feeling, an emotion, an enthusiasm, an ardour and a courage that transcends all obstacles. It is a constant and productive activity. This strength which belongs to zeal appears in numerous affairs such as: **a strength in convincing others and influencing them, and a strength in defending the faith and Truth, and a strength in action.**

If someone with this type of fervour enters the service of God, then everyone feels that a great energy has entered the ministry, and that every branch of it has begun to be motivated and heated, and that it is bearing abundant fruits. Such people have derived strength from the Spirit, which has then become a characteristic of theirs which accompanies them at all times and in all places.

It is amazing that the people of the world may well have courage when it comes to the thoughtless or irresponsible things they do, yet the children of God quite often tend to feel embarrassed about their righteousness.

It is as if 'humility' were a seal on their lips!! They don't have strength to defend their principles or beliefs, or their spiritual way of life. It is as if one of them were ashamed of having a spiritual dimension to his life.

Look at how the Bible describes the holy angels: *"Bless the Lord, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word..."* (Ps. 103:20).

It reminds me of the strength with which St. Paul spoke about righteousness, self-restraint and judgement, a matter that scared governor Felix .

Paul was filled with the Spirit, and was thus filled with strength, that strength of the Spirit about which it was said: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"*. (Acts 1:8).

Another of the necessary characteristics of holy zeal is that it is:

5. A Fruitful And Active Zeal:

Zeal is a positive activity, not just words... and any positive activity must have its fruit in the Kingdom of God. The Bible has asked us to be fruitful, when it said: *"every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"*. (Matt. 3:10).

If holy zeal possesses someone's heart, then it drives him strongly towards saving himself and saving others. I hope that you will have this zeal, and may you also have, along with it, love for others and the will to strive to bring them into the Kingdom.

If you don't have the zeal that drives you to act to save others, then you will be a barren and fruitless tree.

Would you like going to God without having borne any spiritual fruit, without having even won a single soul for Christ?! Would you be content to be a barren, fruitless tree?!

If the vine has only one bunch of grapes upon it, then it single grape, then it, too, still has a blessing! (Is. 65:8). And what about you?! Perhaps you will be able to stand up in the Kingdom of God and say: "*Here am I, and the children whom the Lord has given me*". (Is. 8:18).

So be fruitful in your life. As long as there is life in a tree, then fruit will come naturally. Be productive, not passive. Ask yourself every day if you are making any new contribution to the Kingdom, and increasing its yield? And whether you have been able to communicate the word of God to anyone else?

The most blessed days in your life are those which bear fruit for Christ.

Some of the most amazing days have been those in the lives of the saints which were thus blessed and on such days, the Kingdom of God grew. The words of the Bible "*With the Lord, a day is as a thousand years*", (2 Peter 3:8) apply to such times.

The generation in which we live might well cry out and pray saying: O Lord, we did not deserve to live in the generation which saw you in the flesh and saw how you worked. Nor would we have been worthy to live in the lifetime of, for example, St. Paul, either. But yet it is a cherished prayer that we make: **'Please give us just one day in the life of Paul, or one day in the life of Peter or Stephen'**.

The apostle Peter was able, on one single day, to bring 3,000 people to the faith. (Acts 2:41).

And because of St. Stephen, "*the word of God spread, and the number of disciples in multiplied greatly in Jerusalem...*" (Acts 6:7).

Paul used to win people for Christ in every situation. (1 Cor. 9:22). He used to work in every field, with everybody, with the Jews, the Greeks, with those not under the law etc., with the skill of someone experienced in saving souls. How many souls there will be following St. Paul in the Kingdom! Who can tell? And how great will be his yield in the Kingdom of God? One thing is certain; he was definitely no ordinary servant of Christ.

It is to Paul, and people like him, that the Bible refers when it says: *"I said, You are 'gods'. And all of you are children of the Most High"*. (Ps. 82:6).

Paul was in fact higher than these.

Look at the giants in the Kingdom of God, and earnestly desire to follow their road. Ask yourself every day: **"What have I done for the Kingdom of God?** Am I faithful in my service and in developing all the talents which God has given me? And have I responded to all those souls whom God wanted me to serve? And on the last day, shall I hear his tender voice saying to me: *"Well done, good and faithful servant! you were faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord!"* (Matt. 25:21).

I always marvel at that clever servant who said to his master: *"Master, your mina has earned ten minas"*. (Luke 19:16).

This is the zeal that is real and fruitful in the Kingdom of God. In taking this as a standard for comparison, we might perhaps ask ourselves what we have done for our generation? For that is what has been entrusted to us, and for which we are responsible before God and before the next generations..! What practical use has our zeal been to save it?! Has it contributed to the saving of the church? Or have we taken a look and found our lives barren, worthless and unproductive?!

What have we done for a generation of widely spread permissiveness, materialism and abandoning of the faith; in which it has become a duty for all the children of God to be **shining lights on a dark mountain?**

Has the church stood up to guide the world, or has it shaped some of its children to conform themselves to the world?! Have **we** given anything to the world in which we live, or have we just adjusted to its evil ways? Have we acted in such a way that we have taught the world our spiritual standards, or have we adopted the ways and means and deceptions of the world?!

Has the world, as a result of our zeal, become spiritual, or has the 'spiritual' taken on the form of the people of the world?!

What have we done for the Lord? Can we say to God as our Lord Jesus did: *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work You have given Me to do"*. (John 17:4). In our visits and comings and goings to any house, can we deliver a report to God, in which we can say: ***"Today salvation has come to this house..."*** (Luke 19:9).

Look at John the Baptist, and what he did for his generation: In a very short time he was able *"to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"*, (Luke 1:17) and to lead whole masses of the people from Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region of the Jordan, to the baptism of repentance *'confessing their sins'*. (Matt. 3:5-6). He was able to deliver the bride to the bridegroom and stand and wait full of joy. (John 3:29). This is the wonderful fruit of a burning zeal.

If these saints are a lesson for us, then Nature is too:

I once stood in one of the monasteries, before a huge camphor tree, which was about 20 metres high, and which bore tens of

thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of seeds, and I pondered on one of its seeds and how very small it was. Yet that minute seed was capable of such immense growth and could itself yield thousands of seeds! I felt my insignificance before this camphor tree, and in fact before just one of its branches and even before one of its tiny seeds.

The lesson we learn from the camphor tree we can also learn from the palm.

A date pit has a tremendous capacity for growth, and to reach a great height and to produce a vast amount of dates, thousands of them... I sit and calculate the number of years in the life of a palm tree, and the total amount of fruit which it can produce in its lifetime, and then I feel how small I am before it, .. Perhaps this same idea occurred to David when he said: "*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree*". (Ps. 92:12).

Nevertheless, the Bible says that man is Nature's master, the priest of Nature and God's successor on the earth, that he was the one to whom God gave authority over the plants, the animals and birds. Yet has man ever been able to put forth fruit like the palm tree, or flourish like the lilies of the field? Has he ever been as productive in his work as even one date pit?!

Supposing in one of your meetings, each person were to bring with him ten others in his zeal for the Kingdom of God, just think how many there would then be in the Kingdom if numbers went on multiplying like that!

So may you be zealous for the Kingdom and may your zeal bear fruit in breadth and depth... May it be broad in terms of the number of those it gathers and in its far-reaching extent. And may it be deep in terms of its quality, its spirit and its connection with God.



CHAPTER FOUR

EXAMPLES OF HOLY ZEAL

1. God Himself
2. The angels
3. The prophet Moses
4. Phinehas
5. The boy David
6. The prophet Elijah
7. The prophet Isaiah
8. The twelve disciples
9. St Paul the apostle
10. St Stephen
11. St Marc
12. St Athanasius
13. Archdeacon Habib Girgis
14. Some of the Father monks

If we wish to give some examples of holy zeal, then our first example must be God Himself, whether in His eternal nature or His incarnation. Then we will take the angels and the saints of the Old and New Testaments, along with some examples from the history of the church.

1. God Himself:

In many places we read that God is a "zealous God" and a jealous God. It comes in the Book of Exodus: *"For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, Whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God"*. (Ex. 34:14). And in the Book of Deuteronomy: *"the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God"*. (Deut. 4:24). And in the Book of Joshua it is said that *"He is a holy God; He is a jealous God"*. (Joshua 24:19). And in Nehemiah it says: *"The Lord is a jealous and avenging God"*. (Neh. 1:2). The Sovereign Lord speaks about His divine zeal saying: *"I will be zealous for My holy name"*. (Ezek. 39:25).

The zeal of the Lord is shown in how He punished evil, whether it issued from His people or from the Gentiles. Concerning the people of Jerusalem who had defiled His sanctuary, He says: *"_ Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them The Lord have spoken in My zeal"*. (Ezek. 5:13). He also spoke of His zeal and the fire of His anger in God's sweeping attack on Israel. (Ezek. 38:19).

As for the Gentiles, though, the Bible says: *"therefore thus says what the Lord God: Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession..."* (Ezek. 36:5) and He says that it is because *"I am very angry with the nations..."* (Zech. 1:14).

It is said of the zeal of the Lord in striking down the wicked: *"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy".* (Zeph. 1:18).

On the other hand, in His zeal He saves His people: He says: *"Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob and have mercy on whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for My holy name".* (Ezek. 39:25) and also: *"This is what the Lord Almighty says: I am very zealous for Jerusalem and Zion, ... I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt".* (Zech. 1:14 -16). *"For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this".* (Is. 37:32).

So people used to cry out to the Lord's zeal to save them, saying: *"Look down from heaven and see from Your habitation, holy and glorious. Where are Your zeal and Your strength."* (Is. 63:15) the prophet Joel calling for a fast and for self-abasement and repentance, and for the priests to weep before the Lord. *"Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and pity His people".* (Joel 2:18).

It was, after all, the zeal of the Lord to save His people, that was the reason for the incarnation. Thus in the Book of Isaiah we find: *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end... The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."* (Is. 9:6-7).

We find this zeal to save, this zeal for holiness and the Kingdom in the incarnation of our Lord.

This zeal of the Lord's is clearly seen in His cleansing of the temple, when: "*He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and money changers doing business. When He made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen; and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. He said to those who sold doves, 'take things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!'*" (John 2:14-16). St John goes on to comment on the cleansing of the temple saying: "*His disciples remembered that it is written, zeal for Your house shall consume Me*". (Ps. 69:9).

It was out of His zeal to save others that our Lord Jesus gave Himself for them.

His was a practical and active zeal in the very deepest meaning of the word. It wasn't just a desire to save, He carried their sins, paid the price for them on the cross and died for them. It was a zeal in which there was love and self-sacrifice. It wasn't merely spending something external, the Lord Jesus spent Himself and gave His life. Therefore, He gives us the supreme example of practical zeal in action.

In His period of ministry on earth the Lord Christ had a zeal which was full of love.

For the sake of others, "*Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease*". And "*When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd*". (Matt. 9:35-36). And St Peter said of Christ that "*He went around doing good and healing...*" (Acts 10:38). And God, out of His zeal to save mankind, charged His angels to be servants in this salvation.

2. The Angels:

It was about the angels that St. Paul said: "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*" (Heb. 1:14).

Perhaps one of the most impressive examples related in the Bible about the zeal of the angels, is what it tells us about the zeal of the Seraphim to serve and save mankind, even though they are chiefly angels of praise. When they heard the prophet Isaiah say "*Woe to me!*" and "*.. I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips...*" (Is. 6:5) they lost no time at all, and without even waiting for an instruction or call, hastened to help as quickly and enthusiastically as possible. And then Isaiah said: "*Then one of the seraphim flew to me having in his hand a live coal , which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips'; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged*". (Is. 6:6-7).

Notice here the word 'flew', which denotes speed, and the words 'live coal' which denotes heat. Both speed and heat are attributes of zeal.

We lack the time to talk about the work of the angels in saving people, whether it is the way that they spread the gospel or perform their ministry, or the way that they encamp around those who fear the Lord and deliver them (Ps. 34:7), or carry God's messages to His servants... but it is to the angels that the psalm refers when it says: "you mighty ones who do His bidding, who obey His word". (Ps. 103:20). **Another example of the ministry of the angels was when they saved the priest Joshua.**

Satan was standing on the right of Joshua the high priest, in order to accuse him, and Joshua was wearing dirty clothes. The angel of the Lord entered and said to Satan: *"The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"* (Zech. 3:2).

Then they took off Joshua's dirty garments and clothed him in rich clothes. And the angel of the Lord charged him to behave in accordance with the way of God. (Zech. 3:3-7).

Then there is the example of the zeal of the two angels who saved Lot from the fire of Sodom.

It was said that the two angels said to Lot: *"Do you have anyone else here - sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city - take them out of this place. For we will destroy this place... When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot.. when he lingered, the man took hold of his hand, his wife's hand and the hands of his two daughters and set him outside the city..."* (Gen. 19:12-16).

3. The Prophet Moses:

Moses was so zealous for the Kingdom of God that he became a champion of the faith in his era. Because of his zeal, he left his position as prince in the Pharaoh's place to lead his people to worship God, which is why *".. he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to be suffer affliction with the people of God... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..."* (Heb. 11:24-26).

Another example of his zeal is what happened when the people worshipped the golden calf. Moses took a very resolute stand with the sinful people. When he approached the camp and set eyes on the calf and the dancing, the Bible says:

"his anger became hot and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it". (Ex. 32:19-20). Then Moses rebuked Aaron the high priest, and ordered the people to be struck down, and about 3,000 men died that day. (Ex. 32:28).

Just as Moses's zeal made him take an uncompromising stand with the people on that occasion, it could easily make him ready to intercede for them before God, on another occasion.

When the Lord wanted to destroy them because of this sin of theirs, Moses stood up to intercede saying: *" Lord.. why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people.. Turn from Your fierce wrath; and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel Your servants..."* (Ex. 32:11-12). What is more, he went on to say: *"... If You will forgive their sin - but if not, blot me out of Your book which You have written".* (Ex. 32:32).

Moses' zeal was two-fold: it possessed strictness and compassion. It was capable of disciplining, and yet also capable of interceding when it wanted the people to be saved not destroyed. And if their salvation meant that they needed to be beaten, then Moses did not shrink from doing what was necessary: *"For what son is not disciplined by his father?"* (Heb.12:7). Undoubtedly examples like this of Moses' zeal are among the rare examples of a two-fold zeal.

4. Phinehas:

Phinehas was one of the Lord's priests, and the grandson of Aaron the high priest. It happened, after Balaam had met Balak, that the people began to commit adultery with the daughters of Moab, so that a man even committed the very act of fornication with a woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole people, while they were weeping at the entrance of the Tabernacle of Meeting! This so inflamed Phinehas with holy zeal that he went into the Tabernacle after the man and woman and killed them both, and the camp was purified by the shedding of their blood.

Phinehas had done that without anyone having called him to do it. And God commanded Phinehas's zeal and stopped the plague which he had sent upon them because of their adultery, which had killed some 24,000 of the people. *"The Lord said to Moses, Phinehas son of Eleazor, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned My anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for My honour among them, so that in My zeal I did not put an end to them"*. (Num. 25:6-11).

5. The Boy David:

We spoke in the first chapter about the zeal of King David who said to the Lord: *"zeal for Your house consumes me"*. (Ps. 69:9). David, whose heart was filled with holy zeal, prepared everything for building a house for the Lord. (1 Chronicles. 29). Yet although this was indeed the case, David's zeal could also make him depressed and weep because of the sins of those who had abandoned the law of the Lord. (Psalm 119).

But I want to speak here about David's zeal when he was a boy, when he fought Goliath. I mention this example because David was a young boy, not a man of war, and he was not

responsible for returning Goliath's insult. What is more, David was even rebuked by his brother Eliab for asking about Goliath, for the latter was a giant of a man who struck fear into the whole army. (1 Samuel 17:24). No one at all would have blamed the boy David for not volunteering to fight against Goliath, so we can imagine how surprised King Saul must have been when David said to him: *"your servant will go and fight him"*. (1 Sam. 17:32). And the king answered him saying: *"you are not able to go against this Philistine and fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth"*. (1 Sam. 17:33).

Nevertheless, David's zeal had called him, and he wanted to remove the insult made against the army of the Living God . (1 Sam. 17:26).

The whole army had heard Goliath's insult but without daring to do anything about it. Furthermore, *"When the Israelites saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid"*. (1 Sam. 17:24). **Only David was not afraid. His zeal made him rely not on himself but on God.**

It was a zeal that trusted the action of God, without stopping to show off itself or its work.

It was a zeal which said to the enemy of God: *"You come to me with a sword, with a spear and with javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel... This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand... for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands"*. (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

It was a zeal which did not wait to be called upon to act. For its call came from its burning heart within, which could not stand silent and speechless, and which couldn't stand unmoving

and immobile. Events drove him forward even though there was the risk of danger. And this is how Phinehas behaved too.

There were others who were bigger and older than David, but none would dare act like him as his heart was much bigger than theirs.

In his heart there was zeal, a lighted fire, along with faith and freedom from fear. With this inner treasure he went forward, and God worked in him and with him.

6. The Prophet Elijah:

Elijah was that powerful prophet who said to the Lord: *"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death by the sword"*. (1 Kings 19:14).

Elijah's zeal made him confront the King and reproach him, just as it also caused him various troubles and accusations.

The worship of idols was widespread in his era, because of King Ahab and his wife Queen Jezebel, at whose table some 450 prophets of Baal and 450 prophets of Asherah used to eat. (1 Kings 18:19).

Elijah's zeal urged him to pray that a difficult situation of some kind would occur through which people's consciences could be awakened.

Thus, the holy Bible says about him: *"And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months"*. (James 5:17).

In his zeal and strength of faith he said: "... *there shall not be dew nor rain these years except at my word*". (1 Kin. 17:1). This is how the famine came about which lasted for years, so that when Elijah met King Ahab, the latter said to him: "*Is that you, O troubler of Israel?*" (1 Kin. 18:17). To which Elijah, with all the boldness of his zeal, replied: "*I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandment of the Lord and have followed the Baals*". (1 Kin. 18:18). It all ended up with the return of the rain, and the slaying of the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

This zeal of Elijah's was a strong, bold and resolute zeal which purged the earth from paganism.

It exposed Elijah, however, to various troubles, such as having to confront the king who wanted to kill him. And it was because of this king that the prophets of the Lord had hidden in the caves. They had been helped in this by Obadiah, who was a good man and a palace official, who also feared the king. (1 Kin. 18).

Elijah was also exposed to the anger of Jezebel, who was more powerful and cruel than Ahab. It was Jezebel who, when she heard what Elijah had done, sent him a warning that she would kill him, so that he was forced to flee for his life. (1 Kin. 19:1). The Lord, however, did not allow her to carry out her threat.

7. The Prophet Isaiah:

The zeal of Isaiah was like the words in the psalm: "*My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast...*" (Ps. 57:7).

It was Isaiah who on hearing the voice of the Sovereign Lord say: "*Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?*", replied straightaway: "*Here am I. Send me.*" (Is. 6:8).

Some people might understand the concept of humility to mean excusing oneself and avoiding getting involved in ministering to others, but zeal actually puts itself forward for such service with total love.

Zeal offers itself for service. That is not showing a lack of humility, for it knows that it will be used by the action of God working through it, as it denies itself completely. Just as when David went forward to fight Goliath, saying: *"This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands"*.(1 Sam. 17:46-47).

8. The Twelve Disciples:

Due to the zeal of our forefathers the apostles, the church was founded and spread over the whole world. The voices of those who originally had no voice and nothing to say, ended up by reaching the farthest corners of the inhabited world. Through their determination, which never flagged, their work which knew no respite, and their amazing forbearance, they were able to say, when others tried to oppose them: *"... we cannot help speaking"* (Acts 4:20) and *"we must obey God rather than men!"* (Acts 5:29).

This was how they spoke the word of God: *"with great boldness"*. (Acts 4:29).

So *"And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"*. (Acts 5:42). *"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"*, (Acts 2:47) and *"... more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number"*. (Acts 5:14).

Out of their zeal, the apostles bore beatings, insults and imprisonment. And when they were imprisoned, flogged and released, *"So, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name"*. (Acts 5:41). And when they were brought before the assembly, the chief priest said to them: *"Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend bring this Man's blood on us"*. (Acts 5:28).

And when they were expelled from Jerusalem following the martyrdom of Stephen, the Bible says of them: *"Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word "*. (Acts 8:4).

They were like pieces of coal ignited by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and whose sparks flew in all directions to the ends of the earth, and set the whole world on fire.

Thus they carried out the Lord's command when He had said to them: *"... you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"*. (Acts 1:8).

They bore witness to Christ and thus obtained the crowns of martyrdom and witnessing.

They had absolutely no fear of death, and their difficulties, sufferings, trials and prison; neither troubled them nor deflected them from their purpose. The important thing was that they witnessed for the Lord, and let whatever would be, take its course.

Besides the twelve with their zeal, we must put the name of the apostle Paul.

9. St. Paul The Apostle:

His was one of the most outstanding human examples of holy zeal, if not the most outstanding.

When he was converted to Christianity, an amazing energy of fervour and power entered him, so that he was able to testify to the Lord in Jerusalem and in the country of Judea, in Cyprus and in Asia Minor, before going on to Greece and Italy. It was Paul who founded the Church of Rome, in addition to which he wrote fourteen epistles, which were important in laying the basis of the Christian faith and in its spread. Some of these epistles were written while he was in prison.

What zeal was this, that a person proclaimed the good news of Christ even when in prison! And what a lovely thing he said about Onesimus, that he *"my son, whom I have begotten was in chains"*. (Phil. 10).

From prison, Paul wrote to Ephesus, telling the people there: *"Therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling which you were called"*. (Eph. 4:1). Even while he was a prisoner in jail, Paul was concerned for the salvation of others.

Furthermore, his concern for the salvation of others, surpassed his concern for himself. Thus in his amazing love for his compatriots he was able to say that very moving phrase, which is so full of zeal and love... *"For I could wish that I myself were accursed and from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"*. (Rom. 9:3).

So Paul's zeal was based on a deep love which made him want to save everyone, and which made him fear lest anyone should

fall. He said to the Corinthians: *"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband, that may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,. But I fear lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from simplicity that is in Christ".* (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

Out of his zeal for the Kingdom, Paul was constantly travelling, and enduring hardships in order to spread the faith.

He said about his ministry: *"three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have been in the deep, in journeys often. in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of Gentiles; in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea...in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst; in fasting often, in cold and nakedness. Besides the other things..."* (2 Cor. 11:25-27). And what else could there be? He says: ***"Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily; my deep concern for all the churches"***. (2 Cor. 11:28).

This is really zeal, and before this we can only stand and marvel, when we are getting more used to seeing a young man fought with vain glory just because he teaches a chapter in a Scripture class or delivers a sermon in church! How trivial such things seem to be in comparison to the zeal showed by St. Paul!

Besides his preaching in various new fields, St. Paul was also concerned for the existing churches, that they should be organised, visited and cared for, even while he was in prison.

How great were the sufferings which St. Paul endured because of his zeal for the Kingdom! He described them with the words: *"in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. from the*

Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned..." (2 Cor. 11:23-25).

And concerning his problems, and those of his colleagues in the ministry, he said: *But in all things we commanded ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience; in tribulation, in needs, in distresses; in stripes, in imprisonments, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting; ..as unknown, and yet we known; as dying, and behold we live... as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing..." (2 Cor. 6:4-10).*

In the ministry of the apostle Paul and his fellow workers, zeal was never in any way separated from the cross.

For this reason when Paul describes his life and theirs in the ministry he says: *"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body". (2 Cor. 4:8-10).*

This, then, was their situation, in case some of you imagined that the life of St. Paul was just the glory of being a saint and apostle.

Or in case others imagined that zeal was just an enthusiasm or fervour which assumed the right to order and forbid, or criticise and rebuke!!

It is easy to forget that whoever lives a life of holy zeal, and strives for the Kingdom, must take up his cross every day and follow the Lord.

We spoke in the first chapter about Paul's zeal, and in the third, about the fruits of this zeal, and what we have just said here about it is still not enough to do it justice.

10. St. Stephen:

Stephen's zeal was the natural fruit of his gifts and spirituality.

He was chosen to be a deacon from amongst those who were *full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*'. And it was said that he was *'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'* and of *'God's grace and power'*, and that he *'did great wonders and signs among the people'*. (Acts 6:3-8).

Stephen began his work with vigour. So what were the results of his zeal? The results were thus:

"the word of God spread. and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith". (Acts 6:7).

Those who opposed him could not endure Stephen's zeal and work, so a group of members of the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) and the Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria, as well as those from Cilicea rose up to challenge him in debate: *"and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke"*. (Acts 6:10).

But since they were unable to stand up against Stephen's zeal with all its gifts, they conspired against him and accused him of blasphemy and handed him over to the Sanhedrin to be stoned.

During his trial and stoning, Stephen's zeal did not desert him. He continued to expound the faith and rebuke the leaders of the Jews for their hardness of heart.

This was Stephen, then, who was neither an apostle, nor a bishop, but simply a deacon. He was, however, a deacon who was full of zeal and who acted with tremendous strength, through the Holy Spirit within him.

His zeal bore fruits which his enemies could not endure. He had a boldness too, which they could not bear either. So they became furious with him, and blocked their ears to his words, and attacked him with one fell swoop, taking him out of the city and stoning him. (Acts 7:54-7). Thus Stephen became the first Christian martyr.

Stephen's was a brief ministry, but a fruitful and powerful one.

Let us go on now to another example of zeal, that of St. Mark, from whose powerful ministry we have all benefited.

11. St. Mark:

Mark's zeal yielded much fruit in spite of the many obstacles he faced. He began from nothing, yet he triumphed over all difficulties.

St. Mark came to Egypt, to a land where there was no church, no believing population, no Christianity, and no facilities. In fact there were the Pharaonic forms of worship under the leadership of the god Ra, the Greek under the god Zeus and the Roman worship under the god Jupiter. In addition to these there was Judaism, which occupied two districts of Alexandria, along with various other eastern forms of religion. Then there were the books of philosophy with which the famous library of Alexandria was stacked. All these different forms of belief were supported by the authority of the Roman state with all its cruelty.

The zeal of St. Mark, though, was mightier than all this opposition.

St. Mark had no material resources at all to help him, and actually entered Egypt with torn shoes from so much walking on foot. But on finding no believers there he embarked on making them a believing people.

With his zeal for the Kingdom of God, St. Mark was able to spread Christianity in Egypt and Libya. Moreover; he helped Paul in preaching to Rome and other countries in Europe. Mark also founded the first theological school in Alexandria, which prepared those who were to become leaders of the faith to go throughout the east. He also wrote the gospel which bears his name, and which has been a basic source for the faith throughout the world.

St. Mark's zeal was effective enough to preach to and convert Egypt, yet it went further than Egypt. The faith spread into many different places at Mark's hands. And he made many journeys to spread the Kingdom in other lands. He was obliged to appoint a bishop to assist him and fill in his place during his travels. That man was Anianus, the first of the successors of St. Mark to the See of Alexandria.

Naturally it proved impossible for the enemies of the faith to put up with St. Mark's zeal, and his spreading of the faith. So St. Mark received at their hands, the crown of martyrdom in the year 68 AD, but not before leaving us a firmly-rooted faith in the protecting shadow of which we remain today.

It remains for St. Mark's descendants to trace the effects of his zeal, and follow in his footsteps.

So don't let anyone say: 'I'm ready to serve, but I don't have any means or resources!'

St. Mark served without having any. He began from nothing at all, and even that 'nothing' was surrounded by opposition. He had only his zeal. And this was true for the rest of the apostles. Their way was neither easy nor prepared for them, and was usually fought with difficulties, since they ministered in pagan countries with the Jews against them, and confronted by the Roman Empire, as well.

They laboured and we entered their labour. (John 4:38). Just as Christ laboured before, and the apostles entered into **his** labour. The result of all this continued hard work over consecutive ages is the constant growth of the church.

So there are really two results of zeal: one is that it establishes the Kingdom, and the other, that it makes it grow.

12. St. Athanasius:

What St. Jerome said of Athanasius and his struggle against Arius and Arianism, and how he had been able to change the course of history, was certainly true: "If it had not been for Athanasius, **a time would have come when almost the whole world would have become Arian!**"

The Arian problem started some time before Athanasius. And it was on account of this that Pope Alexandros (the 19th Patriarch) had convened a local council which was attended by 100 bishops from the capital and 5 of the western cities. And at the time when the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea was held in the year 325, **Athanasius was still a young man and a deacon. This young deacon, though, felt that the**

responsibility of combating Arianism lay on his shoulders, and this feeling of responsibility was the source of his zeal.

In the council there were 318 bishops representing the churches of the entire Christian world, and among them there were also patriarchs and church leaders. But Athanasius the deacon, felt that the whole Christian faith had somehow been entrusted to his keeping and depended on his somehow finding a solution to the problem. So he stood up to defend it, most enthusiastically, and refuted every argument of Arius with much stronger theological proofs. Thus he was able to create the articles of the Christian creed.

When Athanasius became patriarch he continued his opposition to the Arians and wrote a book against them entitled, 'Contra Arianos' (against the Arians). The book is in four parts, and deals with all the verses which the Arians relied upon to support their arguments, and it gives the correct interpretation of these verses whilst refuting the incorrect Arian understanding. Athanasius also wrote many other books in defence of the Nicene creed.

Because of his zeal, Athanasius was exposed to much opposition and persecution. The enemies of the faith made bitter accusations against him and conspired against him before the Emperor, so that he was exiled from his seat four times. His zeal, however, never left him when he was in exile, but wherever he was banished he set about spreading the correct faith, expounding the doctrine and refuting Arianism and convening councils to oppose it. It ended up with his return to his seat and resuming his struggle, only to be exiled again.

Athanasius spent 45 years on the seat of St. Mark, engaged in constant struggle. Out of his zeal for the faith, his name became a byword for the faith, so much so that anyone who wanted to prove that he was of the true faith would say: 'I follow the faith of Athanasius'. The fervour of this saint never

flagged for one day. In fact the force of Arianism only kindled his zeal further, until the faith was laid on the correct foundations.

His zeal began when he was very young, and while he was still a young deacon, he wrote two important books: one on the incarnation of the Word and another entitled 'A refutation of the pagans'. Both books became important reference texts, from which all succeeding generations derived benefit, and this is true even till today...

Athanasius was not content just to refute Arianism, he pursued every form of heresy, and as a result of this he wrote his epistles about the Holy Spirit, in which he explained the true faith concerning this Person of the divine Trinity. The zeal, faith and holy struggle of Athanasius became proverbial, so that when St. Hilary, Bishop of Boetia, became famous for his defence of the faith, they called him the Athanasius of the west.

So, we wonder when we see those who look slightly upon many points of the creed and in spite of this they claim to be the sons of Athanasius.

13. Archdeacon Habib Girgis:

Habib Girgis lived during a dark period of history, in which there were no preachers or teachers of theology. And even Ighomanus Philotheus Ibrahim, who was the only light remaining in those days, and whose health did not allow him to finish his mission, had passed on from our world. Habib Girgis was the first student to join the new Theological College, in the year 1893. And at that time it had no teacher of religion!!

In his deep zeal, Habib Girgis felt that the Theological College was his responsibility, so he began to study and to teach his colleagues even while he was a student.

He graduated to take charge over the teaching in the college and began to give lessons in theology and preaching. He went on to write various spiritual books, such as, 'The Seven Sacraments of the Church', and 'The orthodox rock', and a book about St. Mark. He also took on the preparation of teachers of religion.

At that time the college building was not very good, and Habib Girgis felt that it was also his responsibility to provide another building for it. So, full of zeal, he began to call for this to be done, and went around the country collecting donations, until he was able to buy some land with adequate space around it upon which a study centre and a dormitory were built and an institution for teachers. A library was also founded there, and the Church of the Virgin was built, which became the church for the students of the college before it became open to the public.

In those days, there were no schools for church instruction, so Habib Girgis felt again that it was his responsibility to take care of setting up Sunday Schools. He encouraged many people to help and participate in that field, with the result that religious education began to forge its way, under a great wave of enthusiasm, to reach the children of the villages. And thousands became teachers.

Habib Girgis himself was the Deputy Director of the Supreme Council for Sunday School teachers; its Director being, in those days, His Holiness Pope Yuannis the 19th.

There were no programs or courses for religious instruction in the schools either, until Habib Girgis felt it's his special task to write text books to be used for all stages of teaching.

He set out two series for that purpose: one of them was called 'Christian principles' and the other 'The most precious treasure'. The religious instruction they provided lacked nothing concerning information and knowledge, and those course books were amply illustrated. He also issued the journal "AI-Karma" which circulated for 17 years like a teacher moving from house to house at a high standard. It was the first paper to bring us a translation of the sayings of the saintly Fathers.

Habib Girgis took upon himself all of this, though none of which was officially included in his normal duties. It was his zeal which drove him forward in all these fields, this zeal of his which began when he was a student and continued while he was a teacher, until he became the Dean of the Theological College in the year 1918.

Through his zeal he was able to provide the church with thousands of preachers and teachers of religion, and hundreds of graduates, who went on to be consecrated as priests in all parts of the country.

Habib Girgis' zeal was an example of zeal represented in a deeply positive activity.

It never happened that he criticized the weak, or those who had gone astray in his era. But if he ever found a shortcoming or defect, he sought to remedy it, without condemning anyone. In all respects he was a skilful builder. He dug the foundation and laid the bases of two constructions: one of them, the Theological College, and the other, the Sunday Schools. And then he worked hard until both rose up and could accommodate

the children of God. This, then, was the zeal of Habib Girgis: a constructive, effective and positive zeal.

14. Some Of The Desert Fathers:

We see that this holy zeal possessed even the saintly desert Fathers who practised a life of solitude and prayer in the desert and the desert caves.

One might perhaps argue that they had no need of it since it was not the nature of their rank or calling to strive to save the souls of sinners in the cities, and especially not the women who had fallen into prostitution. Nevertheless; their holy zeal was far stronger than to let any obstacle like this hinder them. It took them to places where they had never been before. Nor did they worry about 'losing' their face, if they did go to such places. Their whole concern was focused on saving a soul for whom Christ had died, however fallen or degraded it might be. Perhaps in this area we can give three of the most famous examples of holy zeal in history.

a) The saving of Taiis, the fallen woman

Taiis grew up in Alexandria and was very beautiful. But her wicked mother caused her downfall by embroiling her in a life of sin. So Taiis lived the life of a prostitute in Alexandria, and hundreds fell to her charms. Her reputation spread everywhere until her story reached the desert of Shihit.

St. Pisarion's heart was filled with holy zeal, not only for the sake of saving the soul of Taiis, but also for saving those who might fall because of her.

So the saint went disguised in plain clothes to Alexandria, to the place where Taiis worked and was able to bring her to

repentance. She burned all her seductive clothes and adornments in the main square, before all the crowd, and the saint led her away to a home for Virgins where she led a life of repentance, which saved her soul and removed her sin.

God told the news of the salvation of Taiis' soul, to St. Paul the Modest, who told it to his spiritual holy father St. (Anba) Antonius the Great.

b) The example of the saving of St. Ba'isa after she had fallen.

Ba'isa came from a devout and wealthy family in Menouf. Her father left her a huge fortune which she began to distribute to the poor and needy, and to the monasteries and monks too, until she used up all her fortune. She was on the point of taking up the solitary life of the desert, when Satan became envious of her godliness, and contrived a snare with great cunning and deceit to trap her, at a time when she was weak and unguarded... The surprising thing is that he was successful, and Ba'isa fell, and somehow ended up in a brothel !

At this point, zeal took hold of the old desert Fathers in Shihit, who were sad to see the downfall of this saintly woman. And so they chose St. John the Short One, to go and save her.

So he went to where she worked as a prostitute, and recited to her the words of the psalm: *"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me..."* (Ps. 23:4). And the saint was able to lead her to repentance and take her away from that place of sin in order to go to the desert. Her repentance was truly sincere, and God decided to take her soul that very night. And St. John the Short One saw her pure, spotless soul being carried by angels into the heavens in a column of light.

The church celebrates her anniversary on the 2nd of Misra (according to the Coptic calendar).

c) The saving of Mary, the niece of St. Ibrahim the Recluse.

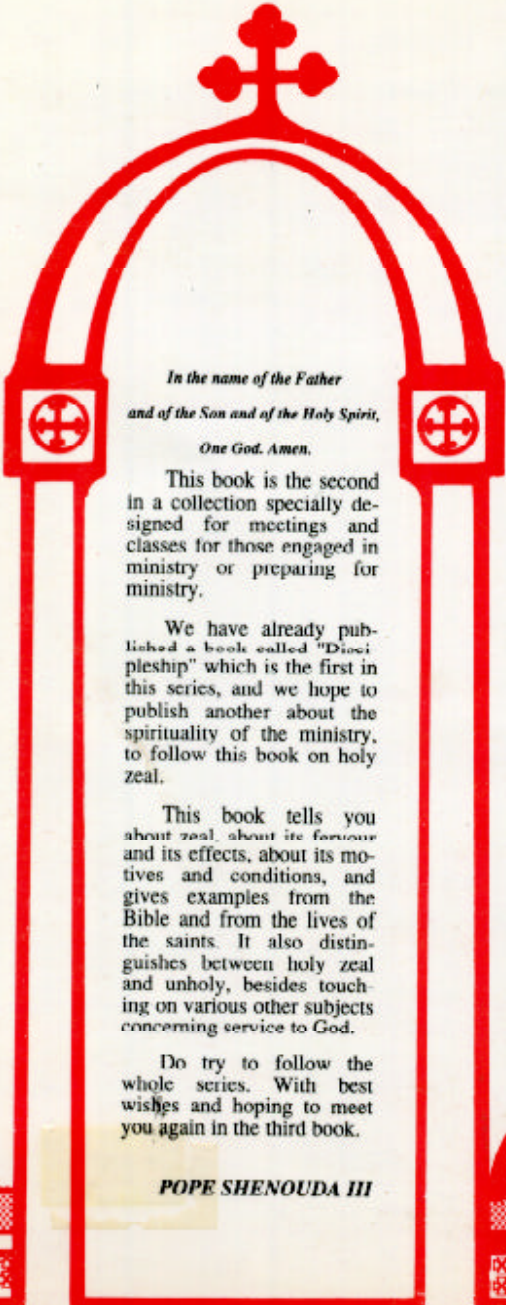
Saint Ibrahim was born in the city of Raha in Mesopotamia, where he became a recluse. Then after the death of her parents, the little girl Mary was put in his custody. He brought her up with him, until she was grown up and became a recluse too, living in a solitary cell near his.

This young girl grew in the life of saintliness, until the day came when the enemy set a trap for her and consequently she fell.

After her downfall, Satan cast her into despair and a sense of deep shame, so she ran away... and ended up in a brothel. When St. Ibrahim discovered what had happened, he was overcome with zeal to save her. And on finding out where she was, he went to her in disguise, aided by the fervent prayers of St. Mar-Ephram AI-Suryani. It ended up with Ibrahim rescuing her and taking her away from that place of degradation so that she could return to her worship, and a life of contrition and repentance.

Towards the end of her life, God honoured her with the gifts of healing, as a sign that He had accepted her repentance.





*In the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
One God. Amen.*

This book is the second in a collection specially designed for meetings and classes for those engaged in ministry or preparing for ministry.

We have already published a book called "Discipleship" which is the first in this series, and we hope to publish another about the spirituality of the ministry, to follow this book on holy zeal.

This book tells you about zeal, about its fervour and its effects, about its motives and conditions, and gives examples from the Bible and from the lives of the saints. It also distinguishes between holy zeal and unholy, besides touching on various other subjects concerning service to God.

Do try to follow the whole series. With best wishes and hoping to meet you again in the third book.

POPE SHENOUDA III

