



Joseph the Righteous
Fasting and Prayer Program
The Holy Great Fast

2020

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Cover

Icon of St. Joseph the Righteous

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C.O.P.T.

The Holy Great Fast, in the Coptic Orthodox Tradition, is a 55 day spiritual journey to the foot of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time of fasting and prayer and spiritual struggle and culminates in The Passion Week or the Holy Pascha (Passover) which is the most important week of the year and the richest spiritually.

The Fasting and Prayer Program for the Holy Great Fast is designed to enrich you on your spiritual journey by providing daily readings for your contemplation. The theme of this Fasting and Prayer program is, 'Joseph the Righteous.'

In it we explore the story of Joseph as recorded in the book of Genesis, his many qualities and virtues and we see the hand of God and His blessings in Joseph's life. Each day (spread over two pages) consists of:

- * A prayer
- * Verses
- * Commentary
- * Sayings of the Fathers
- * Daily Bible Readings

The Program concludes with the events and rites of the Holy Pascha week – “a week full of holy memories of the most crucial stage of salvation and the outstanding chapter in the story of redemption.”

We pray that this Fasting and Prayer Program will be of benefit to your spiritual life.

Guide to Readings:

If a Feast day falls during one of the days of the Holy Great Fast, in most instances, the readings of the Feast Day replace the ordinary readings of that day.

In this Program, the ordinary readings of the Holy Great Fast are included for all days.

Below are the Feast days which normally fall during the time of the Holy Great Fast and their associated readings:

The Feast of the Cross – March 19

The Feast of the Annunciation – April 7 (not celebrated if it falls in the Holy Pascha)

Other important dates to remember:

9 March – Commemoration of St Pope Kyrillos VI's departure

17 March – Commemoration of H.H. Pope Shenouda III's departure

21 March – Commemoration of Fr Pishoy Kamel's departure

26 March – Commemoration of Fr Mikhail Ibrahim's departure

Readings of the Feast of the Cross

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 4:6-8
	Gospel	John 8:28-42
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 60:4-5
	Gospel	John 12:26-36
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 1:17-31
	Catholicon	1 Pet 2:11-25
	Acts	Acts 10:34-43
	Psalm	Ps 65:1-2
	Gospel	John 10:22-38

Readings of the Feast of the Annunciation

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 144:5, 7
	Gospel	Luke 7:36-50
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 72:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 11:20-28
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 3:1-31
	Catholicon	1 John 1:1-2:6
	Acts	Acts 7:23-34
	Psalm	Ps 45:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 1:26-38

Preface

Our focus during the journey of the Holy Great Fast is primarily on the life of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The main objective is to grow up spiritually and be enriched with many virtues.

Our Coptic Orthodox Church encourages us to struggle spiritually and depend on the word of God as a source of power and life, as St Paul said, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

This Program takes you into a journey in the life of Joseph, “a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In Joseph’s life, you can see how God managed his life and had a plan full of wisdom for him. Joseph was a favourite son, a slave, a prisoner and a minister, but he never changed, he was led by God and he grew spiritually and gained many virtues.

His life suits many people; the young, the youth and the elders. His life is full of many spiritual lessons, which we can learn from and practice in our spiritual life. Joseph is a role model for all Christians. He is one of the best models in the Bible for how to honour God in a secular workplace. He is also one of the best models of a leader, ‘a man in whom is the Spirit of God.’ It has been said about leadership:

“The qualifications of a true leader are not merely physical, they are spiritual. It is not just about talent or skill but about character and relationship with God. The key character qualities of a great leader (which took years of suffering to build into Joseph) are internal, not external. They deal with knowing God, not with being great. Joseph had developed the character of a leader, through the lessons and experience of being a servant.”²⁵¹

May our Lord Jesus Christ grant us many blessings through the study of the life of Joseph, and make this Program for the glory of His name, and through the intercessions of all the saints.

Personality Profile

The name of Joseph means ‘May God add.’ Also known as Zaphnath – Paaneah “revealer of secrets” [or “food of life in other interpretations] a name which was given to him by the Pharaoh of Egypt. (Genesis 41:45)

He was born in Canaan, sold to slave traders who resold him to an officer of Pharaoh in Egypt.

Joseph was the eleventh and favourite son of Jacob, the first son by Rachael; married Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest (Genesis 41:45); father of Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 41:50-52).

He was a shepherd in Canaan; household manager in Egypt; later made second-in-command under Pharaoh, responsible for economic development and famine relief. Joseph was known to be skilled at dream interpretation and for his coat of many colours, which distinguished him as the favoured son, also for rising to power in Egypt where he eventually forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery, they intended it for evil but God brought good out of it.(Genesis 45:7-8; 50:20).

Day 1

Monday, 24 February 2020

Genesis 37:1-11

1 Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Billhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.

4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

5 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

8 And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream.

And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

From the Fathers:

YOUTH NO OBSTACLE TO VIRTUE

"Why does he also indicate to us Joseph's age? For you to learn that his youth constituted no obstacle to virtue and for you to have a complete awareness of the young man's obedience to his father and his sympathy for his brothers, despite their savagery. Despite his being so well disposed to them, Joseph was unable to win them over... Instead, they saw from the outset the youth's inclination to virtue and the father's favour for him and they were prompted to envy him." - Chrysostom

Lord, although Joseph was young, he chose You above all else. Grant me Lord, the strength of character to live by Your word and not by the world.

Commentary:

“The inspiring and instructive story of Joseph began in earnest when Joseph was seventeen years old. He was only a teenager, but what a teenager! Already character was deeply etched upon his heart and firm conviction controlled his behaviour. The idea that we cannot expect young people to exhibit much godliness until they are considerably older is not supported by Joseph’s life... Paul exhorted Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Joseph’s conduct was signally different from his brothers. Later on in the story of Joseph, Jacob says Joseph was “separate from his brothers” (49:26). Indeed he was! He stood apart from them in so many ways and most notably in his conduct. Though Joseph worked alongside his brothers in the field with the flocks in those early years of his life, yet he did not participate with his brothers in their evil. He refused to go along with the crowd. He stood alone because he would stand aright. Joseph demonstrated that we do not have to be and do as others. The [world] is not the standard by which we determine our conduct. The Word of God is! Dare to be pure. Dare to live as the Word says and not as the world says.”²

“Choose Christ; and in choosing Him, choose life, and blessedness, and heaven. And when you have chosen Him, cleave close to Him, and send the roots of your existence deep down into the hidden wells of communion and fellowship.”³

1st Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 2:23-3:5; Is 1:2-18	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 6:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 12:24-34
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 1:26-2:7
	Catholicon	James 2:1-13
	Acts	Acts 14:19-28
	Psalm	Ps 22:26
	Gospel	Mark 9:33-50

Day 2

Tuesday, 25 February 2020

Genesis 37:12-17

12 Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."

14 Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.

15 Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?"

16 So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks."

17 And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

From the Fathers:

TYPES OF THINGS TO COME

"As Joseph went off to his brothers to visit them...so to our Lord in fidelity to His characteristic love came to visit the human race. Taking flesh of the same source as ours and deigning to become our brother, He thus arrived among us. Paul too cries out in these words, 'It is not the condition of angels He takes to Himself but descent from Abraham. Hence the need for Him to become like His brothers in everything' (Heb 2:16-17)." - Chrysostom ⁴

Lord, grant me the heart full of love which drove Joseph to look for his brothers until they were found. Let this love be in me Lord, that I may serve Your children with all my heart.

Commentary:

"[Jacob] suddenly said to the dearly-loved Joseph, "Come, I will send you: go, I pray, and see whether it is well with your brothers, and bring me word again." On Joseph's part there was not a moment's hesitation. In the flash of a thought he realised the perils of the mission, perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils of wild beasts, perils in the lonely nights, perils among false brethren, who bitterly hated him. But "none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear to himself." As soon as he knew his father's will, he said, "Here am I." "So Jacob sent him; and he came."

But Joseph did not go in search of his brethren simply because his father sent him. Had this been the case, he would have returned home when he found that they had safely left the dreaded Shechem. But instead of that he sought them, because he loved them, and went after them until he found them.

Is not all this full to overflowing of a yet loftier theme? Our Lord never wearied of calling Himself, the Sent of the Father. There is hardly a page in the Gospel of John in which He does not say more than once, "I came not of Myself, but My Father sent Me..."

But our Saviour did not come solely because He was sent. He came because He loved His mission. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And He especially came in search of His brethren, His own, the children of the Hebrew race. If you had asked Him, as you met Him traversing those same fields, "Who do you seek?" He would have replied in the same words of Joseph, "I seek My brethren."

Nor was He content with only seeking the lost; He went after them until He found them." Joseph went after his brethren until he found them in Dothan." ⁵

1st Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 1:19-2:3;	Zech 8:7-13
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 23:1,3
	Gospel	Matt 9:10-15
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 9:14-29
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:3-11
	Acts	Acts 5:34-42
	Psalm	Ps 25:16-17
	Gospel	Luke 12:41-50

Day 3

Wednesday, 26 February 2020

Genesis 37:18-27

18 Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.

19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!

20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."

22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him" –that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him.

24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.

26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?

27 Come and let us sell him to the

Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.

From the Fathers:

THEY WERE UNCONCERNED THAT HE WAS THEIR BROTHER

"What an unlawful contract! What baleful profit! What illicit sale! The one who caused the same birth pangs as yourselves, the one so dear to your father, the one who came to see you, who never did you the slightest wrong, you endeavoured to sell - and sell to savage people traveling down to Egypt. What dreadful malice! Even if you did this out of fear of the dreams, convinced that they would certainly come to pass in every detail, why did you attempt the impossible and give evidence by what you did to your hostility toward God, who had foretold this to Joseph?" - Chrysostom ⁶

Lord, although completely innocent, Joseph was cast into a pit by the envy of his brothers. Remove from me Lord all feelings of jealousy and envy, so that my heart may be pure before You.

Commentary:

“Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.” And he would doubtless have been ruthlessly slain, and his body flung into some pit... if it had not been for the merciful pleadings of Reuben the eldest brother. “So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colours that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit.”

What a genesis of crime is here! There was a time when the germ of this sin alighted on their hearts in the form of a ruffled feeling of jealousy against the young dreamer. If only they had quenched it then, its further progress would have been stayed. Alas! they did not quench it; they permitted it to work within them as leaven works in meal. And “when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:15) Take care how you permit a single germ of sin to alight and remain upon your heart. To permit it to do so, is almost certain ruin. Sooner or later it will acquire overwhelming force.

Years after [Joseph’s brothers] said one to another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear.” What a revelation there is in these words!..... Joseph’s grief was a true anticipation of Christ’s. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11) They said, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.”

(Luke 20:14-15)

They parted his raiment among them. They sold Him to the Gentiles. They sat down to watch Him die. The anguish of Joseph’s soul reminds us of the [anguish of Christ’s soul in the Garden of Gethsemane...] and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Matthew 26:37-38)]. The comparative innocence of Joseph reminds us of the spotlessness of the Lamb who was without blemish, and whose blamelessness was again and again attested before He died. “I have found no fault in this Man” (Luke 23:14).”⁷

1st Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 2:3-11; Joel 2:12-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 25:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 6:24-34
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:19-15:7
	Catholicon	2 Pet 1:4-11
	Acts	Acts 10:9-20
	Psalm	Ps 25:20,16
	Gospel	Luke 6:35-38

Day 4

Thursday, 27 February 2020

Genesis 37:28-36

28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes.

30 And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?"

31 So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

32 Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?"

33 And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

From the Fathers:

THE FRAGRANCE OF JUSTICE

"Joseph was rejected by his brothers and was received by the Ishmaelites; in the same manner our Lord and Saviour was rejected by the Jews and received by the pagans. The Ishmaelites who received Joseph carried along with them all kinds of perfumes, and this fact showed that the pagans by embracing the faith would spread the different perfumes of justice all over the world." - Chromatius ⁸

Lord, as you were with Joseph in his trials and granted him perfect peace, also be with me. No matter what trials I face, embrace me Lord always, in Your loving, Fatherly care.

Commentary:

“Joseph was betrayed by his brothers; Jesus by His friend. Joseph was sold for money, so was our Lord. Joseph followed in the train of captives to slavery; Jesus was numbered with the transgressors. The crime of Joseph’s brothers fulfilled the Divine plan; and the wicked hand of the crucifiers of Jesus fulfilled the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

The Midianite merchantmen, into whose hands his brethren sold Joseph, brought him down into Egypt. He was bought by Potiphar, “the captain of the guard.” Potiphar was an Egyptian grandee; a member of a proud aristocracy; high in office and in court favour. He would no doubt live in a splendid palace, covered with hieroglyphs and filled with slaves. The young captive, accustomed to the tenderness of his simple and beloved home, must have trembled as he passed up the pillared avenue, through sphinx-guarded gates, into the recesses of that strange, vast Egyptian palace, where they spoke a language of which he could not understand a word, and where all was so new and strange. But “God was with him”; the sense of the presence and guardianship of his father’s God pervaded and stilled his soul, and kept him in perfect peace; and, though severed from all whom he knew, it was rest and strength to feel that the mysterious wings, engraved on the porticoes of so many Egyptian buildings, were emblems to him of the outstretched wings of his great Father’s care - an unsleeping care beneath which his soul might nestle evermore.

Who would not rather, after all, choose to be Joseph in Egypt with God, than the brothers with a blood-stained garment in their hands and the sense of guilt on their souls?”⁹

1st Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 2:11-19; Zech 8:18-23	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 24:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 8:23-25
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 4:16-5:9
	Catholicon	1 John 1:8-2:11
	Acts	Acts 8:3-13
	Psalm	Ps 118:14,18
	Gospel	Mark 4:21-29

Day 5

Friday, 28 February 2020

Genesis 39:1-6

39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.

5 So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.

From the Fathers:

A SUCCESSFUL MAN

"What is the meaning of "the Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man"? Everything went well for him, grace from on high preceded him everywhere, and the grace that flourished with regard to Joseph was so obvious as to become plain even to his master, the chief steward. Recall the text says, "His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. Joseph found favour in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority." Do you see what it means to be helped by the right hand from above? I mean, behold, a young man, a stranger, a captive slave, yet entrusted by his master with his whole household. "He entrusted everything to him," the text says. Why? Because along with power from on high Joseph also contributed his own way of doing things." - Chrysostom ¹⁰

Lord, Your servant Joseph was faithful in all the tasks set before him, as he felt that he was serving You. Grant me Lord this spirit of true and faithful service, for the glory of Your name.

Commentary:

“Imagine how painful it must have been at age 17, not only to have been torn from his family and sold into slavery - but to have his family do it! How easy it would have been to become embittered and hate-filled (like his brothers). But that didn’t happen to Joseph. Although he was far from home, the presence of God was very real in his life, and it had a dramatic impact on Potiphar. He could not help but recognize the presence of God in the life of this remarkable slave. Imagine how strong Joseph’s testimony had to be for Potiphar, who was a pagan, not only to recognize and admire Joseph’s character but to attribute it to God rather than to Joseph.

Joseph was not bitter toward his brothers nor enslaved by his circumstances. He was content in the presence of God (Heb. 13:5-6 and Phil. 4:10-13). He didn’t mourn his disappointment but became useful where he was. And God used that heart of faithfulness and contentment.”¹¹

“In the first place, though stripped of his coat, [Joseph] had not been stripped of his character. See to it, young people, that no one rob you of that: everything else may be replaced but that! He was industrious, prompt, diligent, obedient, reliable. When sent to find his brothers, he had carried out, not the letter only, but the spirit of his father’s instructions, and did not rest till he had traced them from Shechem to Dothan. And this was the spirit of his life. He did his work, not because he was obliged to do it, but because God had given it to him to do, and had called him to do it.

He read the will of God in “the daily round, the common task.” He said to himself, as he said [in later days], “God sent me before you” (45:5). He felt that he was the servant - not so much of Potiphar as - of the God of Abraham and Isaac.

[Joseph] girded himself manfully to do with his might whatsoever his hand found to do. He was “faithful in that which was least,” in the most menial and trivial duties of his office. He believed that God had put him where he was; and in serving his earthly master well he felt that he was really pleasing his great heavenly Friend, who was as near him in those hieroglyphed palaces as in Jacob’s tents. This is the spirit in which all service should be done. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).”¹²

1st Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 6:3-7:26; Is 3:1-14	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 30:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 5:12-16
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 12:6-21
	Catholicon	3 John 1:1-14
	Acts	Acts 2:42-3:9
	Psalm	Ps 13:5-6
	Gospel	Luke 11:1-10

Day 6

Saturday, 29 February 2020

Genesis 39:6-9

6 Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

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

From the Fathers:

THE SOUL MASTERS THE FLESH

"This holy Joseph was beautiful in his body but even more beautiful in his soul, because he was chaste in his body and had a chaste soul. The beauty of his body shone in him, but that of his character even more so. Therefore, even though for many people the beauty of the body is usually an obstacle to salvation, it could do no harm to our saint, because the beauty of his character ruled that of his body. So the soul must subdue the flesh, and not the flesh the soul, because the soul is the master of the flesh, and the flesh is the servant of the soul. Woe to the soul that is dominated by flesh and is changed from master to servant by neglecting the faith in the Lord and by submitting to the slavery of sin. But the soul of the patriarch Joseph securely preserved its power, and the flesh could not dominate it at all." – Chromatius¹³

Lord, in the face of temptation Joseph stood firmly, refusing to do this great wickedness and sin against You. Let my strength be in You Lord, so that I may stand strong against sin and resist it at its doors.

Commentary:

“In the midst of this honour the devil envied [Joseph] and started to work. Indeed when you find that you are in peace and restfulness, be careful of the devil’s envy. The devil did not rest when he saw Joseph resting, he started working in a way that Joseph never considered.

Joseph was a young man with all the energy of youth. He was only 17 when his brothers threw him into the pit (37:2). When he was tempted in Potiphar’s house, he was only 20 or in his 20’s and “Joseph was handsome in form and appearance” (39:6). Here the devil spread a net for him using the wife of Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer (39:1). “Now it came to pass that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph” (39:7). She started to lust after him and to ask of him the sin. She was very persistent and asked him everyday. He did not heed her (39:10).

Joseph’s chastity is a lesson for all generations, the sexual urge is hard to resist in this age... Joseph persevered in his chastity and purity, he refused to give himself any excuse. There were many excuses; one excuse was that this woman had authority over him, she could cause him many problems if he refused her demands and if she felt she had been insulted. Despite this he refused but she insisted day after day. He apologised saying he would be loyal to her husband who is his master. He said, “Look my master does not know what is with me in the house and he has committed all that he has to my hand there is no-one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you because you are his wife.

How then can I do this great wickedness?” (39:8-9). She kept on asking Joseph. Here Joseph considered a higher level in the conversation which is the right of God. He said “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (39:9).

This is Joseph the virtuous who by his pure heart and chaste body has moved far beyond the level of sin. He was known for his sentence, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God” (39:9). He knew that this sin was against God not only against Potiphar or to his wife. ..The chastity in his heart was stronger than the temptation attacking it from outside.”
- H.H. Pope Shenouda III ¹⁴

1st Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 119:57-58
	Gospel	Matt 5:25-37
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 12:1-21
	Catholicon	James 1:1-12
	Acts	Acts 21:27-39
	Psalm	Ps 5:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 5:38-48

Day 7

Sunday, 1 March 2020

Sunday of the Treasures of the
Kingdom of Heaven
Matthew 6:19-33

19 *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;*

20 *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

22 *The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.*

23 *But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

24 *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

25 *Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*

26 *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

27 *Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*

28 *So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;*

29 *and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

30 *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

31 *Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’*

32 *For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph was a shepherd “feeding the flock” (37:2). Our Lord Jesus Christ is a Shepherd: He is “the good shepherd” (John 10:11).”

+ “Joseph was opposed to evil (37:2; 39:9). Paul says of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Hebrews, “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.” (Hebrews 1:9).”

+ “Joseph was the beloved son of his father (37:3). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the beloved Son of His Father; for God said, “This is my beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).”

+ “Joseph was hated by his brothers (37:4,5,8). How true this also was of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did His own brethren (the Jews) greatly hate Him (Luke 19:14), but also the world hated Him, as Our Lord Himself testified in John 7:7, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.” ”

+ “Joseph was hated without a cause. He was hated for what he was (righteous) and for what he said (dreams, Divine truth; 37:5,8). Our Lord Jesus Christ was “hated ... without a cause” (John 15:25)”

+ “Joseph was promised a glorious future (37:7,9). Some of the glorious future of Our Lord Jesus Christ was described by the archangel Gabriel when he said of Him, “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

(Luke 1:32,33).”

+ “Joseph was envied by his brethren (37:11). Pilate realized that about Our Lord Jesus Christ; for the Scripture says of Pilate, “For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy” (Matthew 27:18).”¹⁵

1st Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 17:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 6:34-7:12
Prophecies: -		
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 7:22-29
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 13:1-14
	Catholicon	James 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 21:40-22:16
	Psalm	Ps 25:1-2,4
	Gospel	Matt 6:19-33

Day 8

Monday, 2 March 2020

Genesis 39:10-12

10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.

11 But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside,

12 that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

From the Fathers:

REMAIN VIGILANT AND ALERT

"But how will we succeed in having the Lord with us and enjoying His guidance in everything? If we are vigilant and alert and imitate this young man's self-control, his other virtues and noble attitude, and if we see that it is so necessary for us to perform all our duties precisely so as never to be condemned by the Lord. We perform our duties to acknowledge that it is impossible to escape the notice of that unsleeping eye... Let us not place greater weight on respect for human beings than on God's anger but rather recall in every circumstance those words of Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So when some temptation disturbs us, let us turn these words over in our mind, and every unholy desire will immediately be put to flight." - Chrysostom ¹⁶

Lord, despite the weight of the temptation, Joseph's heart always remained loyal to You. Help me Lord to flee from youthful lusts, so that I may always remain faithful to You.

Commentary:

“[Joseph] had the right concerns

He was concerned ethically that his actions not hurt others, in this case Potiphar. His master had entrusted him with much, and Joseph refused to violate that trust for a moment of pleasure. He also looked beyond the immediate to the ultimate, recognizing the consequences that such sin would have on his relationship with God (v.9). He was concerned spiritually, because he understood that all sin is against God. The offer of sensual pleasure is not worth the price tag attached to it.

[Joseph] had the right strategy

He avoided contact with her. Joseph realized that he had to be aware of the lure of sin and avoid its opportunities. He had to be alert!

[Joseph] had the right escape route

When Potiphar's wife finally got Joseph alone, he ran as far as he could as fast as he could, leaving his coat behind. What Samson, David, and Solomon did not do, Joseph did. He fled, keeping the courage of his convictions and his integrity intact. He exemplified Paul's advice to Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). He didn't flirt with sin, argue with it, or reason with it. He fled from it.

In spite of the evil environment, the woman's persistence, and his limited personal spiritual training, Joseph resisted. How?

- He recognized that he belonged to God.
- He recognized sin's effect on others.
- He recognized sin as defiance against God.

This young man's godly character was continuing to be shaped.”¹⁷

2nd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 3:6-14;	Is 4:2-5:7
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 40:11
	Gospel	Mark 9:25-29
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 1:18-25
	Catholicon	Jude 1:1-8
	Acts	Acts 4:36-5:11
	Psalm	Ps 29:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 18:1-8

Day 9

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Genesis 39:13-15

13 And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,

14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.

15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

From the Fathers:

THE ONE WHOM GUILT HAS EXPOSED

"When Joseph was accused by his master's wife, he could be held by his clothing but was unable to be captivated in soul. He did not even tolerate her words for a long time, considering it a dangerous influence if he delayed any longer, lest through the hands of the adulteress the attractions of lust penetrate his soul. Therefore by removing his garments he shook off all accusation; leaving the clothes with which he was held he fled, robbed indeed but not naked, for he was covered still more with the clothing of purity. No one is naked except the man whom guilt has exposed." - Caesarius of Arles¹⁸

Lord, Joseph dedicated his heart wholly to You, such that sin could not take over his heart or defile his body. Fill my heart with Your love Lord, so that I may not sin against You.

Commentary:

“If Judah, the free son, had enslaved himself to the lust of his body, and married the Canaanite, the daughter of Shua; Joseph the slave, on the other hand, proclaimed his true freedom, when his master’s wife could not take over his heart, or defile his body, despite the bitter circumstances in which the young man lived.”¹⁹

“The merely negative attitude will, after all, be weak and [therefore] the best means of saying “No” to sin is to say “Yes” with the whole heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you wish to dispel the darkness you will bring in a light; if you desire to kill weeds most effectively you will sow the ground with wholesome grass; and, in like manner, if you would keep evil out of your hearts you must get the Lord Jesus Christ into them.

....the grace of the Holy Spirit, personal attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ, and implicit trust in Him, will give us quickness of sight to see what He would have us to do and firmness of purpose to do that with our might. Nothing is so clear-sighted as love. It is on the alert at the approach of the slightest danger; and if only we take care to continue in the love of Christ, that will keep us right, for it will reveal the tempter to us even under his most cunning disguise, and give us courage and firmness to withstand him. Nay, more, let us but have the love of Christ strong within us, and we shall not think that there is anything like a sacrifice or a hardship in saying “No” to sin, for we shall have no [yearning] after that which He disapproves.

Our refusal to sin will be then only the outworking of our satisfaction with Him; the consequence of our delight in Him, and not the result of any outward compulsion. Here, young man is the key to the whole position: fill the heart with Christ, and when the tempter comes he will find it so pre-occupied that there is no room in it for him and his seduction.”²⁰

2nd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Job 19:1-27, Is 5:7-16	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 41:4,13
	Gospel	Luke 12:22-31
Mass:	Pauline	2 Cor 9:6-15
	Catholicon	James 1:1-12
	Acts	Acts 4:13-22
	Psalm	Ps 41:1
	Gospel	Mark 10:17-27

Day 10

Wednesday, 4 March 2020

Genesis 39:16-20

16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home.

17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me;

18 so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

19 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused.

20 Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.

From the Fathers:

HE WAS A PALACE IN HIS PRISON

"But the holy man considered that prison to be a palace; and Joseph himself was a palace in his prison, because where faith, chastity and modesty are, there the palace of Christ is, the temple of God, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.... In the church there are three models of chastity that everybody must imitate: Joseph, Susanna and Mary. May men imitate Joseph, women Susanna and the virgins, St Mary." – Chromatius²¹*

** The story of Susanna can be found in the Second Canonical Books – The Story of Susanna 1:1-64 (refer to back pages of this program). The story is read in the Coptic Orthodox Church on the night of the Apocalypse (Joyous Saturday).*

Lord, what purity, what righteousness was displayed in the life of Joseph. No matter how difficult the circumstances, help me to maintain my purity of heart and body before You.

Commentary:

“[Joseph] paid the price for his righteousness, whatever the results Joseph put purity of heart and body first, or we could say, he preferred to be honest to God. Even though he could have been thrown in prison, he preferred disgrace, bad reputation, unjust accusation by Potiphar’s wife, rather than to sin against God. He preferred to lose the love and favour of his master who left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, who trusted that God’s hand was with him and believed he was a blessing to his house. For the sake of remaining pure, he lost his position, his reputation, his freedom, comfort and wealth and was thrown in prison. Truly righteousness has a very high price that the virtuous pay. Joseph did not only give us a lesson in chastity and purity, he gave us a lesson in following the correct path, regardless of how difficult the consequences might be.”

“The captain of the guard threw Joseph in prison and attracted the attention of the guards to him. Imagine this prisoner who has been accused of attempting to defile the honour of the captain of the guard’s wife? How do you think he would be treated in prison? What was on Joseph’s mind at that time? He might have thought, is this the result of chastity and purity, where is God’s protection of me? Amazingly, after Joseph was thrown in prison, the Bible says, “The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy” (39:21). Some of us may ask the question, “Lord what sort of mercy is this in which Joseph has to bear unfair accusations, a bad reputation, imprisonment and dismissal from his job?”

I think it is as if the loving God was whispering in Joseph’s heart, “It is not important where you are, what is important is that I am with you wherever you are. If you go to prison I am there with you, I will look after you, guard you and show mercy towards you. Joseph the meek would be saying, “Blessed are You O Lord, I through faith believe in Your care not only in prison but also ‘though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me’ (Psalm 23:4). ... If You are not with me nor I with You and if I had obeyed that woman and left You, the bad reputation with which they labeled me, all that Potiphar’s house accused me of, all these things do not matter, what matters God is what You think of me.”” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ²²

2nd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 2:11-20; Is 5:17-25;	
	Mal 1:6-3:6	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:17-18
	Gospel	Matt 5:17-24
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 3:1-17
	Catholicon	2 John 1:8-13
	Acts	Acts 5:3-11
	Psalm	Ps 18:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 15:32-38

Day 11

Thursday, 5 March 2020

Genesis 39:20

20 Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH BLESSED IN PRISON

"Therefore I might say that [Potiphar's wife] was truly stripped even though she held the skirt of his garment in her hand, for she had lost all the adornments of purity and the covering of chastity. I might say further that [Joseph] was sufficiently adorned and clothed even though his voice was not heard, for his innocence spoke... I might have said Joseph was more blessed when he was cast into prison, for he endured martyrdom in defense of chastity. The gift of purity is a great thing, even when it is preserved without danger, but when it is defended, although at the risk of personal safety, then it is crowned still more fully." - Caesarius of Arles ²³

Lord, despite the unfairness of being cast into prison, Joseph's hope always rested in You. Grant me the faith Lord to know that Your ways are not my ways and that You are working in me.

Commentary:

"I read the words from the biblical account, and my heart goes out to Joseph. I think, Oh, if there's ever a time to reward this man Joseph, reward him now, God! Reward him for saying no day after day after day! Reward him for running instead of yielding! But God is not through with His man, Joseph. God is not like us. He patiently and faithfully works in ways we would never employ. God sees far beyond this situation and knows what needs to be done deep within the recesses of Joseph's life as He prepares him for greatness in the years ahead. Therefore, He remains silent even though Joseph was caught in a trap of circumstantial evidence....

Imagine what must have been going through Joseph's mind at this point, shortly after he was incarcerated. He was not only innocent, he had resisted blatant temptation over and over again. (He'd never read Genesis 41. He didn't know what the final outcome would be. He didn't know that in a matter of years he would be prime minister of Egypt). All the man knew at this painful moment was that he had done what was right and had suffered wrong for it. Time dragged by. Days turned into months. He was, again, unfairly rejected – forgotten – totally helpless. But somehow, in the midst of this unfair situation, Joseph sensed that Jehovah's hand was in all this. "Joseph, you're Mine. Just wait. I'm with you. I'm not ignoring you or rejecting you. You will be a better man, Joseph, because of this accusation against you. I'm not through preparing you for My service." ”²⁴

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

(Isaiah 55:8-9)

2nd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 5:15-22; Is 6:1-12; Josh 2:1-6:27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 28:9
	Gospel	Matt 11:20-30
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 16:17-27
	Catholicon	James 3:1-12
	Acts	Acts 12:12-23
	Psalm	Ps 48:10-11
	Gospel	Matt 19:16-30

Day 12

Friday, 6 March 2020

Genesis 39:21-23

21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing.

23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

From the Fathers:

THE CREATIVE WISDOM OF GOD

"Then the loving God, though wanting to make Joseph feel completely secure, did not release him from slavery or set him at liberty. This, after all, is ever God's way, not to free virtuous people from dangers or preserve them from trials but, in the midst of such trials, to give evidence of His characteristic grace to such an extent that the very trials prove an occasion of festivity for them. Hence blessed David also said, "You have relieved me in my distress"; "you did not take away the distress," he is saying, "or free me from it and make me be completely at ease, but, what is quite remarkable, you brought me peace though I was in fact still in distress." This is exactly what the loving Lord does in [Joseph's] case...the creative wisdom of God transformed all his distress. Just as a pearl reveals its peculiar beauty even if someone buries it in the mire, so too virtue, wherever you cast it, reveals its characteristic power, be it in servitude, in prison, in distress or in prosperity. So since, even when cast into prison, he won over the chief jailer and received from him control of everything there, let us see in this case as well how Joseph reveals the force of grace coming his way." – Chrysostom ²⁵

Lord, You never left Joseph in his time of trials but were always by his side, supporting and nurturing him. Help me Lord to cling to You in times of difficulty, knowing that You will never forsake me.

Commentary:

“The Lord was with him in the palace of Potiphar; but when Joseph went to prison, the Lord went there too. The only thing which severs us from God is sin: so long as we walk with God, God will walk with us; and if our path dips down from the sunny upland lawns into the valley with its clinging mists, He will go at our side. The godly man is much more independent of men and things than others. It is God who makes him blessed. Like the golden city, he has no need of sun or moon, for the Lord God is his everlasting light. If he is in a palace he is glad, not so much because of its delights as because God is there. And if he is in a prison he can sing and give praises, because the God of his love bears him company. To the soul which is absorbed with God, all places and experiences are much the same. “Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners [were] confined. And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. “If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.””²⁶

“... where was God? We can see God in the good things. We can even see Him in the questionable things. But where is God when all is unfair? Where is God when the dungeon experience occurs? Does His silence mean He’s absent? We’re not left to wonder.

Genesis 39:21 says, “The Lord was with Joseph.” That’s where God was. He was right there, He never left. He

never left. He was *with* Joseph. Not only that, he did for Joseph what he had done before. He gave him favour in the eyes of others.... In what could have been the direst of positions, the dreariest of places, Joseph prospered... in prison – of all places.

False accusations put Joseph in prison, but it was the Lord who stayed near him and nurtured his soul while he was there. As a result, Joseph found favour in the eyes of the chief jailer to the point where the man trusted Joseph to supervise all the other prisoners. The warden trusted and respected Joseph so much that he “did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.”

You see, the Lord remained first in Joseph’s life, He was the focus of his life. The lens of God’s will stood between Joseph and his circumstances, enabling Joseph to see God in them, to read God in them - and enabling God to use him in them.... Make no mistake about it, Joseph didn’t deserve jail, but he responded to it beautifully. That’s the marvel of the story. First and foremost in his life was his vital and consistent relationship with his Lord. And because of that, God used him in strategic and significant ways.”²⁷

2nd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 8:1-9:4; 1 Sam 17:1-18:4; Is 7:1-14; Job 11:1-20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 116:7-8
	Gospel	Matt 15:39-16:12
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 12:28-13:16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:7-16
	Acts	Acts 15:22-31
	Psalm	Ps 29:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 6:39-49

40:1 It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker.

3 So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

5 Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation.

6 And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH AND THE TWO OFFICERS

“Joseph entered prison, not for anything wrong he did, but as a price for the lust of Potiphar’s wife... Similarly, the Lord descended to us and [trod] the winepress, not because of any evil He might have done, but in redemption of humanity that was defiled. In prison, Joseph encountered the two officers of Pharaoh, as though he is the Lord Christ, crucified between two robbers. The one on the right proclaimed his repentance and took hold of Paradise to remain with God, while the one on the left [remained] in his evil and blasphemy, to lose both his present and eternal lives.” – Fr Tadros Malaty ²⁸

Lord, despite Joseph's own pain and mistreatment he was sensitive and cared about the needs of others. Grant me Lord the sensitivity of heart to respond to those who are hurting and in need.

Commentary:

"[Joseph] looked at these men (40:6-7), and recognized their hurt and distress. How easy it would have been to turn away, thinking, "No one is caring about the mistreatment I have received. Why should I care about anyone else's?" But he didn't. Joseph's response to the disappointment of unjust imprisonment was twofold:

- Vertical - he didn't allow his circumstances to disrupt his relationship with God.
- Horizontal - he didn't allow his hurt to prevent him from caring about the hurts of others.

Joseph could have ignored them, but he didn't. He had the grace to set aside his personal adversity and help others who were hurting. Life is filled with disappointment and loss, but we can be overcomers by refusing to become self-absorbed and self-centered. Instead of wasting our energy in self-pity, we can invest our time in meeting the needs of others.

For example, a missionary couple in India saw their six children killed, so they raised 300 foster children. Following the tragic flood at Toccoa Falls, Georgia, a man whose wife and two children had died in the flood said, "Every time I wanted to cry, someone else needed help and I felt compelled to offer. I was so consumed with helping others that I had no time to worry about myself."

Is that how you respond to adversity and disappointment? Or do you become so consumed with your own pain that you are blind to the pain of others? Sensitivity to the needs of others can be deadened by preoccupation with personal disappointment. But that wasn't true of Joseph. He not only noticed and cared-he got involved. [Joseph's] care and concern for these men was marvellous in its expression of true humility and godly character."²⁹

2nd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 25:7-8,11
	Gospel	Mark 9:43-50
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:1-18
	Catholicicon	James 1:22-27
	Acts	Acts 22:17-30
	Psalm	Ps 118:19-20
	Gospel	Matt 7:13-21

Day 14

Sunday, 8 March 2020

Sunday of the Temptation on the
Mount
Matthew 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and,

'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph was sent on a mission by his father (37:13,14). The Father sent Our Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” (John 20:21)

+ “Joseph obeyed his father and went on the mission as instructed (37:13ff). Hebrews 10:9 says of Our Lord Jesus Christ, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.””

+ “Joseph sought his brothers’ welfare (37:14). Our Lord Jesus Christ said He did not come “into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

+ “Joseph was rejected by his own brothers when he came to them seeking their welfare (37:16ff). Our Lord Jesus Christ experienced similar rejection, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).”

+ “Joseph was conspired against for evil. “Even before he came near to them [his brothers], they conspired against him to slay him” (37:18). Our Lord Jesus Christ was conspired against in order that He might be slain (Matthew 12:14). Even before He had begun His public ministry - in fact, while only an infant - Herod sought to slay Him (Matthew 2:16-18). But Herod failed to slay Our Lord Jesus Christ, just as Joseph’s brothers failed to slay Joseph.”

+ “Joseph was stripped of his garments (37:23). Shortly before Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, the soldiers “stripped him” of His clothes (Matthew 27:28).”

+ “Joseph came out of the hole in the ground alive (37:28). Our Lord Jesus Christ also came out of the hole in the ground (His tomb) alive, “And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! (Luke 24:4-6).”³⁰

2nd Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 51:1,9
	Gospel	Mark 1:12-15
Prophecies: -		
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 57:1
	Gospel	Luke 4:1-13
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:19-15:7
	Catholicon	James 2:1-13
	Acts	Acts 23:1-11
	Psalm	Ps 27:8-9
	Gospel	Matt 4:1-11

Day 15

Monday, 9 March 2020

Genesis 40:7-8

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"

8 And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."

From the Fathers:

EVIDENCE OF JOSEPH'S CHARACTERISTIC VIRTUE

"This remarkable man, however, concerned for their comfort, noticed that they were dismayed by the experience of the dreams and confused in mind; so he asked, "Why so downcast today?" The dejection on their faces, you see, betrayed the apprehension within them...So, when he saw them lost in dejection from the experience of their dreams, he questioned them to discover the cause. See how, even when he found himself in prison, he gave evidence of his characteristic virtue and was concerned to relieve the sadness of others." – Chrysostom ³¹

Lord, Joseph's consolation was in You and You sustained him and were his anchor in the time of his need. Help me Lord to direct those who are troubled to You, the only true source of consolation and comfort.

Commentary:

"We may learn that those who have been themselves upheld in trouble are the most efficient helpers of others when they are in trial. Young as Joseph was, he had seen enough sorrow to [enable] him to sympathise with others in their affliction. And in the suggestive question which he put to his fellow prisoners, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" he not only expresses his own faith, but in the most delicate and skilful manner indicates to them the source [where] alone true consolation comes. His faith in God had been grievously tried. He had been plunged into affliction, and as the direct and immediate result of his adherence to the course of purity and [righteousness], he had been cast into a prison. Yet he still held fast his confidence in Jehovah, and it was that faith which made him such a cheerful comforter of others. There was a great sorrow in his heart, but his firm conviction that God was ordering his life made him outwardly happy in spite of that; and only on such an occasion as that of his appeal to the cup-bearer was any reference made to it by him. But the consciousness that it was there opened his ear in compassion for the reception of the story of another's woe. Yes, it is only through suffering that we learn to sympathise... Thus we may console ourselves under our own trials with the thought that God is endowing us thereby with the gift of sympathy, and fitting us to become "sons of consolation" to others in affliction...

Mere suffering [however], will not give us the gift of consolation, unless we have ourselves been sustained by God through our affliction. We can say, then, that the anchor which held us in the storm will hold others, and that saying has more staying power in it than if we were merely to direct the troubled one to use an anchor which we had never proved. When you are in the prison, therefore, remember that you are there not simply for your own sake, to prepare you for the post that you are yet to fill, but for the sake of others, that you may learn to speak a word in season to those who shall be in it after you." ³²

3rd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 1:20-33; Is 8:13-9:7	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 19:11-28
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 5:9-6:5
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:3-12
	Acts	Acts 17:10-14
	Psalm	Ps 32:5
	Gospel	Luke 11:33-36

Day 16

Tuesday, 10 March 2020

Genesis 40:8

8 And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.” So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.”

From the Fathers:

GRACE FROM ON HIGH

“But you, dearly beloved, hearing that Joseph endured slavery at the hands of the traders and then experienced the slavery of the chief steward, consider how he was not alarmed and did not give up hope or debate within himself in these terms: “How deceitful were those dreams that foretold such prosperity for me! I mean, look, I have gone from slavery to harsh slavery and a range of masters, from one to another, forced to associate with savage races. Surely we haven’t been abandoned? Surely we haven’t been passed over by grace from on high?” He said nothing of the sort; he gave it not a thought; on the contrary, he bore everything meekly and nobly.” – Chrysostom ³³

Lord, Joseph had great faith in You such that he never lost hope that his dreams would be fulfilled. Grant me Lord the strength of faith to believe in Your promises, despite the obstacles I may face.

Commentary:

“And we cannot but feel that in this faith of his we have the secret of Joseph’s greatness. Many a man, having had his experience of dreams, would have said to these prisoners, “Think no more about them; they are mere delusions. I too have had my dreams; and once they seemed to me prophetic, but they have only mocked me, and it will be the same with you.” But no, he was holding himself up by his faith in God’s revelation to himself, made long ago through the bowing sheaves and the reverential stars, and he would not make light of what had been similarly revealed to other men.

Joseph’s willingness to interpret the dreams of his fellow-prisoners proves that he still believes in his own; that among his other qualities he had this characteristic also of a steadfast and profound soul, that he ‘reverenced as a man the dreams of his youth.’ Had he not done so, and had he not yet hoped that somehow God would bring truth out of them, he would surely have said, ‘Don’t you believe in dreams ; they will only get you into difficulties.’ He would have said... ‘I won’t meddle with dreams any more; I am not so young as I once was; ... I have learned what human life actually is... My religion has brought me into trouble; it has lost me my situation; it has kept me poor; it has made me despised; it has debarred me from enjoyment’... But [he did not speak like this] to the two heart-stricken captives; and in offering to become the interpreter of their dreams he takes another step towards the fulfillment of his own.

Had he ridiculed their visions, then, so far as we can see, he might have remained in the prison till his death; but by the course he took, inspired as that was by faith in God, he showed that he still regarded his own visions as full of Divine significance, and took the way that led to their [fulfillment].”³⁴

3rd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 2:1-15; Is 10:12-20;	
	Josh 7:1-26	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:10
	Gospel	Luke 12:54-59
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 4:1-8
	Catholicon	1 John 2:1-11
	Acts	Acts 27:9-12
	Psalm	Ps 32:2-3
	Gospel	John 8:31-39

Day 17

Wednesday, 11 March 2020

Genesis 40:9-19

9 Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, 10 and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes.

11 Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

12 And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

13 Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.

14 But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.

15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon."

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head.

17 In the uppermost basket [were] all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."

18 So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days.

19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you."

From the Fathers:

CONSIDER JOSEPH'S ATTITUDE

"Consider in this, I ask you, how Joseph says nothing against that disgusting adulteress, does not blame his master or recount his brother's inhumanity to him, instead he suppresses all that in saying, "Remember me, and have me taken out of this dungeon, for I was really abducted from the land of the Hebrews and have done nothing here and yet have been cast into this prison."...Hearing this let us learn, when we fall foul of such people, not to be bent on railing against them and sharpening our tongue in accusing them. [Instead, let us]...demonstrate our innocence meekly and mildly and imitate this remarkable man in that, though being in difficulties, he did not bring himself to parade the Egyptian women's [sin] even by word of mouth." – Chrysostom³⁵

Lord, Joseph's character was one of integrity and faithfulness regardless of the situation. Help me Lord to be honest and faithful to You in all aspects of my life, no matter how insignificant they may seem.

Commentary:

“All [Joseph] asked of his fellow prisoner in prison, the chief butler was to mention him before Pharaoh, so he can release him from the prison, saying to him, “Please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house...I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon” (40:14-15). Because Joseph asked in this situation for human help, it was said regarding it, “Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” (40:23) Perhaps the thirteen years of pain had exhausted Joseph, thus he was weakened and asked the chief butler to mention him before Pharaoh. But the chief butler did not mention him, however, the angels were undoubtedly mentioning him before God.” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ³⁶

“One of the chief characteristics of Joseph was his great faithfulness regardless of the situation. In sonship, Joseph was faithful to Jacob; in slavery, Joseph was faithful to Potiphar; in seduction, Joseph was faithful to God; in slander, Joseph was faithful to grace; in suffering, Joseph was faithful to patience, and here in speech, Joseph was faithful to truth. He spoke the truth whether it was good news or bad news.” ³⁷

3rd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 4:19-6:13; Joel 2:21-26;	
	Is 9:9-10:4; Job 12:1-14:22	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 27:4
	Gospel	Luke 13:18-22
Mass:	Pauline	2 Thess 2:9-17
	Catholicon	2 Pet 2:9-15
	Acts	Acts 28:7-11
	Psalm	Ps 27:7-8
	Gospel	Luke 4:1-13

Day 18

Thursday, 12 March 2020

Genesis 40:20-23

20 Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH REALISED THE RACE WAS LONGER FOR HIM

“Joseph, you see, had to await the right moment for release from there to come his way along with renown. After all, if before Pharaoh's dreams the chief cupbearer had by his own intervention freed him from prison, perhaps his virtue would not have become known to many people. As it was, however, the wise and creative Lord, who like a fine craftsman knew how long the gold should be kept in the fire and when it ought be taken out, allowed forgetfulness to affect the chief cupbearer for a period of two years so that the moment of Pharaoh's dreams should arrive and that by force of circumstances the good man should become known to the whole of Pharaoh's kingdom.” – Chrysostom ³⁸

Lord, despite many disappointments, Joseph's life was characterised by patient trust in You. Grant me this patient trust Lord, to know that You will never forget me but are refining me as gold purified in the fire.

Commentary:

“Joseph was abandoned - this time by a friend, not an enemy, and for a long time, not a short one. It would have been easy for him to succumb to disillusionment and disappointment. But those are the results of putting our trust in men - and Joseph's trust was in the Lord. Even though the butler had forgotten Joseph, God hadn't. These are the times that build into us the indispensable character quality of patient trust. James 1:24 says that this can be learned only through trials. James teaches that without patience there will be no maturity, and without trials, delays, and disappointments there will be no patience. It has been said that a man is not a hero because he is braver than anyone else but because he is brave longer.”³⁹

“The butler forgot [Joseph] for two years and amazingly it was to Joseph's advantage, until God sent to Pharaoh two dreams. Pharaoh gathered all the wise men and magicians but they could not tell him the interpretation of his dreams. This is when the chief butler remembered Joseph the righteous, and told Pharaoh about his wisdom in dream interpretation. All this was by virtue of divine intervention, to elevate Joseph's status and to compensate for the days of hardship. Here we see the Lord's wisdom in working at the right time. If the chief butler had mentioned Joseph in front of Pharaoh as soon as he returned to do his position, the most Joseph could have obtained was to get out of the prison and he would not have known where to go after that. Also if Potiphar had not believed his wife in her false accusation of Joseph, and said to her rather, that this youth is a blessed person, and if he had investigated

the issue more thoroughly, revealing Joseph's innocence, the result could have been Joseph's remaining as an honest slave in Potiphar's house. He would not have become the second man in the kingdom, whom everyone bowed to. “And without his consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (41:44) Also Joseph's brothers, if God had saved Joseph from their hands at that time, so they had not thrown him into the pit or sold him as a slave, he could have remained a goat shepherd all his life. Therefore what a person wishes for is one thing, but what God prepares for him or her is much greater, even if this greatness is obtained by means of trouble and hardship. God may allow sinners to commit whatever they want against His sons and it may seem as if God is doing nothing. As David complained saying to the Lord in the Psalm, “Why do you stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1) However, at the same time when a trialled person thinks that God is distant from him, God will be arranging for all things to work for his benefit. And as Paul the Apostle said, “All things work together for good to those who love God.” (Romans 8:28) – H.H. Pope Shenouda III⁴⁰

3rd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 18:17-19:29; Prov 2:16-3:4; Is 11:10-12:2	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 9:11-12
	Gospel	Luke 20:20-26
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 4:6-11
	Catholicon	James 4:1-10
	Acts	Acts 28:1-6
	Psalm	Ps 9:7-8
	Gospel	John 12:44-50

1 Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river.

2 Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the [other] cows on the bank of the river.

4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke.

5 He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good.

6 Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

7 And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream.

8 Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but [there] [was] no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day.

10 When Pharaoh was angry with his

servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker,

11 we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream.

13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it."

16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH'S GOOD SENSE AND DISCRETION

"Notice how Pharaoh was ashamed to say openly, 'None of my [magicians] can interpret the dream.' Instead, what? 'I had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it; but I have heard them say of you that once you hear of a dream you interpret it.' Consider in this case too, I ask you, Joseph's good sense and discretion in the way he replies to Pharaoh: 'Don't suspect,' he says, 'that I utter anything of myself or interpret them by human wisdom. There is, in fact, no way of coming to knowledge of them without revelation from on high. So be aware that without God it is not possible for me to give you a reply.' Without God, the text says, Pharaoh will not be given the right solution. So, now that you know that the Lord of all is the one who gives this revelation, don't look for something from human beings (he is saying) that God alone has it in his power to bring to light. See how through his reply Joseph brings Pharaoh to the realization of the limitations of the [magicians] attending him and the power of the Lord." – Chrysostom ⁴¹

Lord, truly Joseph humbled himself under Your mighty hand and sought to honour and glorify You. Grant me Lord the spirit of humility which was so evident in the life of Joseph.

Commentary:

“When Joseph was taken out of prison and brought before Pharaoh, one would think that his first interest would be pleading to Pharaoh for a permanent release from prison. But in spite of the fact he had been in prison unjustly for a number of years, his first words to Pharaoh were words which exalted God (41:16). How commendable! How instructive! Joseph did not try to vindicate himself or seek Pharaoh’s aid in getting released from his prison sentence. These things were justified needs, but Joseph’s first concern was the glory and honour of God.”⁴²

“Talk about humility. Talk about absolute integrity. Here was a man who had truly humbled himself under the mighty hand of God.....Joseph said, “No, I’m not the one with the answers. But I serve a God who is. And we’ll both listen to Him, and He’ll tell us what He wants us to learn.”

You know why Joseph could be so humble and speak so openly? Because his heart had been broken. Because he had been tried by the fire of affliction. Because while his external circumstances seemed almost unbearable during those years, his internal condition had been turned into pure gold. We are now witnessing the benefits of enduring affliction with one’s eye on God.

Throughout the rest of Joseph’s life, from age 30 to age 110 when he died, we will not hear one word of resentment on his heart or from his lips. Not a word of blame against the brothers who sold him into slavery, not a word of bitterness against Potiphar’s wife, not a word of rebuke against the cupbearer who had forgotten him. Joseph was eventually in a position to get even with all of them. But he didn’t.”⁴³

3rd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 9:7-10:11; 1 Sam 23:26-24:22; Job 15:1-35; Is 13:2-13; Sirach* 2:1-3:4	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 16:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 20:27-38
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 11:1-8
	Catholicon	Jude 1:17-25
	Acts	Acts 23:6-11
	Psalm	Ps 16:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 11:14-26

* Second Canonical Book

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river.
18 Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.
19 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.
20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows.
21 When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.
22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.
23 Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.
24 And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."
25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:
26 The seven good cows are seven

years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one.
27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine.
28 This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.
29 Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt;
30 but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.
31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe.
32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

From the Fathers:

NO EXCUSE FOR ANYONE TO NEGLECT VIRTUE

"Let us never despair in the midst of tribulations or become frustrated by following our own reasoning. Rather, let us give evidence of sound endurance and be buoyed up by hope, secure in the knowledge of our Lord's resourcefulness and the fact that instead of ignoring us and abandoning us to the experience of troubles, he wants to crown us with a resplendent garland for our struggles. It is for this that all holy people have been distinguished. Hence the apostles also said, "It is through great tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God." Christ himself said to the disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation." So let us not be upset at the thought of tribulations but rather listen to Paul's statement that "those who wish to live religiously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Far from being surprised or troubled, let us endure developments with complete fortitude and endurance, having regard not to the tribulations but to the gain accruing to us from it." – Chrysostom ⁴⁴

Lord, Joseph walked with You and believed in You, not as afar off, but as always near. Help me Lord to walk with You as Joseph walked with You, and to recognise and witness Your constant presence in my life.

Commentary:

“As God did not abandon Joseph, so Joseph also did not abandon God. Joseph held onto the Lord through all the trouble that came upon him, and he strongly held his faith. The Lord’s name was in his mouth every time he spoke with Pharaoh for he mentioned the Lord’s name more than once in front of Pharaoh. (41:16,25,28,32) He mentioned the Lord even though he knew that Pharaoh worshipped Ra, Amon, Isis or Osiris and Ptah, etc. But he said nothing except the Lord’s name, ‘Elihom’ and ‘Jehovah’ in front of Pharaoh. This is opposed to those who don’t mention God’s name in front of those who do not worship Him, either because of shame, fear or weakness. Perhaps this will remind us of what David the Prophet had said to the Lord, “I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings.” (Psalm 119:46). The person who is faithful to God will have God’s name on his tongue in front of everyone. That is what Joseph was like.

[Joseph] attributed all that would happen in the future to God’s arrangement. In this way Joseph disappeared from the picture so that God dominates it before Pharaoh.

Repeating God’s name five times in his speech with Pharaoh allowed God’s name to be also on Pharaoh’s tongue. Thus, he said to his servants regarding Joseph, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” Then he said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.” (41:38-39) And he delivered to him all the authority over Egypt.” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁴⁵

3rd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 130:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:17-27
Mass:	Pauline	2 Cor 7:2-11
	Catholicon	James 2:14-26
	Acts	Acts 23:12-35
	Psalm	Ps 27:6-8
	Gospel	Matt 18:23-35

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 And the younger of them said to [his] father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

25 Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 So he answered and said to [his] father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.

30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph was sold for a trifling sum compared to his worth. The man who instigated the sale was Judah (37:26-28). Our Lord Jesus Christ was sold for a trifling sum compared to His worth. The man who instigated the sale was Judas (Matthew 26:14-16).”

+ “Joseph became a great blessing to Gentile people after his deliverance from the pit (39; 40; 41; 47:13-26). After Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave, He became a great blessing to the Gentiles through the Gospel (Acts 26:23; Romans 1:16).”

+ “Joseph was humbled by being made a lowly servant (39:1). Our Lord Jesus Christ “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself” (Philippians 2:7,8).”

+ “Joseph pleased his master (39:3-6). Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” (John 8:29). God the Father agreed; for He said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).”

+ “Joseph increased in favour with man (39:6,21). Our Lord Jesus Christ “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).”

+ “Joseph had a great temptation experience recorded of him in the Scriptures in which he adamantly refused to yield to the temptation (39:1-12). Our Lord Jesus Christ also had a great temptation experience recorded of Him in the Scriptures in which He adamantly refused to yield to the temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).”

+ “Joseph was falsely accused (39:14ff). Our Lord Jesus Christ was accused by false witnesses, “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward” (Matthew 26:59,60).”⁴⁶

3rd Sunday of the Holy Fast

Vespers:	Psalm:	88:1-2
	Gospel:	Matt 15:1-20
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm:	55:1-2,16
	Gospel:	Matt 20:1-16
Mass:	Pauline:	2 Cor 6:2-13
	Catholicon:	James 3:1-12
	Acts:	24:1-23
	Psalm:	79:8-9
	Gospel:	Luke 15:11-32

33 “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.

35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH, DISCERNING AND WISE

“During the period of the Pharaohs, the Egyptians were well known for their great wisdom. St. Stephen witnessed to this saying, “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). Pharaoh was considered by the Egyptians as a descendant of a line of gods, the wisest man in the world! What did the wise man say concerning Joseph the estranged young man who was imprisoned? “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” (Genesis 41:38). Pharaoh knew that Joseph’s wisdom was incomparable and exceptional. He couldn’t have attained such wisdom from man, but was a gift from the Spirit of God.” – Fr Tadros Malaty⁴⁷

Lord, You blessed Joseph with discernment and heavenly wisdom, and strengthened him to carry out the tasks set before him. Strengthen me Lord and grant me wisdom, understanding and counsel in all that I do.

Commentary:

“Joseph did not only interpret the two dreams of Pharaoh but he also provided him with the solution. He was not like most who talk about problems without contributing to solving them. The solution he offered was a practical and wise one, that Pharaoh admired and he confessed that Joseph is “a man in whom is the Spirit of God” and also that he is “discerning and wise”. Hence, he gave him the power to carry out himself this solution; so Joseph did and saved the nation from the famine. Joseph was honest in his work and a wise manager; he was the most successful minister of resources in all of Egyptian history. He was a field manager who does not sit at a desk and give orders but he used to go to the worksite and work. He used to store the grain himself and sometimes to sell it himself. He gave us the practical example of a successful businessman. Some might think that religion is just about fasting and praying and other worship matters. However, Joseph provided us with the ideal example of the faithful religious at work, in both his work with Potiphar and with Pharaoh. Hence, he accurately and successfully carried out the plan that he drew, to rescue not only Egypt but also the rest of the surrounding countries from the famine. This is evident from the fact that his brothers came from another country.” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁴⁸

4th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 27:1-41; Is 14:24-32; Job 16:1-17:16	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 55:1, 27:7-8
	Gospel	Luke 14:7-15
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 8:12-26
	Catholicon	James 5:16-20
	Acts	Acts 11:2-18
	Psalm	Ps 55:16-17
	Gospel	Luke 16:1-9

Day 23

Tuesday, 17 March 2020

Genesis 41:37-41

37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.

40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."

41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

From the Fathers:

GOD'S RESOURCEFUL PROVIDENCE

"Do you see how even Pharaoh realized that these things became clear to Joseph through a revelation from on high? I mean, whom would we find, he is saying, so imbued with grace as to have the spirit of God in him?" He said to Joseph, 'Since God has revealed all this to you, there is no person more discerning than you.'" Consider in this instance how, when the resourceful God wishes to put his decisions into effect, no difficulty can arise from events that occur in the meantime. Witness, for example, the slaughter that nearly occurred, so to say, at the hands of his brothers, the selling, the accusation that led him into the utmost peril, imprisonment for such a long period of time, and how after all this happened to him he was raised, you might almost say, to the royal throne." – Chrysostom ⁴⁹

Lord, Joseph's spiritual life was such that Pharaoh was able to recognise the 'Spirit of God' within him. Help me Lord to be a great leader as Joseph was, through the lessons and experience of being a servant.

Commentary:

"The best appointment Pharaoh ever made was his appointment of Joseph to second in command in the government. And it is no wonder the appointment was such a good one, for Joseph's spiritual condition was the first qualification mentioned by Pharaoh as essential for the job. He said, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" (41:38).

"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you ... I have set you over all the land of Egypt" (41:40,41). This was the mandate for Joseph's selection, and what a promotion it was for him! He went all the way from the prison to the palace on Pharaoh's decree. Not only was this a great promotion for him; but it was also a great vindication and exoneration for him, too. It does pay to be pure. Truth will triumph, and all Josephs will be honoured in due time.

First, he was put over Pharaoh's house ("You shall be over my house"). This is the fourth time Joseph was made an overseer of someone's house. He was put over his parent's house (37:3, the "coat of many colours" indicated this); he was put over Potiphar's house (39:4); he was put over the prisoners' house (39:22); and now he is put over Pharaoh's house. He had proven his faithfulness in each of the previous three lesser assignments and would prove it in this fourth and greatest assignment as well. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10), said our Lord.

This was the habit and history of Joseph, and it ought to be the habit and history of every child of God.

Second, Joseph was put over all the people, "only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you ... I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Joseph was put over every Egyptian except Pharaoh. Such a great elevation would be the ruin of most people. "Only a man like Joseph, schooled by adversity and sorrow, could meet a sudden elevation like this without pride and self-exaltation. His rigorous training enabled him to encounter success without succumbing to its blandishments."⁵⁰

"The qualifications of a true leader are not merely physical, they are spiritual. It is not just about talent or skill but about character and relationship with God. The key character qualities of a great leader (which took years of suffering to build into Joseph) are internal, not external. They deal with knowing God, not with being great. Joseph had developed the character of a leader, through the lessons and experience of being a servant."⁵¹

4th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 28:10-22; Is 25:1-26:8; Job 18:1-21, Sirach* 8:1-10:1	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 17:1
	Gospel	Matt 21:28-32
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:1-16
	Catholicon	2 Pet 2:2-8
	Acts	Acts 27:1-3
	Psalm	Ps 17:6
	Gospel	Luke 9:57-62

* Second Canonical Book

42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt.

44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

From the Fathers:

REJECTED BY HIS OWN

"How amazing! The one considered by his brothers as worthy of death, is honoured by the pagan king, and set by him over all the land of Egypt. His brothers took off his coloured tunic, and the stranger presented him with a garment of white linen. His brothers sold him as a slave, and the pagan gives him his signet ring, put a gold chain around his neck, and had him ride in his second chariot. His brothers humiliated him, and the stranger cried out, 'Bow the knee to him.' Who is that Joseph, but the Lord Christ, rejected by His nation, as a King to reign over their hearts, to ordain their lives, and transfigure in their depths?" – Fr Tadros Malaty ⁵²

Lord, You rewarded Joseph abundantly because of his great faithfulness to You. Help me Lord to seek Your kingdom first and Your righteousness, forsaking the pleasures of this world, to obtain treasures in You.

Commentary:

“It was a wonderful ascent, sheer in a single bound from the dungeon to the steps of the throne. His father had rebuked him; now Pharaoh, the greatest monarch of his time, welcomes him. His brethren despised him; now the proudest priesthood of the world opens its ranks to receive him by marriage into their midst.... The hands that were hard with the toils of a slave are adorned with a signet ring. The feet are no longer tormented by fetters; a chain of gold is linked around his neck. The coat of many colours torn from him by violence and defiled by blood, and the garment left in the hand of the adulteress, are exchanged for vestures of fine linen drawn from the royal wardrobe. He was once trampled upon as the offscouring of all things; now all Egypt is commanded to bow before him, as he rides forth in the second chariot, prime minister of Egypt, and second only to the king.

All this happened because one day, for the sake of God, Joseph resisted a temptation to one act of sin. If he had yielded, we should probably never have heard of him again; he would have been slain by the siren who has slain so many more strong men, and would have gone down to the dark chambers of death. No happy marriage, no wife, no child, would have fallen to his lot. No honour or usefulness, or vision of the dear faces of his kin, would ever have enriched his life with their abundant blessing. What a good thing it was that he did not yield!

Let us stand firm; let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; let us deny ourselves immediate pleasure for the sake of the far-off harvest of content; let us honour God by obedience to his least command; let us dare to say, ‘No’; let us be willing to decrease. And then the tide will turn: God will not be unfaithful to forget; He will turn again and have mercy upon us, and will exalt us to inherit the earth.”⁵³

4th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 7:14-8:18; Joel 2:28-32; Job 1:1-22; Is 26:21-27:9	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 18:37,40
	Gospel	Luke 14:16-24
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:17-32
	Catholicon	James 3:13-4:4
	Acts	Acts 11:26-12:2
	Psalm	Ps 18:17-18
	Gospel	Mark 4:35-41

Day 25

Thursday, 19 March 2020

Genesis 41:47-49

47 Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly.

48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.

49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH PREFIGURES CHRIST'S MERCY

"Indeed, anyone who was suffering from famine was sent to Joseph... Now there was famine, not in one locality alone but over the whole land, because there was no one to do good. Therefore the Lord Jesus, taking pity on the hungers of the world, opened His granaries and disclosed the hidden treasures of the heavenly mysteries, of wisdom and of knowledge, so that none would lack for nourishment. For Wisdom said, "Come, eat my bread," and only the one who is filled with Christ can say, "The Lord feeds me, and I shall want nothing." Therefore Christ opened His granaries and sold, while asking not monetary payments but the price of faith and the recompense of devotion. He sold, moreover, not to a few people in Judea but to all, so that He might be believed by all peoples." - Ambrose ⁵⁴

Lord, Joseph was diligent in gathering and storing grain in the years of plenty to survive the years of famine. Help me Lord, to be just as diligent in my spiritual life, so that I may be prepared for the life to come.

Commentary:

“Joseph counseled Pharaoh to gather one fifth of all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain, to be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt. That was wise counsel, which should be adopted by every believer spiritually. In times of his spiritual comfort, and when his heart flares with love for God, he should take the opportunity to gather, for the account of the Kingdom of God, in the innermost stores of his heart; so that, being honest and committed at those times, God, Himself would support him at times of drought, and at times of temptations.”⁵⁵

“Gathering and storing great amounts of grain during the years of plenty to survive the years of famine was a very wise policy to say the least. It demonstrated the value of preparing in the present so you will not perish in the future. One cannot apply that lesson in any better place than in the matter of our soul’s salvation. The prophet Amos exhorted, “Prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12), and there is no more important preparation than that! And it is a preparation which must not be put off, for “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Failure to prepare in this life means judgment in the next life; just as failure to use the seven good years to prepare for the famine would have meant future starvation.”⁵⁶

4th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 32:1-30; Is 28:14-22; Job 20:1-29; Dan 6:1-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 12:7
	Gospel	Mark 3:7-12
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 12:31-14:1
	Catholicon	James 4:11-5:3
	Acts	Acts 4:19-31
	Psalm	Ps 48:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 18:35-43

Day 26

Friday, 20 March 2020

Genesis 41:50-57, 42:1-5

50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,

54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."

56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy [grain], because the famine was severe in all lands.

42:1 When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

2 And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

3 So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

5 And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

From the Fathers:

HARDSHIPS FORGOTTEN UNDER THE POWER OF GRACE

"Consider the man's God-fearing attitude. By recording the memory of everything by the name of his son [Manasseh], Joseph purposely expressed his constant thankfulness. He did so that the one born to him might be in a position to know from his own name the trials and endurance that characterized the good man and so brought Joseph to such prominence." Because he made me forget all my hardships and all those of my father." Notice that [Ephraim's] name too is suggestive of gratitude. "Not only did he grant me forgetfulness of my distress," he is saying, "but he also made me prosper in the land where I suffered such awful humiliation as to be reduced to the limit and run a risk to life itself." - Chrysostom⁵⁷

Lord, Joseph acknowledged Your presence and Your work in his life by the names he gave his two sons. Help me Lord to never forget Your work in my life, recognising that it is to You I owe all things.

Commentary:

“In naming his sons as he did, Joseph proclaimed openly that God had made him forget all his troubles, even those in his father’s household. Above and beyond that, God had made him fruitful in a land and in circumstances that had brought him nothing but trouble. How humble of Joseph to acknowledge that!

The first name, Manasseh, is from the Hebrew root *nashah*, which means “to forget.” By naming his first son Manasseh, Joseph was saying, “God has made me forget.” “God has *Manassehed* me - He has removed the sting from my memory.”

By naming his second son, Ephraim, another play on a word from the original, meaning “twice fruitful,” he was saying, “God has *Ephraimed* me. He has given me two sons. He has blessed me beyond measure in a place that once seemed to bring only suffering.”

Joseph gave his children names that would reveal his humble attitude before his God, tagging these boys with reminders of God’s activity in his life. “God has made. ..” he said. “God has given me...” he acknowledged.”⁵⁸

4th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 10:12-11:28; Is 29:13-23; Job 21:1-34; Dan* 14:1-42	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 28:6-7
	Gospel	Luke 4:31-37
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 13:7-16
	Catholicon	1 John 4:7-16
	Acts	Acts 22:17-24
	Psalm	Ps 28:2
	Gospel	Matt 15:21-31

* Second Canonical Book

6 Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.

7 Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

8 So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

9 Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

10 And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.

11 We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies."

12 But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

13 And they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more."

14 But Joseph said to them, "It is as I spoke to you, saying, 'You are spies!'

15 In this manner you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother

comes here.

16 Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies!"

17 So he put them all together in prison three days.

18 Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

20 And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so.

21 Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."

23 But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself away from them and wept.

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH'S PURPOSE WAS TO CORRECT THEM

"Truly [Joseph] was so holy that he could not have hated [his brothers]. Therefore we must believe that he wearied them with so many tribulations, in order to arouse them to a confession of their sin and the healing of repentance. Finally, with great grief, they said they suffered those ills deservedly, because they had sinned against their brother, 'whose anguish of heart they witnessed.' Since blessed Joseph knew that his brothers could not be forgiven their sin of murder without much penance, once, twice and a third time he worried them with salutary trials as with a spiritual fire. His purpose was not to vindicate himself but to correct them and free them from so grave a sin." - Caesarius of Arles⁵⁹

Lord, Joseph's concern was not for revenge but for the repentance of his brothers. Help me Lord not to seek revenge against those who have done me wrong but to pray for their repentance.

Commentary:

“Here we notice three points. First, that he recognised them but they did not recognise him (42:8). Also by asking them, he discovered that they were from the land of Canaan, that they had a missing brother and the youngest brother that their father loved.

Secondly, Joseph spoke to them through an interpreter (42:23). He was speaking to them in hieroglyphic which he learnt in Egypt and which they did not know. They spoke in Hebrew which he knew, and they never suspected that he did. Thus, their private conversations were all revealed in front of him without them being aware of it.

Thirdly, he pretended to treat them badly but deep in his heart he loved them and he was moved by their affliction and cried. He was treating them roughly in pretence but cruelty was not one of his attributes. Thus, this superficial cruelty led them to address their previous sins and regret them. Even he said to them “You are spies, you have come to see the nakedness of the land, bring your youngest brother to me so that your words will be verified.” (42:9,20) Then they said to one another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us” (42:21-22). “And [Joseph] turned himself away from them and wept” (42:23).

This is how delicate and sensitive his heart was, despite his rough manner of speech. His crying was out of love and compassion. He did not cry when he was thrown in the pit or when he was sold as a slave or when he was innocently accused, thrown in prison without investigation and stayed there a prolonged time. But he cried when he saw his brother's humiliation in front of him. Truly, he was the one who humiliated them. But deep inside he was kind to them and was leading them to repentance. His father could not discipline his brothers properly but Joseph did and was successful in doing so. He was cooking them on a simmering and purposeful fire. Knowing their minds and his experience with them, he saw that if he was lenient with them he would not get anything out of them, he might not be able to see his father or brother Benjamin but he was wisely able to remind them of what they had done to him, how they had cast him into a pit and then sat to eat and talk. (37:24-25) – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁶⁰

4th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 142:5,7
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 4:4-9
	Catholicon	James 3:13-4:6
	Acts	Acts 24:24-25:12
	Psalm	Ps 61:1,5
	Gospel	Matt 21:33-46

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria. 5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on

this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." 27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him. 31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and [then] comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph is not recorded in Scripture as having given any answer to the false accusation made against him by Potiphar’s wife. Our Lord Jesus Christ “answered nothing” when accused by false witnesses at His crucifixion trial, “Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.” (Mark 15:4-5).”

+ “Joseph was innocent, yet he suffered (39:20). Our Lord Jesus Christ was not guilty of sin, but He suffered for it anyway, “And they made His grave with the wicked--but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth” (Isaiah 53:9) & (Hebrews 7:26).”

+ “Joseph was numbered with the transgressors, particularly with two transgressors (40:1-3). Our Lord Jesus Christ was “numbered with the transgressors”, “With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with the transgressors” (Mark 15:27-28).”

+ “Joseph, in his suffering, brought blessing to one transgressor (the butler, 40:13), but not to the other transgressor (the baker, 40:19). Our Lord Jesus Christ brought blessing to one of the thieves crucified with Him, but not to the other (Luke 23:39-43).”

+ “Joseph sought to comfort others, even though he was experiencing suffering himself (40:7ff). Our Lord Jesus Christ, while experiencing the agonies of Calvary, provided a home for His mother St Mary (John 19:26,27) and comforted the thief with the promise of Paradise, “And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”” (Luke 23:43).”

+ “Joseph was a wonderful counselor. This is especially seen in the advice he gave Pharaoh regarding preparation for the famine (41:33-36). Isaiah 9:6 prophetically speaks of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the Wonderful Counselor, “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.””

+ “Joseph was acclaimed because he did not speak as others (the magicians), but had spiritual understanding and discretion (41:37-39). Of Our Lord Jesus Christ it is written, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46) & (Matthew 7:29).”⁶¹

4th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 27:14, 13
	Gospel	Luke 12:22-31
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 31:24, 23
	Gospel	Matt 22:1-14
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 6:10-24
	Catholicon	James 4:7-17
	Acts	25:13-26:1
	Psalm	Ps 105:3-5
	Gospel	John 4:1-42

24 Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

25 Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

26 So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

27 But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

28 So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

29 Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying:

30 "The man who is lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31 But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.

32 We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father this day in the land of Canaan.'

33 Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: Leave one of

your brothers here with me, take food for the famine of your households, and be gone.

34 And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'

35 Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

38 But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

From the Fathers:

SIGNS OF AFFECTION

"See how Joseph takes every means of putting fear into them so that, on seeing Simeon's bonds, they may reveal whether they manifested any sympathy for their brother. You see, everything he does is to test their attitude out of his wish to discover if they had been like that in dealing with Benjamin. Hence Joseph also had Simeon bound in front of them to test them carefully and see if they showed any signs of affection for him. That is to say, concern for Simeon led them to hasten Benjamin's arrival, which he was anxious for, so as to gain assurance from his brother's arrival." - Chrysostom ⁶²

Lord, Joseph led his brothers to the confession of their sins through fear, because they did not know love. Grant me Lord a heart that is sensitive to Your love, so that I'm able to recognise my sins against You.

Commentary:

“And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes” (42:24). But why Simeon particularly. Maybe because he was the most violent of them all, who participated before with his brother Levi in the dishonest killing of all the males in Shechem, even after they kept their part of the agreement and were circumcised. (34:25-29). And consequently Jacob in his last blessing to his sons, said to Simeon, “Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honour be united to their assembly;... Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! (49:5-7)

Thus Joseph ordered Simeon to be bound in front of their brothers to show them that the most violent amongst them was actually weak and humiliated in front of him. This was to lower their pride and to scare them so that they would not rebel against him. His heart was melting with longing to see his brother Benjamin, thus he said to them, “Send one of you and let him bring your brother” (42:15-16). At first he ordered to put them all in prison and one of them to go and bring the youngest brother. Then He felt for them and said “Let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses. And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die” (42:19-20). “So I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men” (42:34). And so they did and told their father about all that happened.

“Then it happened as they emptied their sacks that surprisingly each man's bundle of money was in his sack” (42:35). This Joseph did so that they would become fearful. They did not know love, thus Joseph guided them through fear.”

– H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁶³

5th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 3:5-18; Is 37:33-38:6; Job 22:1-30	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 88:2-4
	Gospel	Luke 12:16-21
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 2:1-16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 3:10-18
	Acts	Acts 10:25-35
	Psalm	Ps 86:3-4
	Gospel	Luke 9:12-17

Day 30

Tuesday, 24 March 2020

Genesis 43:1-17

43:1 Now the famine was severe in the land.

2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

3 But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

4 If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'

6 And Israel said, "Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?"

7 But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.

9 I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him [back] to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

10 For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

11 And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

12 Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

13 Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.

14 And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

15 So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.

16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon."

17 Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

From the Fathers

THE MEANS OF OUR SALVATION

"What is entering Joseph's house, but being included in the fellowship of the Church, to enter God's house through the water of Baptism. What is washing of feet with water, but presentation of repentance to wash out our transgressions, and the dust that clings to our soul during our travels... And lastly, to sit at the table, refers to the enjoyment of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. These are all the [means] of our salvation, that we enjoy in the church of Christ by the Holy Spirit through the Cross." – Fr Tadros Malaty⁶⁴

18 Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "[It] [is] because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and fall upon us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."

19 When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house,

20 and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;

21 "but it happened to us when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, [each] man's money [was] in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand.

22 "And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."

23 But he said, "Peace [be] with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

24 So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave [them] water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

25 Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which [was] in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

27 Then he asked them about [their] well-being, and said, "[Is] your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? [Is] he still alive?"

28 And they answered, "Your servant our father [is] in good health; he [is] still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

29 Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "[Is] this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

30 Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought [somewhere] to weep. And he went into [his] chamber and wept there.

31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

32 So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that [is] an abomination to the Egyptians.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

34 Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

5th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Num 10:35-11:34; Prov 3:19-4:9; Is 40:1-8; Job 25:1-6; Job 26:1-14	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 86:5-6
	Gospel	Mark 9:14-24
Mass:	Pauline	Phil 2:22-26
	Catholicon	1 John 3:2-11
	Acts	Acts 24:10-23
	Psalm	Ps 86:17
	Gospel	John 8:12-20

Day 31

Wednesday, 25 March 2020

Genesis 44:1-15

44:1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

2 Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

3 As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

4 When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?

5 Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'"

6 So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

7 And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.

8 Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?

9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

10 And he said, "Now also let it be

according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."

11 Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.

12 So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

15 And Joseph said to them, "What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

From the Fathers

JOSEPH'S HOLY LOVE

"Now 'his heart yearned for his brother,' because his freedom to embrace the brother he longed for was postponed. 'So Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there.' Joseph was being overcome by feeling but put off by deliberation; reason was in contest with love. He wept, so that he could moderate the surges of his holy love." - Ambrose ⁶⁵

Lord, just as You look at the heart, Joseph wanted to know what was in the heart of his brothers. Grant me Lord, a pure and repentant heart, which is pleasing in Your sight.

Commentary

“[Joseph] prepared for the final test. At the banquet referred to in chapter 43, he gave Benjamin five times more than the other brothers, and they didn’t resent the kind of favouritism that they had despised so viciously in Joseph. Then he seemed to put Benjamin in harms way to test them. Would they protect Benjamin, or abandon him as they had abandoned Joseph 20 years earlier?”

Only God can look at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), so Joseph put in motion the test that would expose them and reveal how genuine their apparent change really was.

After the feast, Joseph commanded his butler to do several things: Fill their sacks with food, return their money, and put his silver cup in Benjamin’s bag. Why? The only way Joseph could test their character was to “return to the scene of the crime.” They had to be put in the position of choosing between rescuing Benjamin at great personal risk, or abandoning him to slavery for personal gain.

As soon as the brothers departed for Canaan, Joseph sent his servants to catch them and accuse them of the theft of the cup. The brothers reacted with shock and confusion. They claimed honesty based on the return of money they had found in their bags on the first trip for food. And they backed up their claims of honesty with a bold offer: “Kill the guilty one, and enslave the rest!”

The extreme nature of their offer was intended to prove their innocence and sincerity. They would certainly not make such an offer if even one of them was guilty. Imagine the shock and pain as the cup was found in [Benjamin’s] sack. How could it be? They were so certain of their innocence. How would they respond? “Then they tore their clothes” (v. 13). They had reaped what they had sown, and in this dramatic gesture of mourning they displayed the depth of their grief and despair. They responded to Benjamin’s distress the same way Jacob had responded years before when shown the bloody coat of colours that had belonged to Joseph.

Now the question had to be answered. The agreement was that only the guilty would be enslaved and the rest could go home. The easy thing to do would be to leave Benjamin and go home. But they didn’t. Envy and resentment no longer governed their thoughts and deeds. They returned with Benjamin, determined that whatever was to be faced they would face together. The evidence was there. They were truly changed men.”⁶⁶

5th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 8:20-9:35; Is 41:4-14;	
	Joel 3:9-21; Job 28:12-28;	
	Prov 4:10-19; 1 Sam 1:1-2:21	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 55:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:1-12
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 4:14-5:5
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:12-19
	Acts	Acts 11:12-18
	Psalm	Ps 86:13-14
	Gospel	Luke 13:6-9

16 Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found." 17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father." 18 Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'" 20 And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' 21 "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 23 "But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.' 24 So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.' 26 But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' 27 "Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since. 29 But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.' 30 "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32 For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.' 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS REPENT

"Joseph's plan worked. Benjamin returned to him, although unfairly accused of stealing, and he discovered the change of heart of his brothers; having torn their clothes and returned in bitterness, for the sake of their youngest brother Benjamin. Because of that, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. For their repentance, and their unselfish love for their youngest brother, all of them were found worthy of the third encounter with Joseph. Judah told Joseph about the conversation between them and their father, and told him how the soul of their father was attached to the lad, especially after his brother had been torn to pieces. And how, he could not bear to see the evil that would befall the old man. The attachment of Jacob's soul to Benjamin, which motivated Judah to offer himself a surety for the sake of his brother, is a faint portrait of the love that binds the Father to mankind; to make the Only-begotten Son, in His love to His Father, and to humanity, to offer Himself a Redeemer and Saviour." – Fr Tadros Malaty 67

Lord, Joseph witnessed a true change in his brothers once they had repented from their sin. Let my repentance be a true repentance Lord, such that I turn away from my sins.

Commentary

“Joseph’s object was attained. He had wished to restore them to perfect rest and peace; but he knew that these were impossible so long as their sin was unconfessed and unforgiven. But it had now been abundantly confessed.”⁶⁸

Notice the difference in their attitudes from years before:

- “They fell before [Joseph] on the ground” (v. 14), fulfilling the promise of Joseph’s first set of dreams.

- “How shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants” (v.16). There were no excuses or rationalizations. There was no attempt to cover up. They admitted, through Judah, their guilt and submitted to slavery as a group. It was “we,” not “he.” Joseph tested them further with an offer of release, and they passed with flying colours. “Let me remain instead of the lad” (vv.33-34). What a turnabout. The same Judah who had led in the plan to sell Joseph offered to be Benjamin’s substitute as a slave in Egypt. Why? Out of concern for their father (vv.19-32). He openly acknowledged that the young man was now Jacob’s favourite. But instead of resenting this favourite-son status, he longed to preserve it by giving himself.

Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20), and the change in Judah was real. We have been examining God’s work in the life of Joseph, but God had also been working in Judah and his brothers.”⁶⁹

5th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Is 42:5-16; Prov 4:20-27; Job 29:2-20; 1 Sam 3:1-20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 86:14
	Gospel	Luke 9:37-43
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 10:14-11:1
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:2-8
	Acts	Acts 21:5-14
	Psalm	Ps 86:17
	Gospel	Luke 13:10-17

45:1 Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

2 And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.

3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.

From the Fathers:

TEARS OF CHARITY WASH AWAY FORMER ENMITY

"You have admired the chastity of Joseph; now behold his generosity. He repays hatred with charity. When he saw his brothers, or rather enemies in his brothers, he gave evidence of the affection of his love by his pious grief when he wanted to be recognized by them. He tenderly kissed each one of them and wept over them individually. As Joseph moistened the necks of his frightened brothers with his refreshing tears, he washed away their hatred with the tears of his charity. He loved them always as with the love of their living father and dead brother. He did not recall that pit into which he had been thrown to be murdered; he did not think of himself, a brother, sold for a price. Instead, by returning good for evil, even then he fulfilled the precepts of the apostles that were not yet given. Therefore, by considering the sweetness of true charity, blessed Joseph, with God's help, was eager to repel from his heart the poison of envy with which he knew his brothers had been struck." - Caesarius of Arles ⁷⁰

Lord, Joseph succeeded and became great, not by becoming second after Pharaoh, but because of his large heart that was full of love. Help me Lord not to reciprocate evil with evil, but to love my enemies.

Commentary:

“[Joseph] had already led them to repentance and humility and there was no other reason to treat them roughly. He was also so moved by their fear for his father. It was good that God led them to this situation of contrition and humiliation, even though they were innocent of this incident... Thus they remembered how Joseph was innocent and how he must have felt because of their injustice. It was good that they told Joseph ‘God has found out the iniquity of your servants.’ And when has he found this...after 20 years. Thus sin is not abolished with time but with repentance. Hence when they reached this stage of humility and confessed their sin and their entitlement to punishment, the door of forgiveness was opened to them.

Then their brother Joseph whom they had offended cried and shouted saying, “I am Joseph. Does my father still live?” But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed in his presence and he said to them, “Do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. So now it was not you who sent me here but God and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father.” (45:1-9) Then he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept and Benjamin wept on his neck. This was a natural thing for Benjamin to do since he was his brother and loved him and did not participate in the plot against him.

But surprisingly the Holy Bible says regarding Joseph, “Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.” (45:15) Joseph followed the command “Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you” that the Lord Christ said on the mountain approximately 2000 years before it was mentioned. And he also followed the command of purity before God wrote it on the tablets of the Ten Commandments in the days of Moses the Prophet of which the 7th commandment is “Do not commit adultery.” His conscience was alive, following God’s commandments with his pure nature, even before the commandments were written. His spirituality surpassed his time.” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁷¹

5th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Deut 11:29-12:27; 1 Kin 17:2-24;	
	Prov 5:1-12; Is 43:1-9;	
	Job 30:9-32:5	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 86:9-10
	Gospel	Mark 12:28-34
Mass:	Pauline	Heb 12:5-16
	Catholicon	1 Pet 4:15-5:5
	Acts	Acts 15:36-16:3
	Psalm	Ps 138:1-3
	Gospel	John 8:21-27

Day 34

Saturday, 28 March 2020

Genesis 45:4-13

4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry.

10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.

11 There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine."

12 And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you.

13 So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."

From the Fathers:

CHRIST IS REVEALED

"Come to Me," because I have come near to you, yes, even so far that I made Myself a sharer in your nature by taking on flesh. At least do not flee a partaker of your fellowship, if you do not know the Author of your salvation. "And they came to him, and he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me here; for God sent me before you for life.'" What fraternal devotion!... What else is the meaning of that intervention made by our Lord Jesus Christ, who excelled all His brothers in holiness? When He was on the cross, Jesus said on behalf of the people, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' . . . And when they were startled and panic-stricken and thought they saw a spirit, again Jesus said to them, "Why are you disturbed, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself. Feel and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."'" – Ambrose ⁷²

Lord, Joseph offered complete forgiveness to his brothers although they had done him such wrong. Grant me Lord, the ability to fully forgive those who have hurt me and done me wrong.

Commentary:

“For Joseph, the years of pain dissolved in a moment of joy, and he wept uncontrollably in the presence of his brothers. They were tears of joy because his brothers had truly changed, and tears of love because at last they were as brothers should be.

The room was electric as Joseph finally said the words that he had longed to say since he first saw them coming for food: “I am Joseph” (v.3). But they were terrified. The dream had come true. Joseph had the power of life and death over them. What would he do? Notice his tenderness toward them:

- “He wept aloud” (v.2), openly expressing his emotion.
- “Please come near to me” (v.4). They had been apart far too long.
- “Do not ... be grieved or angry with yourselves” (v. 5). This was a time for joy.
- “God sent me” (vv. 5, 7-8). They were to trust that God was in control.
- “Go... and bring my father” (vv. 9,13). It was time to share the joy.

Joseph had overcome ... the potential bitterness that would have seemed so normal. He exemplified grace, giving full forgiveness and no revenge. He exemplified love, discarding the wrongs of the past for the compassion of the present. He exemplified faith, trusting that God would preserve him from the bitterness that leads to self-destruction.”⁷³

“Another most prominent triumph in this revelation was the triumph of perspective of our trials.

Joseph told his brothers, “Do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” (v. 5). What a triumphant perspective of the dark trials of life!

[Joseph had] good attitudes in times of trial which helped him to have victory in the trial. In Potiphar’s house, his attitude in the trial of slavery was to be faithful to his duty. This brought alleviation from the pain of trial. In prison, his attitude was to help others in their affliction. This brought deliverance from his trial. Here, Joseph reveals another attitude which upheld him from the time he was sold by the brothers right up to the very day of revelation. It was the attitude that sees God as the First Cause in our trials. Joseph saw God behind his move to Egypt. He saw [His Divine will] more than persecution in his trials. Such perspective brings victory in trial because it stops bitterness, the great slayer of the tried.”⁷⁴

5th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 65:2-3
	Gospel	Luke 15:3-10
Mass:	Pauline	Gal 5:16-6:2
	Catholicon	James 5:7-11
	Acts	Acts 26:1-18
	Psalm	Ps 143:1-2
	Gospel	Matt 23:14-39

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'"

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph was acknowledged as “discreet and wise” (41:39). Paul wrote of Our Lord Jesus Christ, “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).”

+ “Joseph was given great authority (41:40,41). Our Lord Jesus Christ has been given great authority. “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (John 5:26,27).”

+ “Joseph was exalted by others; they were to “bow the knee” to him (41:43). Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be exalted, and “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Philippians 2:10).”

+ “Joseph was given a name of great honour (41:45). Paul wrote of Our Lord Jesus Christ, “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9).”

+ “Pharaoh called Joseph “Zaphnath-Paaneah” which means food of life. Our Lord Jesus Christ was called the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35); whoever eats of It is never hungry forever.” ⁷⁵

+ “Joseph was given a Gentile bride during the time of his rejection of his brethren (41:45). Our Lord Jesus Christ is being given a Gentile bride - the Church - during the time of His rejection by His own - the Jews. ”Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name...’So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.’ “(Acts 15:14-17); “Salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:11).”

+ “Joseph was thirty years old when he began his public ministry (41:46). Jesus was thirty years old when He began His public ministry on earth. “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23).” ⁷⁶

5th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 39:12
	Gospel	Luke 18:1-8
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 102:1-2,12
	Gospel	Matt 21:33-46
Mass:	Pauline	2 Thess 2:1-17
	Catholicon	2 Pet 3:1-18
	Acts	Acts 26:19-27:8
	Psalm	Ps 33:5-6
	Gospel	John 5:1-18

Day 36

Monday, 30 March 2020

Genesis 45:14-28

14 Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

16 Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well.

17 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan.

18 Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land.

19 Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come.

20 Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours."

21 Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey.

22 He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.

23 And he sent to his father these things: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female

donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey.

24 So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

25 Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father.

26 And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them.

27 But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

28 Then Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

From the Fathers:

GOD'S CARE PERMITTED THIS ALL TO HAPPEN

"Who could adequately admire the virtue of this good man who fulfilled in generous measure the moral values of the New Testament? What Christ recommends to the apostles in these words, "Love your enemies; pray for those who abuse you," this man even surpassed. I mean, not only did he give evidence of such wonderful love for those who did away with him as far as they could, but he did everything to convince them that they had not sinned against him. O what extraordinary good sense! O what marvelous degree of sound values and generosity of love for God! "Surely it was not you who did this against me," he is saying, you see. "It was God's care for me that permitted this to happen so as to guarantee the realization of my dreams and so that I might prove an adequate occasion of survival for you." — Chrysostom 77

Lord, Joseph recognised Your hand in his life such that he held no bitterness against his brothers. Grant me Lord, the faith to see Your will in my life and the trust to know that You are able to turn evil into good.

Commentary:

“When Joseph said to them, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt” they became terrified. They thought that the time of his revenge had come especially when he did not only say to them “I am Joseph” but also “Joseph your brother, whom you sold.” And there they were in his hands to do with them whatever he wished. However, Joseph’s morality was above revenge. He knew that they were in a state of shock, fear and weakness and did not have anything to answer him with. As the Bible says, “But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence” (45:3). Yes, they became dismayed of this person whom they had mocked, however Joseph being noble assured them, and he showed them God’s will in all that happened. Yes, God who is able to turn evil into good, “Out of the strong came something sweet.”

It was God in whose hands Joseph put his life and he saw that all that had happened to him was allowed by God for his good. Thus he assured his brothers saying to them, “So now it was not you who sent me here but God. Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth” (45:5-8). Thus he repeated the phrase “God sent me” 3 times.

Joseph did not mention the painful part of his experience but rather mentioned the divine arrangements that surrounded it and what goodness it carried for him, his brothers and all people. For it was to preserve a posterity. By the wisdom that God gave him, he saved lives through the years of famine either in Egypt or in Canaan and for him he said “God has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. (45:8). And after he assured them and dismissed all fear from their hearts he spoke to them about his father and his coming to Egypt. So he said to them, “Hurry and go up to my father...and you shall hurry and bring my father down here” (45:9,13).” – H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁷⁸

6th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 8:1-11; Is 43:10-28; Job 32:6-16	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 38:9
	Gospel	Mark 12:1-12
Mass:	Pauline	1 Thess 4:1-18
	Catholicon	James 4:7-12
	Acts	Acts 18:9-18
	Psalm	Ps 35:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 13:1-5

Day 37

Tuesday, 31 March 2020

Genesis 46:1-7,26-34

46:1 So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am."

3 So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.

4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him.

7 His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt...

26 All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all.

27 And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt [were] two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

28 Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him the way to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen.

29 So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive."

31 Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.

32 And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

33 So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'

34 that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we [and] also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

From the Fathers:

THANKING THE LORD

"In many cases an excess of joy causes the tears to flow. "He fell on his neck," the text says, and not simply "wept" but "wept a flood of tears." You see, immediately there came to his mind what he himself had suffered, what his father had endured on his account. Joseph thought of the great length of time that had elapsed in the meantime and the fact that, contrary to all expectation, he saw his father, and his father set eyes on his son. So he shed a flood of tears, revealing his exceeding joy and, at the same time, thanking the Lord for what had happened." – Chrysostom ⁷⁹

Lord, what generosity of spirit characterised the life of Joseph; he was generous in his love and generous in providing for his family. Grant me Lord a generous spirit so that I may give, not begrudgingly, but out of love.

Commentary:

“Joseph gave his brothers a message to his father saying, “Come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children... There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine” (45:9-11). Thus he did not bring his father to him only because he missed him but also to provide for him and his household and also to provide for his brothers who sold him and all their children.

Joseph was very generous to his father and brothers. He gave them garments so they would look well dressed, he sent his father donkeys loaded with grain and bread and with good things from Egypt and said to them, “See that you do not become troubled along the way” (45:21-24). He knew what they were like, thus he gave them spiritual advice besides materialistic goods. Joseph was not like those who ignore their needy relatives when they become of a distinguished status. In all the greatness that he had achieved he did not forget his father the shepherd. He wanted to make his father happy in his last days and make up for all the years of struggle and pain that he endured.”

“Part of Joseph’s honour towards his father was that he went himself to meet him on the way, “So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel” (46:29).

When we realise that Goshen is in the governate of Al-Shariqa, east of Cairo, we recognise how far the distance was that Joseph covered with his chariot, from the capital city to the land of Goshen in order to receive his father. This, the second man in the kingdom did not wait until his father reached him but he went to meet him in the street. Therefore, all people could see the importance of this shepherd whom the ruler of all the land of Egypt went to meet. “And he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while” (46:29). The emotions that were kept inside for twenty-two whole years, erupted at that moment in the form of hugging and tears. Here the tongue becomes speechless but love is the conveyor of all the emotions in the heart; the love of a son for his father, who spent all his youth deprived of his kindness. The father who loved him the most and favoured him above all his brothers, the love of the father to the son whom he thought was dead and whom he had mourned over for more than twenty years.”

- H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁸⁰

6th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 8:12-21; Is 44:1-8; Job 32:17-33:33; 2 Kin 5:1-27	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 35:13
	Gospel	Luke 4:22-30
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 14:18-28
	Catholicon	James 1:22-2:1
	Acts	Acts 19:11-20
	Psalm	Ps 42:1
	Gospel	Luke 9:18-22

47:1 Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they are in the land of Goshen."

2 And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

3 Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers."

4 And they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

5 Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you.

6 The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."

7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?"

9 And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The

days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

10 So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11 And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families.

13 Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.

14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house...

From the Fathers

CHOOSING THE LAND OF GOSHEN

"Joseph chose for his father and brothers the land of Goshen for four reasons: (1) it was closest to Canaan (Northeast Egypt) so they would long for the return, (2) to prevent conflicts with the Egyptians who despised shepherds, (3) to keep them from being affected by Egyptian idol worship as much as possible, and (4) because Goshen means "to be near" or "related", so he wanted their hearts to be near God during their physical alienation." – Fr Tadros Malaty⁸¹

Lord, despite all his greatness, Joseph was a man of simplicity, humility and nobility. Take away from me Lord all form of pride, so that I may be simple, humble and noble before You.

Commentary:

“Joseph told Pharaoh of the arrival of his father and brothers and introduced them to him. Joseph, Pharaoh’s deputy was not ashamed of his father and brothers, the shepherds. He was not ashamed of them, their goats or cows. There are some people who are ashamed of the poverty of their relatives but Joseph was not like that at all. Joseph brought his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh, thus Pharaoh respected him for his son, and for his age and the grace of God on him.

Joseph’s loyalty to Pharaoh made Pharaoh respect his father and brothers. Joseph’s wisdom, his honesty in his work and his saving of Egypt from the days of famine, all this made Pharaoh respect him and his father, and welcome his brothers and show generosity to the whole family, even saying to Joseph, “The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock” (47:6). Thus, Joseph provided for his father, his brothers and all the household of his father. “So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly” (47:27).”

– H.H. Pope Shenouda III ⁸²

6th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Ex 10:1-11:10; Is 44:21-28; Prov 8:22-36; Job 34:1-37; Sirach* 10:1-31	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 102:17,21
	Gospel	Mark 7:1-20
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 2:12-24
	Catholicon	2 Pet 1:20-2:6
	Acts	Acts 26:1-8
	Psalm	Ps 9:11-12
	Gospel	Luke 11:45-52

* Second Canonical Book

Day 39

Thursday, 2 April 2020

Genesis 47:23-31, 48:1-7

23 Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land.

24 And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones."

25 So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, [that] Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, which did not become Pharaoh's.

27 So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.

28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

29 When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt,

30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will

do as you have said."

31 Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

48:1 Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, "Indeed your father is sick"; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2 And Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph is coming to you"; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

3 Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

4 and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'

5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

7 But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

From the Fathers:

DO NOT FORGET THE PROMISED LAND

"Jacob died a stranger in Egypt after having asked to be buried in his fathers' grave in Canaan. It was as if he realized that the seed of God's people had taken root in Egypt and would grow and bloom, but that the heart of the people must be tied to the Promised Land. His concern about burial affirmed his respect for the body, which will rise to share with the soul the eternal inheritance. He specifically asked to be buried with his fathers to affirm the need for each generation to commit itself to accepting the faith handed down to the saints (2 Timothy or Titus 4), so that all may live as one spirit." – Fr Tadros Malaty⁸³

Lord, both Jacob and Joseph knew that they were only sojourners in the land of Egypt and that their true home was the Promised Land. Help me Lord to know that I too am a sojourner in this world and that my true home is with You.

Commentary

“Jacob said, “Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers,” just as Joseph said, “I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” But while Jacob requested that his body should be at once buried in Machpelah, Joseph required that his bones should remain among the Israelites, and be taken with them when they should go to Canaan. Both alike [believed] by faith in the covenant and oath of God, that their descendants should possess the Promised Land, but Jacob showed his faith by asking to be immediately buried in the [tomb] of his fathers, while Joseph manifested his by leaving his bones among his people, and giving commandment that they should be carried up with them out of Egypt. And if you will look at the difference of situation between the two, you will find the explanation of the difference between the two requests. For Jacob and his sons had been already long in Canaan. It was natural for them, therefore, to dwell on the memories of the past; and Jacob, by asking to be buried immediately in Machpelah, virtually said to his sons, “Do not forget Canaan in Egypt. Let not the prosperity of the present drown out of your heart all love for the past, or all longing for a return to its happiness. Keep alive the memory of the good land that is for the moment behind you”; and for that purpose, knowing how affection clusters round the [tomb] of a father, he had his body taken at once to Hebron. But when Joseph came to die, the majority of the descendants of Jacob had never seen Canaan.

They had grown up in Egypt, and their danger was that of settling down there in contentment, without having any desire to go to the land of their fathers. Therefore, to keep alive among them the truth that they were yet to go to Canaan, and to preserve in the midst of them the evidence of his faith that they should ultimately possess that land, he left his body, embalmed, yet unburied, among them, with the instruction that when they did go they should take it along with them...Joseph left his confined body to his people, that by its presence among them, and preservation by them, they might never forget that Egypt was not their final resting place and might [always be in] constant readiness to arise and go to their own land.”⁸⁴

6th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	2 Kin 4:8-41; Is 45:1-10;	
	Prov 9:1-11; Job 35:1-16;	
	Sirach* 11:1-10	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 9:13
	Gospel	Luke 20:9-19
Mass:	Pauline	1 Tim 2:1-3:4
	Catholicon	Jude 1:19-25
	Acts	Acts 27:16-20
	Psalm	Ps 9:13-14
	Gospel	John 6:47-71

* Second Canonical Book

8 Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who are these?"
9 And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place." And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."
10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.
11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"
12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.
13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.
14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.
15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,
16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
Let my name be named upon them,

And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."
17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.
18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."
19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."
20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" "And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.
21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers."
22 "Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

From the Fathers:

THE EYES OF JACOB'S MIND WERE STRENGTHENED

"See how he also taught his sons from the very beginning to show due respect for the old man. Joseph brought them along according to seniority, the text says, and presented Manasseh and then Ephraim. At this point notice, I ask you, how the good man's bodily eyes were by this time weak through old age ("His eyes had faded with age," remember, "and he could not see"), but the eyes of his mind were strengthened, and by faith Jacob already saw what was going to happen. I mean, instead of heeding Joseph, Jacob crossed his hands over in blessing them and gave precedence to the younger, putting Ephraim ahead of Manasseh." – Chrysostom⁸⁵

Lord, even in the story of Joseph, Your promise of salvation was made evident to Your people. Grant me Lord the blessing of the sacrifice of the Cross in my life.

Commentary:

“As his last hours neared, those for which Israel had endured troubles throughout all his life, Joseph hastened to bring his two sons so that his father could bless them. Jacob blessed the younger one with his right hand and the older one with his left hand, deviating from tradition. He then declared the following:

1 - God appeared to him in Luz (Bethel) to confirm that the blessing he gives is not from himself but from the Lord. The church does not offer anything of her own, but only through the work of the Spirit of God in her and with the blessing of her Groom Who dwells in her.

2 - He declared that both Ephraim and Manasseh belonged to him, and so they became two tribes; thus, Joseph effectively received two shares of what his each of brothers were given. Each one of his brothers became only one tribe.

3 - He asked Joseph not to forget his mother Rachel who was buried in Bethlehem (48:7), so that he would tie Joseph's heart to Canaan and neither his Egyptian wife, his wealth, his authority, nor his children would make him forget the promised land.

4 - By putting his hands in an unusual way (the right on the younger while the left on the older), they formed a cross during the blessing, so that the two sons would be blessed by the sacrifice of the cross.

Favouring the younger over the older symbolizes us enjoying firstborn rights through the Second Adam not the first Adam, the firstborn of the Spirit not of the flesh. Manasseh represents the negative side (forgetting love of the world) and Ephraim, meaning “plentiful fruit” represents the positive side of spiritual life. The first represents the era of the Law, while the second represents the era of blessing, meaning that together they represent the church of both eras.”⁸⁶

6th Friday of the Holy Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
Vespers:	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 22:1-18; Is 45:11-17; Prov 9:12-18; Job 36:1-33; Job 37:1-24; Tobit* 1:1-3:23; Tobit 3:24-9:12; Tobit 10:1-14:15	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 51:7-8
	Gospel	John 3:14-21
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 10:1-13
	Catholicon	1 John 2:12-17
	Acts	Acts 8:9-17
	Psalm	Ps 34:5,4
	Gospel	John 3:1-13

* Second Canonical Book

49:1 And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: 2 Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father. 3 Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. 4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it – He went up to my couch. 5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstringed an ox.

7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob

And scatter them in Israel. 8 Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments

in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes [are] darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk. 13 Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon. 14 Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between two burdens; 15 He saw that rest was good, And that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, And became a band of slaves. 16 Dan shall judge his people As one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path, That bites the horse's heels So that its rider shall fall backward. 18 I have waited for your salvation, O Lord! 19 Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, But he shall triumph at last. 20 Bread from Asher shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties. 21 Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words. 22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well..."

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH'S FRUITFULNESS INCREASES

"[Jacob] the prophet has blessed Joseph more than all his brothers, because he contemplated the mysteries which, having been prefigured in him, would be fulfilled in Christ. Therefore Jacob did not praise Joseph but the one who was symbolized by Joseph. In fact, he says to him, "My son is increased, Joseph," because thanks to his kingly and perfect name the grace of Christ has increased and has become abundant in the world." – Hippolytus ⁸⁷

**Lord, one cannot help but notice the fruitfulness in Joseph's life. Grant me
Lord the fruit of the Spirit so that I too may be a fruitful bough.**

Commentary:

“Joseph is a fruitful bough . . . by a well, his branches run over the wall” (49:22). This is Jacob’s descriptive picture of Joseph’s life and character... It was not difficult to tell that Joseph was indeed a fruitful bough. If we examine the list of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and [self-control]), we can find ample illustrations of each in Joseph’s life.

Love is seen in Joseph’s love for his father, for his ten older brothers, and for his youngest brother Benjamin.

Joy came to Joseph when he was given the coat of many colours from his father, when he was promoted from prison to prime minister, and when he was reunited with his father when Jacob came to Egypt.

Peace so abounded in Joseph that he was able to bless others with peace. He gave peace to Pharaoh (41:16), to Egypt when the famine came (41:55,56; 47:25), and to his brothers when they were very concerned as to their situation (50:15-21).

Long-suffering was exhibited by Joseph in his cooperative attitude as a slave, in his gallant reaction to injustice, and in his faithfulness in service in his extended stay in prison.

Gentleness was shown by Joseph in his compassion for the butler and baker, in his treatment of his brothers, and in the manner in which he governed the people.

Goodness (righteousness) was evidenced in his reporting the truth to his father about his brothers’ evil conduct, in his purity when tempted by Potiphar’s wife, and in his honesty with Potiphar as a slave (39:8).

Faith was confessed by Joseph repeatedly. He confessed it in prison (40:8), in the palace (41:16), and in

his passing (death, 50:24,25; Hebrews 11:22).

Meekness was evidenced in his “Here am I” (37:13) submission to his father, in his obedient conduct as a slave and as a prisoner, and in his respectfulness of Pharaoh even though he was number two ruler of the land.

[Self-control] was much in evidence when tempted to immoral conduct, in his control of his emotions before his ten brothers when they first came to Egypt to buy grain, and in his wise and disciplined administration during the years of the famine.

Yes, the evidence of fruitfulness abounded in Joseph’s life. Calling him a “fruitful bough” was a very fitting portrayal of Joseph. It described him well.

The phrase “whose branches run over the wall” (49:22) indicates the extent of Joseph’s fruitfulness. The picture is that of a vine or tree whose growth is so healthy its branches extend beyond the wall or fence of the field in which it is located. Joseph was like that, for he not only bore fruit at home; but his branches also reached out beyond his home. They reached into Potiphar’s home, then the prison, the Pharaoh’s palace, and then into much of the world.”⁸⁸

6th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 79:8-9
	Gospel	Matt 9:1-8
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 4:1-7
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:9-26
	Psalm	Ps 32:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:46-52

Sunday, 5 April 2020

1 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. 8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" 9 Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." 10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." 12 Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his

eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." 25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." 26 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! 31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" 36 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." 38 Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him. 39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." 40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains."

Symbols and Similarities between Joseph and Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ “Joseph was announced as the one to whom all should go in their distress (41:55). The often repeated message of the Word of God is to go to Our Lord Jesus Christ in our distress and He will bring relief, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).”

+ “Joseph dispensed the bread of life to those who came to him and kept them from perishing from hunger (41:55,56). Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger” (John 6:35).”

+ “Joseph knew his brothers, though they did not know him (41:7,8). Our Lord Jesus Christ “knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24,25) though men knew not Him.”

+ “Joseph, by going through deep poverty (slavery and prison) was able to prevent others from experiencing poverty (45:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ “became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).”

+ “Joseph was the saviour of man from death (47:19-25). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Saviour of man from death. All who believe in Him shall “not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).”

+ “Joseph greatly honoured his father (50:1-12). Our Lord Jesus Christ honoured His Father. He said, I have glorified You [His Heavenly Father] on the earth” (John 17:4).”

+ “Joseph was a great fear remover. He told his brothers to “Fear not” (50:19,21). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great fear remover. He said, “Do not fear, little flock” (Luke 12:32).”

+ “Joseph permanently pardoned his brothers and would not cast them out when they came to him (50:15-21). Our Lord Jesus Christ permanently pardons and will not cast out those who come to Him, “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).”⁸⁹

6th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	Ps 17:3,5
	Gospel	Luke 13:22-35
Prophecies: -		
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 26:2-3
	Gospel	Matt 23:1-39
Mass:	Pauline	Col 3:5-17
	Catholicon	1 John 5:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:27-37
	Psalm	Ps 143:7,1
	Gospel	John 9:1-41

22 "Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a well;
His branches run over the wall."

From the Fathers:

JOSEPH, A FRUITFUL BOUGH BY A WELL

"Joseph, 'the man of dreams', the firstborn of Rachel, was praised more than all his brothers; having been honest in his relationship with God, and loving all, as a son, a brother, a slave, a prisoner, or a leader in a palace. That is why his father called him, 'a fruitful bough' repeating it twice, as a reference that its fruit is that of love. Joseph represents the human soul, honest to God, that does not cease to offer spiritual love, despite numerous oppressions and fierce spiritual wars. That soul keeps on being a fruitful bough, connected to the origin, according to the word of the Lord: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) It is the bough that is attached to the well of the water of the Holy Spirit, that grants it life and fruits; to grow to become like "branches run over the wall" of time, set forth toward heaven." – Fr Tadros Malaty ⁹⁰

Lord, Joseph lived by the well and was able to draw the source of his fruitfulness from You. Let me live by the well of Your word Lord and to drink deeply from it, so that I may draw nearer to You.

Commentary:

“Jacob said Joseph was “by a well” (49:22). The well was the energy for Joseph’s fruitfulness. The well is the key to the survival and productiveness of a tree or vine. They must have water or they will not grow, be fruitful, or even live. Being located “by a well” assures the tree or vine of a vigorous life, capable of bearing much fruit.

Joseph was located by the spiritual well of God and His Word. No wonder he was fruitful! Joseph lived all his life in nearness to God and in continual remembrance of Divine revelation. His persistent consciousness and consideration of God were evidenced no matter where he was. In temptation he said, “How then can I ... sin against God?” (39:9); in prison he said, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (40:8); before Pharaoh he said, “God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (41:16); in speaking to his brothers of their evil to him, he said, “God did send me before you to preserve life” (45:5), and “God meant it for good” (50:20); and in his last days, he was still speaking of God; for he said, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” (50:25). Joseph always dwelt by the well of God; and so regardless of the circumstances, his energy for fruitfulness was great. Being by the well, Joseph was “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3).

Spiritually, the [Christian] must do likewise if he is to bear spiritual fruit. He must dwell near the well of the Word - both the Incarnate and the Written Word.

The reason for so much unfruitfulness in Christians’ lives is that they do not spend much time near the well. [Christians] are too often like Israel was in Jeremiah’s day. God said of Israel then, “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). A believer will find no “well” in the world! The well is in God and His Word. One must drink deeply of this well; or his spiritual witness, work, and welfare will wither. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8) simply says we must live by the well if we want a fruitful Christian experience.”⁹¹

7th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 10:1-16; Is 48:17-49:4;	
	Job 38:1-38	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 14:10-15:2
	Catholicon	James 2:5-13
	Acts	Acts 9:22-31
	Psalm	Ps 86:12-13
	Gospel	John 5:31-47

Day 44

Tuesday, 7 April 2020

Genesis 49:23-24

23 "The archers have bitterly grieved him,
Shot at him and hated him.

24 But his bow remained in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made
strong

By the hands of the Mighty God of
Jacob

(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone
of Israel)..."

From the Fathers:

VIRTUE UNDER ATTACK

"Do you see how things proceed gradually and systematically, and how in every circumstance Joseph shows his characteristic virtue and endurance so that, just as an athlete who has nobly contended will be crowned with the kingdom's garland, likewise the fulfillment of the dreams would ... teach those who sold him that no advantage accrued to them from their awful [deception]? Virtue, you see, has such power that even when under attack it emerges even more [clearly]. Nothing, after all, is stronger than virtue, nothing more powerful ... not because it has such power of itself but because the one who acquires it also enjoys grace from on high. By enjoying grace from on high and being accorded assistance from there, virtue would be more powerful than anything, invincible and proof against not only the wiles of human beings but also the snares of the demons." – Chrysostom ⁹²

Lord, Joseph was prepared spiritually when he was attacked by the wiles of the devil. Help me Lord to be prepared punctually, powerfully, persistently and properly, in my spiritual life.

Commentary:

“Why was Joseph attacked? He was attacked because he was fruitful. Insects do not invade a barren tree, but they invade one that is healthy and bears fruit. Robbers aim to rob the rich, not the poor. It is the President, not peasants, who are in the most need of protection. And it is the godly who will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Therefore, the fruitful and faithful [Christians] will not be left alone by the evil one.

...Though he was viciously and thoroughly attacked in battle, Joseph was not overcome. “But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God” (49:24). Joseph was the victor and not a victim, because he was prepared. Joseph was prepared punctually,... powerfully, persistently, and properly.

First, Joseph was prepared punctually; for he had a bow when the enemy attacked. He was not unarmed for battle. Today we prepare in advance for everything imaginable in the physical and material area of life, but we are often very [negligent] in spiritual preparation. Jesus said to His disciples, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38). Paul said, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Let believers be punctual about getting into the Word and in spending time in prayer, if they want to be armed for battle when it comes....

[Second], Joseph was prepared powerfully; for he was prepared “in strength.” He had convictions, not just opinions. His resolves were vigorous; as is seen in how firmly he refused the

temptation of Potiphar’s wife. He was dogmatic about right and wrong.

[Third], Joseph was prepared persistently; for his bow “abode.” He was always ready. Not one trial caught him unprepared. He was not just a Sunday saint but was a saint all week through.

[Fourth], Joseph was prepared properly; for he was “made strong by ... God.” He was made strong where it counted the most - in spiritual things. We may be strong physically, positionally, and materially; but if we are not strong spiritually, we are in trouble. We need spiritual strengthening otherwise all other strengths will be worthless when the enemy assaults us. Joseph was properly and adequately prepared for the battle because he lived by the well, by God and His Word. A tree or vine located by a well will have its roots deep in the ground; and, therefore, will not be uprooted by storms. Saints who continuously live near the Lord and daily draw from the well of the Word will not be toppled by every temptation. They will be given Divine strength to stand true. The key to winning the war against wickedness is to live by the well.”⁹³

7th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 10:17-32; Is 49:6-10; Job 38:37-39:30; Sirach* 5:1-15	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 38:18-19
	Gospel	Luke 17:1-10
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 14:5-17
	Catholicon	2 Pet 3:8-15
	Acts	Acts 22:17-24
	Psalm	Ps 51:2-3
	Gospel	John 12:36-43

* Second Canonical Book

Day 45

Wednesday, 8 April 2020

Genesis 49:25-33

25 "By the God of your father who will help you,
And by the Almighty who will bless you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

26 The blessings of your father
Have excelled the blessings of my
ancestors,

Up to the utmost bound of the
everlasting hills.

They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him
who was separate from his brothers.

27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the
morning he shall devour the prey, And
at night he shall divide the spoil."

28 All these are the twelve tribes of
Israel, and this is what their father
spoke to them. And he blessed them; he
blessed each one according to his own
blessing.

29 Then he charged them and said to
them: "I am to be gathered to my people;
bury me with my fathers in the cave that
is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 in the cave that is in the field of
Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the
land of Canaan, which Abraham bought
with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a
possession for a burial place.

31 There they buried Abraham and

Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac
and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried
Leah.

32 The field and the cave that is there
were purchased from the sons of Meth."

33 And when Jacob had finished
commanding his sons, he drew his feet
up into the bed and breathed his last,
and was gathered to his people.

From the Fathers:

THE STRENGTH OF JOSEPH

"From here "he grew strong over all the mountains and the desires of the everlasting hills." For He shone forth like a heavenly light above all those men of exalted merit, patriarchs and prophets and apostles, and beyond the sun and moon and archangels as well, even as he says, "No disciple is above his teacher, nor is the servant above his master." Who indeed among them was there to whom all things were subject? Rather, Christ gave to them their nature. In Him all His saints are blessed, because He is the head of all, above the heads of all"- for "the head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ" - and above the crowns of the heads of all men, because He is the surpassing crown of the whole of humanity." - Ambrose ⁹⁴

Lord, because Joseph separated himself from the evil that surrounded him, he was able to become a truly superior person. Help me Lord, even though it may be difficult, to separate myself from the things that take me away from You.

Commentary:

“Separation is still the way of blessing, as Joseph’s life proves. He was separate from his brothers in interests, loyalties, [conduct], and convictions; and it paid handsome dividends. The Christian who wants God’s blessing in his life will have to practice separation, too. He will have to separate from many places, people, practices, and philosophies in morals, marriage, business, religion, and every other area to obtain choice blessings.

Separation can also be unpleasant. Joseph was separated from “his brethren,” which shows how painful separation can be at times. We may have to separate from favourite friends and pet pleasures to keep ourselves clean. It will not be a pleasant experience, but separation is necessary for blessing. Do not let a little pain keep you from purity and from paying the full price for spiritual prosperity.

Joseph was truly a superior person. He was superior in fruitfulness; he was superior in overcoming his enemies; and he was superior in the quality and quantity of blessings he received. Joseph was superior because he lived by the well. He put holiness before happiness, purity before pleasure, and God before man. Too many Christians in our day live by the world instead of by the well.”⁹⁵

7th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 10:32-11:13; Is 58:1-11; Job 40:1-41:34	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 57:1
	Gospel	Luke 14:28-35
Mass:	Pauline	Rom 10:4-13
	Catholicon	James 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 19:23-26
	Psalm	Ps 51:2-3
	Gospel	John 6:35-45

50:1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him.

2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.

3 Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

4 Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying,

5 "My father made me swear, saying, 'Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.'" Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back."

6 And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

8 as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen.

9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.

10 Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and

very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father.

11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians."

Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

12 So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them.

13 For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

From the Fathers:

THE GATES OF THE UNDERWORLD WERE STILL NOT BROKEN

"For your part, however, dearly beloved, don't simply pass this by on hearing it; instead, consider the time when it happened and absolve Joseph of all blame. I mean, the gates of the underworld were still not broken or the bonds of death loosed. Nor was death yet called sleep. Hence, because they feared death, they acted this way; today, on the contrary, thanks to the grace of God, since death has been turned into slumber and life's end into repose and since there is great certitude of resurrection, we rejoice and exult at death like people moving from one life to another. Why do I say from one life to another? From a worse to a better, from a temporary to an eternal, from an earthly to a heavenly." – Chrysostom⁹⁶

Lord, the honour given to Jacob upon his death was as a result of Joseph's saintly character and conduct. Help me Lord to live a saintly Christian life, so that I may bring honour to You, my Father in heaven.

Commentary:

“Jacob truly went out in a blaze of glory. And the reason for so much of this honour at his death was because of Joseph. Joseph's saintly character brought great honour to his father. Joseph made sure due honour was given Jacob in his passing, and the Egyptians made sure Jacob was greatly honoured because of their respect for Joseph.

What a good lesson we have here concerning the behaviour of God's children and how it reflects on the honour given God the Father. The child of God ought to live in such a way that others will honour the Heavenly Father. The Egyptians honoured Jacob because of the way Joseph had lived. Joseph's saintly conduct down through the years, even when he was despised, ultimately caused others to want to glorify his father. The conduct of God's children should likewise lead others to exalt their Heavenly Father. When God's children sin, however, they will not bring honour to God nor cause others to want to honour God. The ten older brothers, who lived such unsavoury lives, certainly did not honour Jacob by their lives. They brought him anxiety, grief, discouragement, and frustration, but not honour. When David's conduct was bad, he did not honour God either. When he sinned in regards to Bathsheba and Uriah, the prophet Nathan said to him, “By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (2 Samuel 12:14). How do we live? Does it result in the name of God being blessed or in being blasphemed? If you want to honour the Heavenly Father, you will have to live saintly as did Joseph.”⁹⁷

7th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 11:13-26; Is 65:8-16; Job 42:1-6; 2 Kin 6:8-7:20	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 63:1
	Gospel	Matt 20:20-28
Mass:	Pauline	2 Cor 4:5-18
	Catholicon	1 John 3:13-24
	Acts	Acts 25:23-26:6
	Psalm	Ps 122:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 12:18-27

14 And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

16 So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying,

17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

From the Fathers:

GOD'S WISDOM TRANSFORMS ALL THEIR WICKEDNESS

"Don't be apprehensive or anxious," Joseph says. "I belong to God," and in imitation of my Lord I strive to reward with kindness those who are maliciously disposed to me - "I belong to God," after all. Then to show how great is the favour he enjoys from God Joseph says, 'You acted against me with evil intent, but God turned everything to good for me.' Hence Paul also said, "All things work together for good to those who love God." "All things," he says. What is meant by "all things"? Opposition and apparent disappointment - even these things are turned into good, which is exactly what happened with this remarkable man. In fact, what was done by his brothers had the particular effect of bringing him the kingship, thanks to the creative God's wisdom transforming all their wickedness into good." - Chrysostom ⁹⁸

Lord, Joseph was able to permanently forgive his brothers, because he felt Your nearness, goodness and mercy in his life. Help me Lord to never forget Your mercy towards me, so that I may be merciful to others.

Commentary:

“From Machpelah the brothers returned to Egypt to resume their usual work. But the absence of Jacob re-awakened in the hearts of ten of them the sense of their ill-desert for their treatment of Joseph long ago, and made them fear that now he might visit them with the punishment which their cruelty had merited. They supposed that their brother’s kindness to them had been shown simply for their father’s sake, and that it was Jacob’s presence alone that secured their immunity. They knew Joseph so imperfectly that they judged him to have a disposition like that of Esau, who threatened his brother after this fashion: “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob”; (Genesis 27:41) and they were afraid lest now he should be moved, either to put them to death, or to subject them to some most [shameful] treatment. But it was not the presence of Jacob that had moved Joseph to his clemency. Had that been all that held him from revenge they might well have trembled; for he had the power of Egypt at his back, and there was no one in the kingdom who would have called him to account either for its use or its abuse. But that which weighed with Joseph was his experience of the nearness and the goodness of his God. Jacob might die, but God remained, and that God had been with him and made him prosperous in everything he did. It would have been a poor return, therefore, for his goodness, if he had dealt sternly and [mercilessly] with his own brothers.

His gratitude for the Divine favour thus showed itself in his tenderness towards them after he was fully convinced that they had truly acknowledged their guilt, and heartily repented of their sin. He put them to a severe test, in order to find out how they felt about their conduct towards himself, but when once he was satisfied on that point he frankly, fully, and permanently forgave them.

It is a hard thing to forgive those who have done us grievous injury. We may, perhaps, without much difficulty come so far as to refrain from visiting them with positive punishment. But to be to them as we would have been if they had never wronged us; to have no constraint in our [dealings] with them from our remembrance of their attempt to do us harm; to take them back into our confidence again, and trust them is if nothing had occurred - that is hard indeed. Yet, if we are thoroughly persuaded of the genuineness of their repentance, and have ourselves a deep sense of gratitude to God for His remission of our own sins against Him, we may be enabled by His grace and spirit to deal with others as He has dealt with ourselves.”⁹⁹

7th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 49:33-50:26;	
	Prov 11:27-12:22; Is 66:10-24;	
	Job 42:7-17	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 32:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 16:19-31
Mass:	Pauline	2 Tim 3:1-4:5
	Catholicon	James 5:7-16
	Acts	Acts 15:1-18
	Psalm	Ps 98:8-9
	Gospel	Luke 13:31-35

22 So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

26 So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

From the Fathers:

BY FAITH HE DID ALL THIS

"The text goes on: "Joseph passed away at one hundred and ten." Why did it indicate to us his age too? For you to learn how long he had been entrusted with the control of Egypt. He was seventeen when he went down to Egypt, and it was when he reached the age of thirty that he appeared before Pharaoh and interpreted his dreams. Joseph then held complete control of Egypt for eighty years. Do you see how the rewards were greater than the hardships and the recompense manifold? For thirteen years he struggled with temptations, suffering servitude, that illicit accusation, ill treatment in prison. Since he nobly bore everything with thankfulness, accordingly he attained generous rewards even in the present life. Consider, after all, I ask you, that as a result of that short period that he endured servitude and imprisonment Joseph occupied a royal position for eighty years. For proof that it was by faith that he did all this and for the same motive gave directions about the transfer of his bones, listen to Paul's words: "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.""¹⁰⁰ - Chrysostom

Lord, Joseph lived his life by faith in You and by faith in the promise of salvation. As we enter into the week of Pascha Lord, open my eyes and my heart to see Your work of salvation in my life.

Commentary:

“Let us realize the spirit that underlay and prompted these words. It was above all a pilgrim spirit. Joseph bore an Egyptian title. He married an Egyptian wife. He shared in Egyptian court-life, politics, and trade. But he was as much a pilgrim as [were his fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. “He filled his place at Pharaoh’s court; but his dying words open a window into his soul, and betray how little he had felt that he belonged to the order of things in the midst of which he had been content to live. Though surrounded by an ancient civilization; and dwelling among granite temples and solid pyramids and firm-based sphinxes, the very emblems of eternity; he confessed that he had here no continuing city, but sought one to come.””

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“What a contrast there is between the opening and closing words of Genesis! Listen to the opening words: “In the beginning, God.” Listen to the closing words, “A coffin in Egypt.” And is this all? Is all God’s work to end in one poor mummy case? Stay. This is only the end of Genesis, the Book of Beginnings. Turn the leaf, and there are Exodus, and Joshua, and Kings, and Prophets, and Christ. God is not dependent on any one of us. We do our little work and cease... But God’s work goes on. His temple rises age after age. And it is enough for each of us, like Joseph, to have lived a true, pure, strong, and noble life - and to leave Him to see after our bodies, our beloved, whom we leave so reluctantly; and our work. Nor will He fail. “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you’” (Exodus 13:19); and “the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem ... and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph” (Joshua 24:32).”¹⁰¹

Lazarus' Saturday

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 49:1-28; Is 40:9-31; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 9:9-15	
Matins:	Psalm	Ps 88:2-4
	Gospel	Luke 12:16-21
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 2:1-8
	Catholicon	1 Pet 1:25-2:6
	Acts	Acts 27:38-28:10
	Psalm	Ps 129:8,2
	Gospel	John 11:1-45

Gospel of the Palm Sunday Liturgy

Mark 11:1-11

1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples;

2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it.

3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."

4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it.

5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?"

6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.

7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it.

8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread [them] on the road.

9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David

That comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!"

11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Events:

Our Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as a King, sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Rites:

- Procession of the Cross during the prayers of Raising of Incense (Matins)
- The Liturgy of Palm Sunday in which the four Gospels relating to the entry of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem are read and the praises of the children 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and a hymn 'Evlogemenos' is chanted.
- The funeral service for the departed is conducted after the completion of the Holy Liturgy and Communion. Funerals are not performed during Passion week as the focus is on the pains and sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday Eve

Events:

Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- The Pascha prayers begin in the second chorus of the Church (outside the camp – Jerusalem) and the Church is decorated with black cloths suitable for the Passion of Christ.
- Every hour includes:
 - The Prophecies
 - 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' ('To You is the Power and the Glory') 12 times
 - The Psalm, the Gospel's introduction and the Gospel in the sad tune
 - Commentary introduction and conclusion
 - The Litanies
 - The Blessing
- 5 hours at night and 5 hours during the day of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the First Hour of Monday of the Holy Pascha

Mark 11:12-24

12 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry.

13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.

15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.

17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.

19 When evening had come, He went out of the city.

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.

23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Monday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ cursed the fig tree that had no fruit, while on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem. He spent the rest of the day cleansing the Temple and teaching.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers
(1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Tuesday Eve

Events:

- In the evening, Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers
(1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday Eve of the Holy Pascha

Mark 13:32-14:2

32 *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

33 *Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

34 *It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.*

35 *Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming – in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning –*

36 *lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

37 *And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”*

14:1 *After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death.*

2 *But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.”*

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Gospel of the Third Hour of Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

Matthew 23:37-24:2

37 *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*

38 *See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

24:1 *Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.*

2 *And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”*

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples saw that the fig tree was withered.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day with the disciples in the temple, teaching them by parables, telling them about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming

Rites:

- In the 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' praise of the 11th hour, the words 'My Good Saviour' are added after 'My Lord Jesus Christ.'
- Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Wednesday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany to spend the night there.

Rites:

- The Church prohibits the exchanging of a kiss from Tuesday evening, so as not to share with Judas Iscariot the sign of the delivery of the Lord.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the Ninth Hour of Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

Matthew 26:3-16

3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him.

5 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,

7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table.

8 But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?"

9 For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor."

10 But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.

11 For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always.

12 For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.

13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day in Bethany.
- A woman poured fragrant oil on Our Lord's blessed head.
- The betrayal of Judas Iscariot who agreed on a price with the chief priests, to deliver Our Lord Jesus Christ to them with the sign of a kiss.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Holy Thursday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the night in Bethany.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).
- In the 3rd hour, Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.

Gospel of the Covenant Thursday Liturgy

Matthew 26:20-29

20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.

21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.

24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Holy Thursday

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The word 'Passover' is Hebrew which means 'to cross over,' indicative of the passing of the destroying angel from the Israelites to kill the first born of the Egyptians.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the disciples.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ established for us the Lordly Supper, the Eucharist, with His disciples.

Rites:

- The prayer of the Morning (1st) hour, the Raising of Incense. Procession of Judas from the southern side to the northern side (the opposite direction) and Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.
- The 3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual.
- The service of the 'Lakan' which contains readings concerning Our Lord washing the feet of His disciples.
- The service of the Divine Liturgy (The Catholic Epistle, Acts, Synaxarium, Prayer of Reconciliation, Commemoration of the Saints are not prayed).
- The 11th hour of the Pascha prayers is prayed instead of Psalm 150.

Good Friday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Rites:

- The words, 'My strength and my praise is the Lord who became my Holy Salvation,' are added to the praise of 'Thok Te Ti-Gom.'
- In the 1st hour of the Pascha prayers, the Paraclete chapters are read.
- The 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual. The four Gospels are read in each hour.

Gospel of the Sixth Hour of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha

Matthew 27:27-45

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him.

28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.

29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.

31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.

33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull,

34 they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.

35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

"They divided My garments among them,

And for My clothing they cast lots."

36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads

40 and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42 "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

43 He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Good Friday

Events:

- The trial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, condemning Him to be crucified.
- The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the 6th hour.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's words on the Cross.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross at the 9th hour.
- The piercing of Our Lord Jesus Christ with a spear, water and Blood flowed from His side. The body of Our Lord was taken down from the Cross at the 11th hour.
- The burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new tomb at the 12th hour.

Rites:

- The 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed in the second chorus.
- In the 6th hour, 'Tay-sho-ree' ('This is the pure golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 6th hour from the Agpia, then the 'O-mo-no-ge-nees' hymn is chanted. After the 6th hour is prayed, the Right thief's creed is read.
- In the 9th hour, 'Te-sho-ree' ('This is the golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 9th hour from the Agpia, then continues as usual.
- The prayers of the 12th hour are prayed in the first chorus, when the veil of the sanctuary is opened and the Altar is decorated with white cloths suitable for the Joyous Saturday.
- In the 12th hour, the prophecies are read, Lamentations 3:1-66 and Jonah 1:10-2:7. Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- After the 12th hour, once the litanies are prayed, 'Lord have mercy' is recited 100 times on each side (East, North, West, South), ending with 12 times towards the East.
- The procession with the icon of the Cross is performed followed by the hymn of Golgotha and the burial.

Gospel of the Joyous Saturday Liturgy

Matthew 28:1-20

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead [men].

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.

10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.

12 When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

13 saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him [away] while we slept.'

14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."

15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.

17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Joyous Saturday
(The Apocalypse)

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ descended to Hades and restored the souls of the righteous to Paradise.

Rites:

- The hymns are chanted, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- Many praises are read.
- The Book of Revelation is read.
- The Liturgy of Joyous Saturday (The Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle and Acts are read but not the Synaxarium).
- The Psalm and Gospel are prayed, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- The Prayer of Reconciliation is not prayed, the Commemoration of the Saints is prayed, and at the end of the Liturgy, Psalm 150 is not chanted.

EASTER SUNDAY



Christ is Risen – Indeed He is Risen
Ekhristos Anestee –Alithos Anestee

Icon from
St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral
Sydney - Australia



The Story of Susanna, Daughter of Hilkiah and the Revelation of Daniel the Prophet Concerning Her.

1: There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim.

2: And he took a wife named Susanna, the daughter of Hilkiah, a very beautiful woman and one who feared the Lord.

3: Her parents were righteous, and had taught their daughter according to the law of Moses.

4: Joakim was very rich, and had a spacious garden adjoining his house; and the Jews used to come to him because he was the most honored of them all.

5: In that year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: "Iniquity came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people."

6: These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had suits at law came to them.

7: When the people departed at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk.

8: The two elders used to see her every day, going in and walking about, and they began to desire her.

9: And they perverted their minds and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering righteous judgments.

10: Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress,

11: for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to possess her.

12: And they watched eagerly, day after day, to see her.

13: They said to each other, "Let us go home, for it is mealtime."

14: And when they went out, they parted from each other. But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. And then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

15: Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was very hot.

16: And no one was there except the two elders, who had hid themselves and were watching her.

17: She said to her maids, "Bring me oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I may bathe."

18: They did as she said, shut the garden doors, and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; and they did not see the elders, because they were hidden.

19: When the maids had gone out, the two elders rose and ran to her, and said:

20: "Look, the garden doors are shut, no one sees us, and we are in love with you; so give your consent, and lie with us.

21: If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away."

22: Susanna sighed deeply, and said, "I am hemmed in on every side. For if I do this thing, it is death for me; and if I do not, I shall not escape your hands.

23: I choose not to do it and to fall into your hands, rather than to sin in the sight of the Lord."

24: Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her.

25: And one of them ran and opened the garden doors.

26: When the household servants heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her.

27: And when the elders told their tale, the servants were greatly ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

28: The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death.

29: They said before the people, "Send for Susanna, the daughter of Hilkiah, who is the wife of Joakim."

30: So they sent for her. And she came, with her parents, her children, and all her kindred.

31: Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement, and beautiful in appearance.

32: As she was veiled, the wicked men ordered her to be unveiled, that they might feed upon her beauty.

33: But her family and friends and all who saw her wept.

34: Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head.

35: And she, weeping, looked up toward heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord.

36: The elders said, "As we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids.

37: Then a young man, who had been hidden, came to her and lay with her.

38: We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them.

39: We saw them embracing, but we could not hold the man, for he was too strong for us, and he opened the doors and dashed out.

40: So we seized this woman and asked her who the young man was, but she would not tell us. These things we testify."

41: The assembly believed them, because they were elders of the people and judges; and they condemned her to death.

42: Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, "O eternal God, who dost discern what is secret, who art aware of all things before they come to be,

43: thou knowest that these men have borne false witness against me. And now I am to die! Yet I have done none of the things that they have wickedly invented against me!"

44: The Lord heard her cry.

45: And as she was being led away to be put to death, God aroused the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel;

46: and he cried with a loud voice, "I am innocent of the blood of this woman."

47: All the people turned to him, and said, "What is this that you have said?"

48: Taking his stand in the midst of them, he said, "Are you such fools, you sons of Israel? Have you condemned a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts?"

49: Return to the place of judgment. For these men have borne false witness against her."

50: Then all the people returned in haste. And the elders said to him, "Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you that right."

51: And Daniel said to them, "Separate them far from each other, and I will examine them."

52: When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said to him, "You old relic of wicked days, your

sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past,

53: pronouncing unjust judgments, condemning the innocent and letting the guilty go free, though the Lord said, 'Do not put to death an innocent and righteous person.'

54: Now then, if you really saw her, tell me this: Under what tree did you see them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under a mastic tree."

55: And Daniel said, "Very well! You have lied against your own head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from God and will immediately cut you in two."

56: Then he put him aside, and commanded them to bring the other. And he said to him, "You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, beauty has deceived you and lust has perverted your heart.

57: This is how you both have been dealing with the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear; but a daughter of Judah would not endure your wickedness.

58: Now then, tell me: Under what tree did you catch them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under an evergreen oak."

59: And Daniel said to him, "Very well! You also have lied against your own head, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to saw you in two, that he may destroy you both."

60: Then all the assembly shouted loudly and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him.

61: And they rose against the two elders, for out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of bearing false witness;

62: and they did to them as they had wickedly planned to do to their neighbor; acting in accordance with the law of Moses, they put them to death. Thus innocent blood was saved that day.

63: And Hilkiah and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, and so did Joakim her husband and all her kindred, because nothing shameful was found in her.

64: And from that day onward Daniel had a great reputation among the people.

- The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version

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Note- Some of the references that have been quoted have been slightly modified to suit the purposes and users of this Program.

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