



# Women of the Bible

## Daily Contemplations

Fasting and Prayer Program

The Holy Great Fast

2025

This 25th anniversary edition of the Fasting and Prayer Program is dedicated to Sam Bassilious (1962-2024).

A true servant, dear friend and a wonderful role model for family life.

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**Cover**

**Icon of Eve and St Mary**

by Fadi Mikhail, UK Coptic Icons

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# PREFACE

The Fasting and Prayer Program was first published in 2001 as a service for the youth of St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Bexley (Sydney, Australia). The Program continued to be published for several years later at a local level, until Sam Bassilious, a faithful servant of St Mary & St Mina's Cathedral and co-founder of COPT (Coptic Orthodox Publication and Translation), felt that many more people could benefit from a spiritual program during the blessed days of the Holy Great Fast. The Fasting and Prayer Program then spread both nationally and internationally.

Our Lord gifted Sam with many talents and he dedicated his life to various aspects of Church Service, from youth groups to publication endeavours, and the design of the Cathedral itself. He served wholeheartedly with a humble heart and a heavenly wisdom, using his talents for the glory of God and the edification of others. No service was too big or too small for him, he served faithfully in whatever he was called to do. Every year Sam diligently ensured that a Fasting and Prayer Program was published and distributed, even in his very last days. Before Sam went to rest in the arms of his Lord and Saviour during the Holy Great Fast last year, one of his final wishes was to continue with the publication of the Program. He also specifically asked for the theme: *'Women of the Bible'*.

This is the Program that is in your hands today. Contributions have been made by family, friends and the community that Sam served; in honour of him, his unwavering dedication to the Program and his desire to ensure that written treasures, particularly those of the Coptic Orthodox Church, were made available to the Diaspora.

Sam - may your memory be eternal and may this Program be a small token of our love and appreciation for all you have done for us. May your legacy of service, leadership and commitment continue to inspire generations to come.

\* \* \* \* \*

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 that culminates in Passion Week (Holy Pascha), which is the most important week of the year, and the richest spiritually.

This Program is designed to enrich you on your spiritual journey by providing daily contemplations, Bible readings, prayers and key references, expressing how our spiritual life can benefit from the examples set by *'Women of the Bible'*, through their humility, faithfulness, steadfastness, forgiveness, and trust in God.

We conclude with the events and rites of the Holy Pascha week – as our late Pope Shenouda III wrote in his book, *'Contemplations On the Prayer of the Holy Week: Thine is the Power and the Glory'*, it is “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.

# INTRODUCTION

Throughout the pages of Scripture, women play a profound and vital role in God's story of salvation. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, they embody virtues such as faithfulness, humility, courage, steadfastness, forgiveness, and trust in God, His Works and His Plan. Figures like Sarah and Elizabeth teach us the beauty of waiting on God's promises, while Ruth and Naomi show us the strength of unwavering loyalty. Women like Deborah and Esther step forward with courage, while others, like our Theotokos, St Mary, reveal the quiet power of humility and obedience. Their lives, often marked by suffering and trials, reflect the journey of faith that all believers are called to walk.

As we enter this season of the Holy Great Fast, a time of prayer, repentance, and renewal, these biblical women offer us deep spiritual inspiration. The Holy Great Fast calls us to humble ourselves before God, just as Hannah did in her fervent prayers and as Mary Magdalene did in her repentance. It is a time to remain steadfast, like the widow of Zarephath, who trusted God despite her last morsel of food, or like the Canaanite woman, who persisted in seeking Jesus' mercy. Their examples remind us that faith is not about perfect strength but about complete reliance on God's grace.

Many of these women also exemplify selfless love and sacrifice. The widow who gave her two mites teaches us generosity, even in scarcity. Priscilla and Lydia show us that faith is meant to be shared, as they worked alongside the apostles to build the Church. The Samaritan woman, transformed by her encounter with Christ, reveals the power of redemption and new beginnings, which the Holy Great Fast invites us to embrace. These women remind us that no one is beyond God's mercy and that renewal is always possible for those who seek Him with sincerity.

As we journey through the 55 days of the Holy Great Fast, reflecting through prayer and fasting, the stories of these women call us to deeper faith and commitment. Their trust in God amidst trials encourages us to persevere in our own spiritual struggles. Their courage urges us to take bold steps toward holiness. Their repentance inspires us to return to the Father with open hearts. By meditating on their lives, let us draw strength for our own Lenten journey through this Fasting and Prayer Program on '*Women of the Bible*', knowing that, like them, we are never alone—God is always at work, shaping us into vessels of His grace.

Eve is the first woman created by God, fashioned from Adam's rib as his companion, and placed with him in the Garden of Eden.

**EVE**

Day 1

Monday, 24 February

The Fathers of the Church found many beautiful symbols and types in Eve. Just as Adam is a type of Christ (Romans 5:14), Eve is a type of the Church, the Bride of Christ. Eve came from the side of Adam when he fell into a deep sleep (Genesis 2:21–22). The Church came from the side of Christ when He “fell asleep” on the cross. Adam declared that Eve is “*bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” (Genesis 2:23); so also, Christ declares that we are members of His Body, called Christians because we are partakers of Christ.

*“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’”* (Matthew 19:4-5)

Who is the man who leaves the House of His Father but Christ, our heavenly Bridegroom, who descends from heaven into our poverty to unite us to Himself and ascend back with us to His heavenly mansions? In the physical unity of Adam and Eve we come to understand not only the union of a human husband and wife, but also our union with Christ.

And as Eve bruises the head of the serpent and is redeemed in childbearing (Genesis 3:15–16); so also, the Church overcomes the wiles of the devil in every age and is redeemed in bearing her spiritual children through the waters of baptism in the womb of the baptismal font. Indeed, God’s command to “*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth*” (Genesis 1:28) is only truly fulfilled through the Church, whose children are no longer merely fallen humanity, but redeemed humanity, recreated in the image and likeness of Christ, the Last Adam.

Eve is also a type of the Theotokos St Mary. In the second century AD, Tertullian wrote:

*“The self-same Goodness provided also a help fit for him ... He knew full well what a blessing to him would be the sex of Mary, and also of the Church.”* (Against Marcion, 2.4, ANF 3:300, modernised)

Female Eve completes and complements male Adam, as he in turn completes and complements her. If the divine Logos took flesh as a man, it is no coincidence that the most exalted human being in all of history is a woman, or that the Church is described as female. The two most important acts in all human history were Eve’s submission to the serpent that resulted in our fall from paradise, and St Mary’s submission to the angel that resulted in our restoration and exaltation to heaven. To deny the crucial importance of women in the Body of Christ is to sever the unity of Christ and to render it incomplete.

### **Key References:**

*Genesis 1:26–31; 2–4*

### **Prayer:**

*O True Light who gives light to everyone coming into the world, You came into the world through Your love for humanity, and all the creation rejoiced at Your coming. You saved our father Adam from seduction and delivered Eve from the pangs of death. You gave us the Spirit to be Your children; we praise You and bless You with Your angels. (Morning Doxology).*

### **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 1:26-27
	Catholicon	James 2:1-13
	Acts	Acts 14:19-28
	Psalm	Ps 22:26
	Gospel	Mark 9:33-50

# SARAH

Day 2 Tuesday, 25 February

Sarah was the wife of Abraham (originally Abram) and was his half-sister, sharing the same father. God promised that Sarah would bear a son, Isaac, through whom His covenant would be established. Sarah was 90 years old when she gave birth to Isaac, fulfilling God's promise despite her old age.

Sarah, like us, experienced the ups and downs in a life and journey of faith and doubt.

She laughed at God's promise of a son due to her age, revealing initial doubt but also the struggles of faith (Genesis 18:10-15). Her laughter at Isaac's promised birth reflects her initial disbelief, but also God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises (Genesis 18:10-15). This journey encourages believers to trust God's timing, even when it seems improbable. Despite doubts, Sarah's faith, for which she is later celebrated (Hebrews 11:11) led to the birth of her son, fulfilling God's covenant. Even imperfect faith can bring blessings through trust and obedience.

Sarah, with Abraham, welcomed three heavenly visitors who foretold Isaac's birth (Genesis 18:1-8). This hospitality brought the promise of Isaac closer to fulfilment (Genesis 18:1-8). Acts of kindness can lead to divine blessings.

As humans, we are not without flaws, Sarah's are seen in her harsh treatment of Hagar, showing her struggles with trust in God's plan (Genesis 16:1-6). Her impatience with God's plan led to the mistreatment, showing the consequences of acting without faith (Genesis 16:1-6). This highlights the need for patience and reliance on God's wisdom.

Sarah's name change from 'Sarai' marked her elevated role in His plan, as God's covenant made her the matriarch of all nations and kings (Genesis 17:15-16). Her life demonstrates that God's plans often transcend human limitations.

She is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death (127 years) is recorded. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah to bury her, which became a family tomb. Sarah's burial there established Abraham's first landholding in Canaan, part of God's promise (Genesis 23:1-20). Her life and legacy symbolise an enduring faith foundational to God's covenant.

Sarah's life shows that faith, even with moments of doubt and imperfection, can lead to the fulfillment of God's promises. Her story encourages us believers to trust in God's plan and timing, remain hospitable and faithful, and learn from both successes and mistakes.

The Holy Great Fast is a time for repentance, reflection and spiritual growth. Let us ask ourselves: How does Sarah's journey of faith, and moments of doubt, inspire us to trust God more in situations where His promises or timing seem unclear? In what ways do I, like Sarah, sometimes take matters into my own hands rather than waiting on God's plan, and how can I practice patience and reliance on His wisdom? Sarah's hospitality to strangers led to a divine encounter—how can I embody greater kindness, generosity, and openness to others as part of my spiritual growth?

## Key References:

Genesis 11:29-31; 12:1-20; 16:1-8;  
17:1-22; 18:1-15; 21:1-13; 23:1-20;  
Galatians 4:22-3; Hebrews 11:11

## Prayer:

*Heavenly Father,  
Lord of promises and faithfulness,  
guide me as You did Sarah, helping  
me trust in Your divine plan. Teach  
me patience and humility, waiting  
on Your perfect timing. Strengthen  
my faith in moments of doubt. Let  
my heart remain steadfast in Your  
promises. During this season of the  
Holy Great Fast, may I reflect on  
Sarah's story and grow in kindness,  
welcoming others with hospitality.  
Transform my weaknesses for Your  
glory, that I may walk in Your  
light, trusting in Your mercy and  
love. Amen.*

## 1<sup>st</sup> 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
	Catholican	1 Pet 4:3-11
	Acts	Acts 5:34-42
	Psalm	Ps 25:16-17
	Gospel	Luke 12:41-50

Rebekah is one of the matriarchs of the early Jewish nation and her story is told in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament. She was the wife of a great patriarch, Isaac, and the mother of another great patriarch, Jacob.

Rebekah was influential in the events that transpired, which helped to shape the life of her son, Jacob; who later became known as Israel. There are two significant occurrences that provide insight into the character of Rebekah.

The first pertains to the basis of her selection as wife to Isaac. Eliezer, sent by Abraham, to a distant land to find a wife for his son Isaac, requests a sign from God, to guide his choice. He insists that the maiden who is willing to draw water from the well for his animals would be the one chosen by God. Rebekah was the maiden who was willing to do so. Her willingness to serve confirmed she was indeed the appropriate choice for Isaac; a man of God. What ensued reflects the generosity and welcoming spirit to strangers. This is exemplified in the continuation of the service to invite foreign guests to her home and to act as host.

We may take Rebekah's action for granted, but acknowledgment of this character trait, of the willingness to serve, is better appreciated when you consider that she was not at all obliged to act in this. She could have easily saved herself a deal of physical effort and allowed others to do the job.

The second, less positive, but perhaps more human occurrence concerns her behaviour in seeking the blessing of Isaac for her favoured son Jacob; this in preference to his older brother Esau. The reason Rebekah favoured Jacob is made clear in the narrated story in the Bible. Esau was a hunter, he brought game meat back to the camp and was respected and favoured by his father. It may well be that Rebekah in turn favoured Jacob in an effort to balance out parental affection in the home. It is also said that Jacob often stayed in the camp with the women, rather than going out hunting, so perhaps the greater exposure time he had with his mother allowed for their relationship to develop, more than it otherwise would have done. This of course was weighed against her dislike of her older son's behaviour in cavorting with the foreign women and bringing them back to the camp and as a result causing her much distress. It can certainly be argued that Rebekah honestly believed that her son Jacob was much more deserving of the blessing than his brother Esau.

Rebekah's solution to the situation was unfortunately "deception". She devised a plan by which her husband would be tricked to bestow the blessing on his younger son Jacob. Taking matters into her own hands to rectify a perceived injustice, ultimately resulted in animosity and ultimate destruction of the relationship between her offspring. It does not seem to have taken long for her to realise the error of her way and she was the one encouraging Jacob to flee, lest Esau would kill him and she would then "lose both of her sons in the one day".

The lesson we learn from Rebekah's life in this instance is that God uses, even the failings and mistakes that we make in our life, such as the division that was caused in Isaac's family, by Rebekah's plan, to chart a new course for an individual; in this case a new course for Jacob, and one that led him to be a suitable candidate for eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

# REBEKAH

Day 3 Wednesday, 26 February

## Key References:

Genesis 24; 25:19-34; 26:1-28:9

## Prayer:

*Lord, like Rebekah, teach us to be ready and willing to give of our time and our effort in the service of others; even those who may be foreigners and strangers. Help us to remember that You can use the mistakes we make for the Glory of Your name.*

## 1<sup>st</sup> 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
	Catholican	2 Pet 1:4-11
	Acts	Acts 10:9-20
	Psalm	Ps 25:20,16
	Gospel	Luke 6:35-38



Rachel was the first love of Jacob, one of the great patriarchs of the early Jewish nation. He was so dedicated to her that he was willing to work for 14 years to win her hand. Rachel was also the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, two of the twelve tribes of Israel.

She fell in love with Jacob almost immediately. It seemed to be a “love at first sight situation”, as is described in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament. Rachel lived to learn however that even though he, Jacob, reciprocated her affection, in the end it was not enough to meet her every need. For instance, she wanted children, but he could not make that happen for her. She had to wait a long time to be able to have children and her situation was set against the backdrop of having to compete with her sister to be a mother. This was particularly painful, as child bearing was regarded as a blessing from God and the inability to have them as a retribution. This caused Rachel significant emotional distress, as seen in the comment she made to Jacob “give me children or else I would die”, to which he justifiably retorted “am I God that I can do that?” She trusted, not in God, but in the depth of her affection of her partner and relied on this for her happiness, only to learn that, that alone cannot be fulfilling.

Rachel was not the only wife of Jacob’s. Through deception, her father Laban had tricked Jacob into marrying her older sister Leah. Very few women would react well to this situation, but even more so if all your emotion was invested in the relationship with your spouse. Rachel responded to her life circumstances with a seeming degree of resentment, towards her father. You can argue that this is at least understandable from a human nature perspective. When afforded an opportunity to seek recompense for her father’s actions she stole his revered “fake gods statues”. These presumably had some monetary value, as Laban seemed to be keen to locate them. Rachel’s resentment led her to an act of thievery. In order not to be identified as a thief she then had to lie. And worse still, had she been found out more harm could have ensued to herself or her party; as Jacob had vowed that the person in whose possession these statues were found would be put to death. We can see from this sequence of events that it was only God’s mercy that contained the situation such that it did not result in more harm. Perhaps Rachel’s motive might have been to seek justice and some form of compensation for the ill treatment she had received at the hands of her father, but what we learn from her life is that we cannot pursue justice or rectify injustice by our own hands, as often we will create a situation that is far more perilous for ourselves and perhaps even for those we love. Far better then, when we are treated unfairly, to throw up our hands and call on the Almighty Judge to arbitrate and to plead our cause.

Rachel died on the road to Bethlehem in Ramah and whilst giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. At the time of the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem, the prophet makes mention of Rachel as “weeping for her children, for they were no more”. Rachel giving birth to Benjamin and losing her life in the process is reminiscent of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is great joy for a son had come into the world, but there was also sorrow for He was to suffer and to die for our sins.<sup>2</sup>

# RACHEL

Day 4 Thursday, 27 February

## Key References:

Genesis 29-35; Jeremiah 31:15;  
Matthew 2:18

## Prayer:

*Lord, we know that in Ramah, Rachel was “weeping for her children, for they were no more”, just as at the time of the birth of her son Benjamin, she was both sorrowful and joyous. Similarly, may our sorrow over our sins that can lead to death be transformed into a source of hope and joy over our salvation.*

## 1<sup>st</sup> 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
	Catholican	1 John 1:8-2:11
	Acts	Acts 8:3-13
	Psalm	Ps 118:14, 18
	Gospel	Mark 4:21-29

Jochebed was the mother of Aaron, Miriam and Moses. Although she found herself in a difficult situation, she trusted God to look after her children.

The Bible tells us that Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, were faithful and unafraid of Pharaoh, "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command*" (Hebrews 11:23). When Moses was born and Jochebed saw that he was a beautiful child and felt that God had a plan for him, she decided to fight for his life. She did not heed the words of Pharaoh, but rather was faithful to her God. At this point, Jochebed did not know that her son would be one of the greatest personalities of the Old Testament and that God would give him His commandments to pass on to the people.

Despite the king's commands, Jochebed hid her son for three months. One can only imagine the great lengths she would have gone to, to keep him hidden from those who wanted to kill him. Jochebed would have also had to train her other children in how to keep this baby hidden. This was very risky. Eventually though she could hide him no longer. It was a difficult time for Jochebed, but her courage and faith remained strong. Not only did she have to take care of her baby Moses, but she also needed to care for and teach her other two children, Miriam and Aaron, and they would be part of God's plan too. Jochebed had a plan to save Moses' life. She prepared a basket which was able to carry the baby and protect him and she then placed the baby in the basket and into the river Nile. Jochebed instructed her daughter Miriam to follow the basket.

Miriam had been trained well by Jochebed and she prepared her for what may happen to the basket. Once Miriam saw that Pharaoh's daughter had found the child and wanted to keep him, she stepped forward and suggested that she take the child to a nurse to feed him. This plan allowed for Moses to remain in the care of his mother for longer. Jochebed became part of God's plan for His people, and she was able to transmit her faith to her son, preparing him for his important role to come. Moses' role was an extremely important one for his people and he became a friend of God's, "*So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*" (Exodus 33:11).

Jochebed's other children also became part of God's great plan. Aaron became the first priest, "*Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest*" (Exodus 28:1), and was the spokesperson for Moses, "*And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh*" (Exodus 7:2); and Miriam was the first prophetess, "*Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances*" (Exodus 15:20).

Through her great faithfulness, Jochebed earned the meaning of her name, 'Jehovah is glory'. She became one of the greatest mothers in the Bible. Despite her difficult environment she depended on God to direct her life. Jochebed inspires us to trust in God during hardships and lean on Him to guide our way. She is an example of courage and determination and not giving up, even when things seem hopeless. In addition to this, we see the importance of instilling in our children, from an early age, the will of God and His commandments.<sup>3,4</sup>

# JOCHEBED

Day 5

Friday, 28 February

## Key References:

Exodus 1:8-22; Exodus 2:1-10;  
Hebrews 11:23

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, give us the courage and strength of Jochebed. Help us not give up when things seem impossible or when hardships come our way. Let us always turn to You, Lord, for our strength and courage, as Jochebed did.*

## 1<sup>st</sup> 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
	Catholicum	3 John 1:1-14
	Acts	Acts 2:42-3:9
	Psalm	Ps 13:5-6
	Gospel	Luke 11:1-10

St Mary, the Theotokos, or Mother of God, is revered as the virgin mother of Jesus Christ, who conceived Him by the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the prophecy of the Incarnation and playing a pivotal role in humanity's salvation. Her unwavering faith, humility, and obedience to God's will are exemplified in her response to the Annunciation, and she is honoured not only as the mother of Christ but also as a powerful intercessor for believers and a model of Christian virtue.

The Light settled on Mary, as on an eye; it purified her mind, it cleansed her understanding, it washed her thought, it made her virginity shine. The river in which Christ was baptized conceived him again symbolically, the damp womb of the water conceived him in purity, and bore him in holiness, made him rise up in glory. In the pure womb of the river you should recognize the daughter of man, who conceived without the aid of man, and gave birth as a virgin, and who brought up, through a gift, the Lord of that gift. (St Ephrem the Syrian, H. Eccles. XXXVI, 2-4 in: M. Hansbury (trans.), Jacob of Serug: On the Mother of God (New York, 1998), 13). (St Ephrem the Syrian)

From when she knew to distinguish good from evil, she stood firm in purity of heart and in integrity of thoughts. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 24).

That purity which was in Adam, Mary also acquired, by the Spirit who came and she gave birth without impulse of lust. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 36).

Blessed is that One who solemnly appeared to us from your purity! (Hansbury, Mother of God, 42). (St Jacob of Serug)

The purity of St Mary, both inner and outer, illuminates the path of holiness for us all. If we maintain the purity of our souls and bodies, by rejecting all evil thoughts and actions, we will preserve in ourselves the gift of being able to see Christ in us and to experience Him in a very intimate and personal way. If we need to restore our purity, we can do so through repentance and confession. These are ways to emulate St Mary's virtue and purity to know our Lord Christ and be holy for Him and pleasing to Him.

### **Prayer:**

*A true tabernacle, is Mary the Virgin, placed in its midst, the true testimonies. The undefiled ark, overlaid roundabout with gold, and the mercy seat, of the Cherubim. The golden pot, where the manna was hidden, behold the Word of the Father, came and was incarnate of you. The golden lampstand, carrying the true Light, who is the unapproachable, Light of the world. The golden censer, carrying the live coal, and the chosen incense, with a rich aroma. The rod of Aaron, that blossomed, and the holy flower, of incense. All these together, direct us to, the miraculous Birth, O Virgin Mary. (The Sunday Theotokia - Thirteenth Part).*

### **1<sup>st</sup> 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

- 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."

**1<sup>st</sup> 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

Miriam is the sister of Moses and Aaron, recognised for her leadership and prophetic gifts, particularly during the Exodus when she led the Israelite women in worship and song after the crossing of the Red Sea.

One of the earliest significant actions we see from Miriam, is her protecting Moses (Exodus 2:1-10). Showing her bravery, she saved him; enabling God's plan for Israel's deliverance. Her quick thinking showed courage and trust in God. Miriam's example here reminds us that God uses anyone, regardless of age, to fulfil His purposes.

Miriam also led the Israelite women in celebrating God's deliverance after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20-21). Her actions here as a spiritual leader inspired worship and gratitude. Worshiping God for His blessings teaches us gratitude and trust in His power.

Her criticism of Moses, questioning his leadership, revealed pride and jealousy (Numbers 12:1-15). The punishment (leprosy) she received, and subsequent restoration, highlights God's justice and divine mercy. This reminds us to stay humble, avoid envy, and respect God's chosen leaders.

Miriam, as a leader and prophetess, played a vital role during the Exodus. Her contributions highlight the importance of women in God's plan (Micah 6:4). God calls both men and women to significant roles in serving His purpose.

Her death marked the end of an era as Israel neared the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1). Her presence as a key leader was deeply missed, reminding us of the temporary nature of human leadership, and God's eternal faithfulness.

There are many divine lessons we can learn from Miriam's life and leadership. Her bravery demonstrates the power of faith, and courage, in adversity. We learn that the role of worship is also central for us to acknowledge God's greatness. Miriam's pride highlights our human weakness, revealing to us the need to be humble; while her restoration shows God's mercy. Miriam's leadership showed that God values, and uses, all His people to accomplish His will.

The Holy Great Fast is a time of repentance, reflection, and spiritual growth. Miriam's leadership in worship emphasised the importance of praising God after His victories. How can I incorporate more gratitude and worship into my daily spiritual practices this Lenten season?

When Miriam struggled with envy and pride, God corrected her but also restored her. What areas in my life will I look to for repentance, humility, and God's healing during this holy time of reflection?

# MIRIAM

Day 8

Monday, 3 March

## Key References:

Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20-21; Numbers 12:1-15

## Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, I thank You for the example of Miriam, a woman of courage, leadership, and worship. Grant me the boldness to act in faith, to protect and serve others as she did for Moses. May my heart always be filled with songs of praise, leading others to glorify Your name in moments of joy and deliverance. Teach me humility when I struggle with pride or envy, and forgive me when I fall short of Your glory. Like Miriam, restore me in Your mercy, so I may continue to walk in Your light and fulfill the purpose You have for my life. During this Lenten season, help me to reflect on her life and grow in faith, worship, and love for You. Amen.*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophesies:	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
	Catholican	Jude 1:1-8
	Acts	Acts 4:36-5:11
	Psalm	Ps 29:1-2
	Gospel	Luke 18:1-8

Rahab was a Canaanite woman who lived in Jericho. When two Israelite spies came to scout Jericho, Rahab hid them from authorities and helped them escape. In return, she asked for her family's safety when the Israelites attacked.

Despite her background as a harlot, Rahab demonstrated remarkable courage and faith, earning her a place in the genealogy of both King David and Jesus.

Rahab's humble start as a harlot in Canaan didn't prevent her from being part of God's plan. She represents the power of God's love and grace to change even the unlikely of hearts, the marginalised, the people scoffed at and disdained by society. She risked everything, defying her own people to place her faith in the God of Israel. She declared, "...the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." (Joshua 2:11).

Through God's grace, Rahab found more than acceptance. She became an important, respected community member and ancestor of the Messiah. There's something deeply moving about realising that someone like Rahab, with all her flaws and her troubled past, could end up playing such a pivotal role in the lineage of Jesus: "*Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse*" (Matthew 1:5).

This shows how God's plan includes everyone, no matter how flawed or broken we may be. We all have a place in His family. Rahab is a beautiful example of someone God justified and made righteous because her faith was alive and active. Her actions demonstrated her trust in God's promises, proving that faith without works is inoperative and dead (James 2:26).

Rahab was, in fact, the first recorded Gentile convert. She was a Canaanite outside Israel's covenant, but her faith entered her into the family of God's chosen people. Such an amazing transformation reflects the inclusive nature of God's redemptive plan.

While Rahab and Christians are both saved by grace through faith, true faith always requires action. Rahab's confidence in the spies led her to hang a red cord in her window, believing it would protect her family. Similarly, Christians put their confidence in Jesus as their Redeemer, allowing that trust to guide their daily choices and actions.

Rahab's obedience also points to a deeper truth: there is only one way to salvation. She could have marked her home in countless ways, but she and her family could only be spared by following the spies' directions. This reflects the salvation in Christ, as in Acts 4:12 says: "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"

Rahab's life reminds us that God's grace transforms and redeems even the most unlikely people. Her inclusion in the lineage of Jesus demonstrates the effect of faith in action as well as the role of God's plan and the assurance that there is nobody who is not eligible to be loved by God.<sup>5,6</sup>

# RAHAB

Day 9

Tuesday, 4 March

## Key References:

*Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25*

## Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we thank You for Rahab's inspiring life. May the example of her faith inspire us to trust You completely, irrespective of life circumstances, past or present. Grant us the courage like Rahab to take chances and sacrifice everything to follow You. We thank You for Your endless mercy, love and power to change even the most unlikely of hearts. May her story live on as an inspiration to all who seek to walk in Your ways. In Your precious name, we pray. Amen.*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> 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
	Catholicum	James 1:1-12
	Acts	Acts 4:13-22
	Psalm	Ps 41:1
	Gospel	Mark 10:17-27

Deborah is one of most remarkable figures in the Bible, celebrated for her leadership, wisdom and courage. A prophetess and judge of Israel, she played a dual role as a spiritual guide and political leader during a time of oppression.

Unlike many of the male judges in the Bible, Deborah led the Israelites in unwavering faith, offering divine guidance and strategic direction in both spiritual and military matters. Her close relationship with God saw her remain steadfast and composed, even in challenging circumstances.

*“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”* (Judges 4:4-5)

Deborah was highly regarded for her wisdom and fairness. As a trusted leader the Israelites sought her guidance to resolve disputes and deliver just judgments.

She is also described as the wife of Lapidoth. In the Old Testament, women were denoted as belonging to the household of a man, the implications here may have been two fold. It is important to note Deborah's husband played no role in her judgeship, which is directly identified in the Bible. It is also important to understand that whilst Deborah was a highly respected prophetess, she was also a wife and woman rooted in a household of faith. She demonstrated courage and tactical brilliance. God instructed her to lead Israel's army against Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's forces.

Her faith in God, and bravery, are evident throughout her story. She summoned Barak, the military leader, and told him that God commanded him to lead an army to confront Sisera. Barak hesitated to proceed without Deborah by his side, showing the deep trust he had in her leadership. Deborah agreed to accompany him but foretold that the victory would not be credited to Barak, but to a woman. Her faith and confidence in God's promises motivated the troops.

Deborah's leadership in organising and executing the strategy was key to securing Israel's victory over their oppressors. After the victory, Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise, known as the Song of Deborah, which is one of the oldest poetic works in the Bible. The song recounts God's deliverance of Israel and praises those who fought valiantly, including Jael, the woman who ultimately killed Sisera. *“So may all Your enemies perish, Lord! But may all who love You be like the sun when it rises in its strength.”*

Deborah's leadership brought unity to Israel's tribes, particularly as she led them against a common enemy. Her leadership was based on a deep relationship with God. It was instrumental in bringing justice to Israel, and peace after the battle, which marked the end of 20 years of oppression under King Jabin.

Deborah's story exemplifies the qualities of a great leader: wisdom, courage, faith, and the ability to inspire and unify people. She led not just by commanding armies, but by serving as a judge, prophet, and a motherly figure for the nation of Israel. Her story illustrates that leadership is not confined to gender but is about the qualities of character, faith, and reliance on God's guidance.

# DEBORAH

Day 10

Wednesday, 5 March

## Key References:

Judges 4:4-7; Judges 4:8-9; Judges 5:2-7; 5:24-27; Judges 5:31

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, I thank You for the role of women in history and Your kingdom. Just as the prophetess and judge Deborah, I pray that I am filled with godly wisdom so I can make wise decisions and offer counsel and advice to others. When others are too tired and discouraged, may I inspire them to possess what You have promised. Lord, help me to walk in obedience and help me to have the confidence to follow Your instructions despite fear and the size of the obstacle. I pray that I will demonstrate courage in the face of adversity, and not be afraid to stand against the enemy. Whenever challenges arise, I pray that, like Deborah, I will have the confidence to trust that You have already given me the victory, and all that remains is for me to step forward and claim it. Lord, help me to discern when it is the right time for battle and when to take action. I pray that my life will be filled with wisdom, revelation, and discernment, and that I will also be a worshiping warrior. May I sing like Deborah “Lord, let all Your enemies perish! But let all who love You be like the sun when it rises in its strength.” Amen.*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophesies:	Ex 2:11-20; Is 5:17-25;	
	Mal 1:6-3:6	
Mats:	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

Naomi is the mother-in-law of Ruth and a central figure in the Book of Ruth, representing faith, resilience, and loyalty amid personal loss and hardship.

# NAOMI

Day 11

Thursday, 6 March

Naomi's story begins in Bethlehem during a time of famine (Ruth 1:1). Alongside her husband Elimelech and their two sons, she relocates to Moab, seeking sustenance. Tragedy strikes when Elimelech dies, followed by the deaths of her sons, Mahlon and Chilion, after they marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah (Ruth 1:3-5). This leaves Naomi bereft and embittered, leading her to describe herself as "Mara," meaning bitter (Ruth 1:20).

Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem upon hearing that the Lord had provided food for His people. She urges her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab and rebuild their lives. While Orpah heeds her advice, Ruth clings to Naomi, demonstrating unwavering loyalty with the heartfelt declaration: "*For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge.*" (Ruth 1:16-17).

Back in Bethlehem, Naomi's wisdom and guidance shine as she mentors Ruth, encouraging her to glean in the fields of Boaz, a relative of Elimelech. Naomi orchestrates Ruth's approach to Boaz, who ultimately becomes Ruth's husband (after the death of Mahlon) and redeemer, ensuring security and lineage (Ruth 3:1-4:13). Their union leads to the birth of Obed, who becomes the grandfather of King David, linking Naomi to the Messianic lineage (Ruth 4:17).

Naomi's story profoundly touches the heart, showcasing how God can bring redemption and joy from sorrow. Her enduring faith amidst loss, coupled with her ability to nurture and guide Ruth, underscores her remarkable character.

Naomi's story encourages us to trust God, value meaningful relationships, and seek to guide others with love and wisdom. Even when life seems bitter, her journey reminds us that God's plans often lead to unexpected joy and blessings.<sup>7</sup>

## Key References:

Ruth 1-4

## Prayer:

*Lord, thank You for Naomi's story, a testament to Your faithfulness and redemptive power. Help us to trust in You, even in our most challenging seasons, and to be sources of encouragement to those around us. May we, like Naomi, find renewed hope and joy in Your promises. Amen.*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> 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



Ruth is a Moabite woman who demonstrated exceptional loyalty and faithfulness to her mother-in-law Naomi, choosing to accompany her back to Israel and adopting Naomi's people and God as her own.

The death of all the men in the Elimelech family left Naomi (Ruth's mother-in-law), Ruth, and Orpah (Ruth's sister-in-law) widowed, helpless and without support. In the Old Testament, women were not allowed to own property. Therefore as widowed women they had no means by which to support themselves. Naomi would journey back to Judah and advised her daughters-in-law to return to their fathers' households until they married again; since both were childless and young enough to bear sons. *"The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband"* (Ruth 1:9).

Ruth, as a Moabite, grew to know and love her mother-in-law and chose to go with Naomi to care for her following the death of her husband. A journey alone in the Old Testament days did not promise a widow safety. Even then, Ruth made the decision to travel to a foreign land with her elderly mother-in-law who had nothing to offer, forsaking the advantages of returning to her father's house.

We are not told that Naomi tried to talk Ruth into believing in God. Or that she tried to send Ruth home because she was a non-believer. But with loving kindness Naomi shared advice, counselled Ruth, and led Ruth through her own love of God, to the Lord. Ruth acknowledges this when she says,

*"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me"* (Ruth 1:16-17).

Naomi in turn looked after Ruth's future by positioning her into a marriage to a righteous and upstanding relative, Boaz, to regain Elimelech's land according to the Law. Naomi also ensured perpetuation of Ruth's faith in God; thus ensuring an everlastingly growing faith. A mother-in-law's wisdom was a powerful influence in leading and committing Ruth to God for the remainder of her earthly life. Boaz and Ruth were blessed with a son, Obed, who would become the father of Jesse and grandfather to David the King and Prophet.

Some thousand years later, the Lord Jesus Christ would be born a descendant of Obed. Ruth, the poor young widow who cared for her mother-in-law and listened to her advice would be blessed even more by the Lord as she would be one among only four women listed in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew, chapter one. A woman who gleaned the barley fields of Judah would come to be written among the lineage of kings.

May we learn from her inspiring example. <sup>8</sup>

### Key References:

*Ruth 1-4; Matthew 1:5*

### Prayer:

*Our Heavenly Father, we are blessed to be raised by a generation of wise and faithful mothers and fathers. Give us the strength and grace to care for them in their days of need as they cared for us and raised us to grow closer to You in faithfulness. Open our eyes to the example they led with, to follow in their footsteps that ultimately led us closer to You.*

### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."*  
(Luke 1:46)

She was orphaned from both her parents at the age of eight and bore the life of being an orphan. She lived in the temple as a child and endured a life of solitude there. When she left the temple to live under the care of a carpenter, she endured a life of poverty. When she gave birth to her only Son, there was no place for them in the house, so she laid him in a manger (Luke 1:7). She endured that as well... She bore the responsibility at a young age and endured the great glory that surrounded her without being troubled by thoughts of grandeur.

It was not possible for her to declare that she had given birth while remaining a virgin, so she remained silent and endured that.

She endured the arduous journey to Egypt, both going and returning. She endured being expelled from one city to another there because the idols fell before Christ (Isaiah 19:1). She endured alienation and poverty. She endured the *"sword piercing her soul"* (Luke 2:35) because of the persecutions and insults her Son faced, and finally, the pain and shame of the crucifixion...

The Virgin Mary did not merely endure passively; she lived in joy with the Lord. As she said in her song of praise, *"My soul rejoices in God my Savior"* (Luke 1:47). (Pope Shenouda III)

St Mary endured because she was not alone. She was sustained by the Spring that nourished her. No challenge she faced without Him. Her unceasing life of prayer and meditation on the Holy Scriptures allowed her to draw upon His divine strength. Each day she was renewed as she chose to sit at His feet, be filled with His Word, and trust in His promises. He was the truth – her life and world.

*"Let your door stand open to receive Him, unlock your soul to him, offer him a welcome in your mind, and then you will see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the joy of grace."* (St Ambrose)

She kept the door of her heart open, ready to receive Him; therefore she could endure because she placed Him as her shield and strength. He became the fortress sheltering her, the shield protecting her, and the Father loving her, *"For He who is mighty has done great things for me"* (Luke 1:49). She chose to open the door, pray incessantly, have faith immeasurably and love wholeheartedly regardless of the circumstances. In return, the Lord blessed her abundantly, filling her life with His Spirit and granting her the strength to face even the harshest trials - not merely to endure them, but to rise above them with resilience and a joy that overflowed from His comforting embrace.<sup>9,10</sup>

### Key References:

Luke 1:26-56; Luke 2:15-20; Luke 2:34-35; Matthew 2:13-23; John 19:25-27

### Prayer:

*Dear Lord, St Mary faced her challenges with unwavering trust and faith in You. She opened her heart to receive You, and in turn, You granted her the strength that she needed to endure. Her focus remained on the joy of being with You, rather than the circumstances surrounding her. Grant me the grace to open my heart fully to You, so I may face life's trials with You by my side. With You, I have all I need to endure and overcome the raging waters that pursue me.*

### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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
	Catholicon	James 1:22-27
	Acts	Acts 22:17-30
	Psalm	Ps 118:19-20
	Gospel	Matt 7:13-21

**SUNDAY OF THE  
TEMPTATION ON THE  
MOUNT**

Day 14

Sunday, 9 March

Commemoration of St Pope Kyrillos  
VI's departure

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.

**2<sup>nd</sup> 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

Hannah is the mother of the prophet Samuel, known for her deep faith and fervent prayers, particularly her heartfelt plea to God for a child during her years of barrenness.

# HANNAH

Day 15

Monday, 10 March

*“No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.” (1 Samuel 2:2)*

Hannah's personal relationship with the Lord reveals many practical lessons we can learn from. God 'closed her womb' and let her "year by year" suffer bitterness (1 Samuel 1: 6-7); and when the fullness of time came, He expounded to her what surpassed all that she could ask for or imagine; she bore 'Samuel,' the great among the prophets. Hannah prayed personally, silently and with deep faith. She reveals to us a deep level of communion with God which involved guidance we can take today.

The church is our home base - our powerful resting place. Hannah took refuge in the house of the Lord. She 'arose' and went near the 'doorpost of the tabernacle' (1 Samuel 1:9) to pray to the Lord. She teaches us how to take refuge in the church and reminds us of her power.

Be transparent with God. Hannah prayed to Him and 'wept in anguish'. She was transparent by revealing her emotions, thoughts and desires. Her transparency highlights the tender heart of God; that feels our emotions and understands our thoughts. Like Hannah, every tear our eyes shed is never forgotten; rather God will always wipe them away (Isaiah 25:8 & Revelation 21:4). Hannah's transparency with God prepared her to hear His voice. Likewise, when we transparently empty ourselves before the Bridegroom we prepare to receive Him.

Believe before you ask. Hannah's vow is a product of her confidence, belief and courage in God. Sometimes we spend significant amounts of time venting to God, begging Him, pouring out our complaints and requests. This can become a routine undertaken without belief. We need to ask ourselves if we really believe that He can and if this is His will. This is the command of our Bridegroom 'Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them' (Mark 11:24).

Offer Him the most precious gifts. Hannah offered her heart's deepest desire, her firstborn, the son of her tears before she even received him. The depth of her love for the Lord meant that He was more precious than any desire or person. This is underlined in her prayer of rejoicing (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Ultimately, Hannah reminds us that there is no one like our God. No help as powerful, or present; no heart as tender, kind or encompassing. God allowed her soul to become saturated with bitterness, to cry to Him from the depths of her heart, in order to grant her the son He had prepared beforehand for her, and all His people; whose life and ministry would become an integral part of the Bible. Similarly, God allows us, His pious Church to taste bitterness, partake of the affliction of the cross, to experience His death to grant us inner joy, and incomprehensible peace. *“If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together”* (Romans 8: 17).<sup>11</sup>

## Key References:

1 Samuel 1:1-2:11; 2:19-21

## Prayer:

*May God grant us to taste the depth of His love which is always reaching for us, labouring for us and surrounding us; the same infinite love that has known us and loved us before the foundation of the world. Father, we ask You to grant us the realisation of our barrenness and to entreat Your mercy with belief and faithfulness. Grant us the blessing to bear Your beautiful children as Hannah bore Samuel; to hold them and support them with Your hands that are upon us. Grant us to be steadfast in faith all the days of our life.*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> 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
	Catholican	1 Pet 1:3-12
	Acts	Acts 17:10-14
	Psalm	Ps 32:5
	Gospel	Luke 11:33-36

Abigail was the wife of Nabal, a wealthy but foolish and arrogant man, who after his death later wed David. Abigail is known for her wisdom, courage, and strong character. She stands out as a peacemaker and a woman of faith, playing a critical role in preventing unnecessary bloodshed.

David, living in the wilderness, requested provisions from Nabal, whom he had protected. Nabal insulted him, rejected the request and mocked his reputation. Furious, David vowed revenge. Abigail, Nabal's wife, gathered supplies and approached David, urging him to trust God and avoid vengeance. David praised her wisdom, recognising she saved him from sin. After Nabal died, David took Abigail as his wife.

Abigail's wisdom prevented violence, showing the importance of peace. Her faith and humility contrasted Nabal's foolishness. Her story highlights God's justice as David refrained from revenge, while Nabal faced divine judgment for his actions. Abigail's actions reflect a legacy highlighting the power and value of wisdom, faith, and courage. She exemplifies peacemaking, humility, and bold truth-telling, teaching us to act with discernment, trust in God, and promote righteousness.

Her legacy offers valuable lessons for us in today's society:

Abigail's calm, wise approach in a tense situation teaches us how to resolve conflicts effectively. In family, workplace, or community disputes, we can de-escalate tensions by responding with understanding.

Her peacemaking role urges us to seek reconciliation. In a divided world, we can foster unity by listening and understanding differing perspectives.

She courageously spoke truth to David, reminding him of his responsibilities. We should address difficult issues with respect and humility, positively influencing others.

Abigail's humility shows that true leadership comes from serving others. True influence stems from valuing service over status.

She also trusted God to deliver justice. Faith and patience guide us to act with integrity, even in challenging times.

Abigail also used her influence to prevent harm. We all have the power to use our influence for positive change.

By applying these principles in our life, we can strengthen relationships, foster peace, and positively impact our communities.

Let us ask ourselves this Holy Great Fast: How can I emulate Abigail's wisdom and humility in my own relationships and conflicts? Am I using my words and actions to bring peace and reconciliation, as Abigail did, or am I contributing to division? Do I trust God to bring justice and handle difficult circumstances in my life, or do I take matters into my own hands?

# ABIGAIL

Day 16

Tuesday, 11 March

## Key References:

1 Samuel 25:2-42

## Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, during this season of the Holy Great Fast, we seek wisdom, humility, and peace. May Abigail's courage inspire us to act with grace and faith. Teach us to be peacemakers in our families and communities, speaking truth with love and trusting in Your justice. Help us serve others selflessly and stand for righteousness, relying on Your guidance. Remind us of the power of faith and trust in Your plan for our lives. Mold us into instruments of Your peace, reflecting Your love and mercy. Through Christ, we pray. Amen.*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 2:1-15;	Is 10:12-20;
	Josh 7:1-26	
Mats:	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

The widow of Zarephath was a woman that the prophet Elijah met on his journeys. Her husband had passed away, leaving her to care for her only son. She was a foreigner, not an Israelite, and during this time, resources were scarce and she had not enough food to sustain her and her son.

At the time when we meet her, she is using up the last of her resources to prepare a final meal for her and her son to share before they succumb to starvation.

*“As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.”* (1 Kings 17:12)

The widow of Zarephath stared death in the face. It haunted her as she prepared the final meal for her and her son. They were desperate and despairing with no hope for life after this last supper. She did not deny the reality of her situation, nor did she wallow in her hopeless state. Even in the most dire of situations, she humbly did what she could to make her tiny family as comfortable as possible as they met their end.

But even more remarkable, in the face of death, just about to meet her end, this humble widow chose service over self-preservation.

As she is preparing her final meal, Elijah the prophet arrives and asks for a meal for himself. The widow does not know this man—he is no-one to her, and although he promises that his God will provide, she has no reason to believe him. For all she knows, making this meal for him will bring about the demise of her and her only child so much faster.

And yet she does. The little she has, she gives. At rock bottom, she chose to look outwards rather than inwards—to give rather than to hoard for herself. She chose to welcome the stranger who needed her rather than to shut him out for this private and sorrowful moment.

And God did provide.

*“She and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.”* (1 Kings 17:15-16)

This just goes to show that even when we have so little, to give is always better than to hold on to what we have—for nothing we have is ever really our own. And when we give it back to God through His children in need, He can work in us in ways we never could have imagined.

# THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

Day 17      Wednesday, 12 March

## Key References:

1 Kings 17:8-24; Luke 4:25-26

## Prayer:

*In our most desperate of times, when all hope feels lost, we want to hold on to what we have. Lord, please help us to live with open hands and open hearts to give even when we do not have enough and trust that Your infinite love will provide for us in our times of need.*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

The Shunammite woman is a figure of extraordinary faith, generosity, and resilience. She offered the prophet Elisha shelter, and in return, God blessed her with a son despite her previous barrenness.

Her story begins with a simple act of kindness: she and her husband build a room for the prophet Elisha to stay in whenever he visits. Touched by her generosity, Elisha promises her a son, fulfilling her hidden longing despite her advanced age.

When her son suddenly falls ill and dies, she demonstrates remarkable faith by seeking out Elisha, who miraculously restores the boy to life. Later, during a famine, she obeys Elisha's warning to leave her land. Upon returning seven years later to find her property taken, she boldly approaches the king to reclaim what is rightfully hers.

Generosity lies at the heart of the Shunammite woman's story. She didn't only offer Elisha a meal or a bed; she made room in her life for God's work to thrive. This act of generosity proves that opening our hearts and homes to others can often lead to blessings we never anticipated. Her example shows that generosity, especially when done out of reverence for God, can create opportunities for His power to move in our lives.

The Shunammite woman also teaches us the value of persistent faith. When her son died, she didn't surrender to despair. Instead, she acted, seeking out Elisha with unshaken confidence that God could still intervene. Her rejection of defeat is the definition of faith that does not falter in the wake of disaster; it presses on, trusting in God's promises even when circumstances appear bleak. Her boldness and trust in God's power is an example of how faith is not just a feeling but a decisive action to believe in His ability to work miracles.

Obedience also plays a central role in her story. When Elisha warned her to leave her home during the famine, she didn't hesitate. Even though it meant leaving behind her land and her livelihood, her people, she trusted God's guidance. With a heart full of courage, she surrenders her plans to God's calling, trusting Him through the unknown. Knowing that obedience often requires faith in the unseen, it is through these acts of trust that God's provision becomes clear.

Courage is another defining characteristic of the Shunammite woman. When she returns from exile, she refuses to let injustice stop her. Instead, she appeals to the king directly, and in a moment of divine timing, the king hears her story and restores her land. Her courage, coupled with trust in God, led to justice and restoration. She didn't shy away from advocating for herself, and God met her in that moment of need, ensuring her complete restoration.

God is a restorer. Whether it was her son's miraculous resurrection or the restoration of her land, the story highlights God's ability to redeem what seems lost. He is not limited by our circumstances or impossibilities. Her experience assures us that no situation is beyond God's reach. He sees our struggles and works in His time to bring restoration and hope.

### Key References:

2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6

### Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the Shunammite woman's example of faith, generosity, and courage. Help us to live with the same open-hearted trust, knowing that You see every need and work all things for good. Teach us to be bold in our faith, persistent in seeking You, and to be obedient to Your guidance. Lord, help us remember that You are the God who restores what is lost and brings life where there seems to be none. Thank You for Your faithfulness, which never wavers, and for Your power to redeem us even in the hardest circumstances. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

### 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	
Matsins:	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

Esther was a young Jewish girl living in Persia, following the time of the Jewish exile into Babylon. Through her courage and faith she saved her people from annihilation.

There are similarities between Esther and the rise of Joseph to the court of Pharaoh, or the rise of Daniel in the court of Babylon. Esther rose to the court of the pagan king on the basis of her physical beauty. This, however, was only part of God's plan and He selected her because of her faithfulness and courage.

From the Christian perspective Esther may be one of the lesser well-known characters in the Bible. Certainly, less celebrated than others, who have been heralded as "saviours" of the Jewish nation, such as Moses or Joseph. Yet, Esther played a significant role in preventing the mass genocide of the Jews of her day; and this is commemorated in the Jewish annual feast of Purim.

Just like Moses or Joseph, Esther was especially selected by God for the task at hand, with the moulding of her character starting from a very young age. She was orphaned as a child, but we do not get a sense that this was a source of resentment against God; nor did she pray with a sense of entitlement. Her response to this calamity was to develop a closer relationship of trust in God, rather than becoming embittered and angry, as might often be the case. Later in life, when seized with the agony of death, Esther "fled to the Lord for refuge".

We know that Esther was selected to be a part of the court on the basis of her physical beauty. Can physical beauty be used by God for the glory of His name? Too often we overlook the fact that the body is also one of the gifts bestowed upon an individual by God. We may even harbour an inherent bias towards an attractive person, presuming them to be vain, conceited or even shallow. We may need to question this attitude, however, and consider whether our views are based on presumptions or reality. This is perhaps one of the lessons that we can learn from the life of Esther. God made her beautiful and He created her with this beauty for such a time as that.

Esther was not selected by God on the basis of physical beauty alone however. She was selected because she knew and feared God and she made the choice to live a righteous life.

She was placed in the king's court, and she was highly favoured, giving her every reason to be conceited or proud. Fundamentally, however, she understood that it was not of her own merit that she had acquired this position and she tried to abide in God's law, not partaking of the pagan way of life "not eating of their food or drinking their wine".

Whilst Esther did not part the Red Sea or interpret complex dreams, she did, in contravention to the laws of the land, present herself before the king to plead for her people. In doing so, she exhibited tremendous courage and a disregard for her own life, as the penalty could have been easily "death". Instead, she fasted and she prayed. Her focus was not on herself, for her own situation was secure. She however hearkened to the pleas of her people and she trusted in God, and allowed Him to use her in whatever way He saw fit. According to God's plan the king acquiesced and her people were saved from extermination.<sup>12</sup>

# ESTHER

Day 19

Friday, 14 March

## Key References:

Esther 1-10

## Prayer:

*You saw your assets as a gift from God and allowed Him to use you in whatever way He saw fit. You were esteemed as a queen, but were not proud. You lived in the court of the pagans but remained faithful to God's law. You were courageous and selfless, to the point of risk to life. Thank you for being such a wonderful model to us. We ask Our Lord Jesus Christ to help us to grow to be a little more like you, Queen Esther.*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> 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



Modest, chaste and filled with beauties of holiness, so that my mouth is inadequate to speak a word concerning her. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 18).

The maiden was modest and full of all holiness; her appearance was grave and full of all humility. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 56). (St Jacob of Serug)

Everywhere is modesty the companion of her singular virtues in the Virgin. This, without which virginity cannot exist, must be the inseparable companion of virginity. And so Mary did not go even to the temple without the guardianship of her modesty. This is the likeness of virginity. For Mary was such that her example alone is a lesson for all. If, then, the author displeases us not, let us make trial of the production, that whoever desires its reward for herself may imitate the pattern. How many kinds of virtues shine forth in one Virgin! The secret of modesty, the banner of faith, the service of devotion, the Virgin within the house, the companion for the ministry, the mother at the temple. (St Ambrose, Concerning Virginity, 2.2 in: St Paul Brotherhood Press, Treasures of the Fathers of the Church: Sayings of the Fathers on the Theotokos (Los Angeles, 2015), 139). (St Ambrose of Milan)

St Mary, in addition to her sublime purity, was thoroughly modest in everything. She was modest in appearance, wearing holy attire, clothed in a long dress. Her ears were modest, her eyes bashful, her words few and when uttered they were gentle. St Peter in his first epistle says to us, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4). We are called to follow in the footsteps of St Mary to walk before the Lord in modesty and simplicity, and in being content with living humbly.

### Prayer:

*He made it with glory, as commanded by the Lord, according to the patterns, shown unto him. Therein Aaron, and his sons served, the example of the highest, in the shadow of the heavenly ones. They likened it to you, O Virgin Mary, the true tabernacle, wherein dwelt God. Wherefore we, magnify you befittingly, with prophetic, hymnology. For they spoke of you, with great honor, O holy city, of the great King. We entreat and pray, that we may win mercy, through your intercessions, with the Lover of Mankind. (The Sunday Theotokia - Second Part).*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.'

### 3<sup>rd</sup> 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
	Catholican:	James 3:1-12
	Acts:	24:1-23
	Psalm:	79:8-9
	Gospel:	Luke 15:11-32

The woman described in Proverbs 31 is not a specific woman. She is a description of the qualities important to a virtuous wife—qualities that we all, men and women, can learn from.

*“Strength and honour are her clothing;  
She shall rejoice in time to come.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
And on her tongue is the law of kindness.”* (Proverbs 31:25-26)

In modern society, many strange standards are expected of women and wives. Women are expected to be both beautiful but not vain, clever but not too clever, fun but mouldable to the desires of her man. Some more traditional cultures expect their wives to stay home and make no meaningful decisions for her household.

The woman described in Proverbs 31 tells a different story. The character we see here is not a shy, dainty girl with no will of her own, who wishes only to satisfy the desires of her husband and leaves all the big decisions to him.

The Proverbs 31 woman is characterised by strength, courage and kindness. No mention is made of her physical appearance because that is not where virtue lies—her value is not in her beauty but in her inherent worth as daughter of God.

*“She makes linen garments and sells them,  
And supplies sashes for the merchants.”* (Proverbs 31:24)

She works, she sells and makes money, she uses her own mind to make important decisions and leads her family through her kindness and strength. And even then, her cares are not only for her family.

*‘She extends her hand to the poor,  
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.’* (Proverbs 31:20)

She cares for the lowly of her community. She shows kindness to those who need help.

*“She makes tapestry for herself;  
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.”* (Proverbs 31:22)

And she also cares for herself, enjoying her craft and ensuring her needs, too, are met.

Every woman is different. Every wife is different. Every person is different. We are not all meant to look exactly like the Proverbs 31 woman. But the point is that all of us—male or female, married or not—are called to live with courage, strength, and compassion. We are to care for our families, our communities, and ourselves. And we do all of this by trusting in the wisdom of God to lead us through our lives for His glory.

# THE WOMAN OF PROVERBS 31

Day 22

Monday, 17 March

Commemoration of Pope Shenouda  
III, 117th Pope of Alexandria's  
departure

**Key References:**  
*Proverbs 31:10-31*

## **Prayer:**

*Too often, we let the world decide who we should be and how we should act. Lord, please help us to always act with integrity, to be true to unique individuality You have given us while also enacting Your will through courage, strength and compassion. Help us to care for our loved ones, our communities, and ourselves in ways that are pleasing to You, and to always trust and rely on Your wisdom and guidance.*

## **4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast**

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Gen 27:1-41; Is 14:24-32; Job 16:1-17:16	
Mats:	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

Susanna is a virtuous woman featured in the Book of Daniel, known for her beauty and piety, who faced false accusations of adultery from two elders who sought to exploit her.

# SUSANNA

Day 23

Tuesday, 18 March

*"I am in distress on every side. For if I do this, it is death for me; but if I do not do it, I will not escape your hands. It is better for me not to escape your hands than to sin in the sight of God."* (Daniel 13: 22-23)

Susanna was an example of Joseph the righteous, who in the like manner resisted Potiphar wife's temptation and saw it better to please God rather than men. Her sole reason to refute their demands was she did not want to sin in the sight of God, and by raising her voice pleading for help, took an active approach to protecting her purity, just as Joseph did by fleeing.

She speaks of sin as death. For just as in the case of one who commits adultery, the adultery means death, so also every sin which results in death is to be equated with death. And we believe we die as often as we sin unto death. And therefore, on the other hand we rise again and are made alive just as often as we perform deeds which are worthy of life.

She scorned what she heard because she feared the One she did not see, yet by whose divine eyes she was conspicuous. For just as she did not see God, so she was not unseen by God. God saw what she was building, inspected His work, dwelled in His temple; He was there, He Himself answered those lying in wait. For if the giver of chastity had deserted her, chastity would have perished. Therefore, she said: "I am in distress on every side." But she awaited Him who would save her from faint-heartedness and the storm of false witnesses, like evil winds.

However, in those winds and waves, chastity did not suffer shipwreck because the Lord was at the helm. It was cried out, they came, they proceeded, the case reached judgment. The Lord was present to her in prayer, He heard her whom He knew. He did not abandon her to die, as He helped her not to commit adultery. The Lord stirred up the Holy Spirit in Daniel, still young in age, but strong in piety. <sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

## Key References:

Daniel 13 (Second Canonical Book)

## Prayer:

*Lord, help me to see sin for what it truly is—death—and give me the strength to flee from it. May I live a life of purity, faithfulness, long-suffering, righteousness, and reliance on You. Guide me in all my ways, and keep my heart focused on Your will.*

## 4<sup>th</sup> 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

Judith is a heroic figure featured in the Second Canonical Book of Judith, known for her bravery and cunning as she saved the Israelites from the Assyrian general Holofernes by infiltrating his camp and ultimately beheading him.

The Book of Judith is an apocryphal narrative that tells the story of a Jewish widow named Judith, who heroically saves her city, Bethulia, from the Assyrian siege led by General Holofernes. Set in a time following the Babylonian Exile, the story presents Judith as an embodiment of courage, piety, and cleverness, illustrating how a single, seemingly powerless individual can change the course of history through faith and action.

The Assyrian king, Nebuchadnezzar, sends his general Holofernes to conquer Israel and force its submission to his rule. With a vast and overwhelming army, Holofernes successfully defeats neighbouring nations and encircles the city of Bethulia, where the Israelites, in desperate fear, turn to prayer, fasting, and preparation for surrender. As the people prepare to give in to the Assyrians in five days if God does not intervene, Judith, a devout widow, challenges their lack of faith and resolves to take matters and puts it into God's hands.

Judith, described as both beautiful and wealthy, uses her physical appearance and charm as tools in a strategic plan to assassinate Holofernes. Despite her outward vulnerability as a widow with no children, Judith is depicted as spiritually strong and courageous. She leaves her city, traveling to the Assyrian camp with her maidservant, and presents herself as a defector, claiming that she has come to offer valuable information about Israel's weaknesses. Through the grace of God, Judith's charm and intelligence win over Holofernes, who becomes enamored with her.

Over several days, Judith earns Holofernes' trust, and he allows her to come and go from his camp under the pretense of praying for guidance. After a lavish banquet where Holofernes becomes heavily intoxicated, Judith sees her opportunity. She beheads the general and takes his head in a food bag, returning to her city to rally the Israelites. The Assyrians, upon discovering their leader's death, flee in panic, and the Israelites pursue them, achieving a decisive victory.

The story concludes with a celebration in Bethulia and Jerusalem, where Judith is honoured for her bravery. She remains a widow, despite many offers of marriage, and dies peacefully at an old age. Her story emphasises faithfulness in God and courage in the face of overwhelming odds to defeat the enemy.

The Book of Judith offers two main lessons: first, the power of individual action in the face of adversity. Judith, a woman with no formal power, proves that even the most marginalised can make a difference with courage and faith. Second, the importance of trusting in God and maintaining hope, no matter how dire the circumstances.

Judith's story is a testament to the belief that God can use anyone, even the most unlikely heroes, to accomplish great things for His people. Faith can move mountains.

# JUDITH

Day 24      Wednesday, 19 March  
Feast of the Cross

**Key References:**  
*Judith (Second Canonical Book)*

**Prayer:**  
*Lord, the enemy is constantly attacking and never giving up. Help me like Judith to have perseverance, faith, and the belief that, with Your help, victory is possible even against seemingly insurmountable odds.*

## 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
	Catholican	1 Pet 2:11-25
	Acts	Acts 10:34-43
	Psalm	Ps 65:1-2
	Gospel	John 10:22-38

Elizabeth is the wife of Zechariah and mother of John the Baptist, who, despite her old age and barrenness, conceived through God's miraculous intervention.

In the face of years of unanswered prayer, Elizabeth remained steadfast in her commitment and faithfulness to God, she was “*righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Luke 1:6-7).

Elizabeth was a righteous woman, harbouring no intentional sin, and yet, she lived into the years “past childbearing” without receiving the blessing for which she earnestly prayed, a child. God's timing was not punitive, nor was it a dismissal of her wish. It was, in fact, an indication that she had been chosen for a greater blessing than she had even asked. God had a vital role for her in His plan of redemption, but it had to wait until the fullness of time to appear.

God entrusted Elizabeth, to be the mother of St John the Baptist who would prepare the way for the Messiah. He also used her as a guide to St Mary, after she learned of God's calling for her life; “*Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord*” (Luke 1:45).

Elizabeth's story teaches us that when we don't receive the answer to our prayers in timings of our desires, it is a call to trust in God's perfect plan—one that unfolds in His perfect time. God has His reasons, and as we grow in faith and trust, He will let us know what is important for us to know in time. Elizabeth's patient faithfulness was rewarded as her son was described by Jesus; “*among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist*” (Matthew 11:11). Elizabeth's life reminds us God's plans are always greater than our expectations, and His timing is always perfect. Her faith and patience were not in vain, but part of a divine story that prepared the way for the Lord Himself.

A life of faith and prayer opens our hearts to perceive God's presence in ways beyond eyes and ears. “*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.*” (Luke 1:42-45)

Elizabeth felt her child “leap” in her womb and was the first to attest that Mary was carrying a holy child. By this time, Elizabeth was six months pregnant, and the Gospel of St Luke tells us she was “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth was chosen to speak with the wisdom she demonstrated. Her spiritual life was grounded on a deep connection with God that allowed her to rejoice in the Lord's coming before the world could see Him.

Elizabeth testifies to us that faithfulness does not go unseen nor unrewarded by God. In all her years of waiting, of wondering, of serving, and worshipping in faith, Elizabeth may have wondered if God saw or noticed her. Even when it seemed impossible, the message from God to her was clear; “*For with God nothing will be impossible*” (Luke 1:37). Indeed, He was watching all along. She was in His view. We are reminded that we are seen by God. Though the waiting may be long, God will fulfill His purpose for each of us. Such that, we can pray with David in full confidence, “*The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the works of Your hands*” (Psalm 138:8).

Just as Elizabeth was in His view, so are we.<sup>16</sup>

# ELIZABETH

Day 25

Thursday, 20 March

## Key References:

Luke 1:5-80

## Prayer:

*Lord, help me trust in Your perfect timing, even when I don't understand. Like Elizabeth, may I rest in the knowledge that You have a greater plan for me, one that's unfolding in Your time. Help me to remain faithful to You. Teach me to grow in faith and patience, trusting that You will reveal what I need to know when the moment is right.*

## 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:	1 Cor 12:31-14:1	
	Catholicism	James 4:11-5:3
	Acts	Acts 4:19-31
	Psalm	Ps 48:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 18:35-43

# ANNA, THE PROPHETESS

Day 26

Friday, 21 March

Commemoration of  
Fr Pishoy Kamel's departure

## Key References:

Luke 2:36-38

Anna was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was widowed after seven years of marriage and devoted her entire life to serving God in the temple. She holds the distinct honour of being the only woman explicitly called a prophetess in the New Testament.

*“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem..” (Luke 2:36-38)*

Anna exemplifies a life of dedication and spiritual discernment. Despite experiencing deep sorrow as a widow at a young age, in a time and culture when a woman's status as a widow often meant being isolated and vulnerable, she transformed her loss into a life of extraordinary purpose. Rather than allowing grief to define her, she chose to dedicate herself entirely to God's service.

Anna's response to her sorrow wasn't passive. She demonstrates how personal tragedy can become a gateway to deeper spiritual connection. In the temple, she found not just consolation but a divine calling through daily prayer, fasting, and seeking God. And through her dedication, she discovered something far greater than consolation, she found a divine purpose. She developed such spiritual sensitivity that she immediately recognised the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah when He was brought to the temple.

It's incredible to think about all those years of praying and fasting, waiting and watching, and then, in that seemingly ordinary moment, she knew God's promise had been fulfilled.

Romans 5:3-4 *“...we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”* Anna's life illustrates this so perfectly. She shows us that faith refined by trials doesn't just endure, it grows stronger and becomes a source of hope, both for ourselves and for others.

But her story also challenges us. How do we respond to life's hardships? Do we let our circumstances harden us, or do we, like Anna, use them as stepping stones to deeper communion with God? Her life challenges us to consider how we respond to life's difficulties. Her example shows that no circumstance, age, status, or life situation is too limiting to have a meaningful impact in God's kingdom.

## Prayer:

*Lord, like Anna, help us to remain faithful in both joy and sorrow. Teach us to transform our challenges into opportunities to grow closer to You. Grant us the spiritual discernment to recognise Your presence in our daily lives, and the courage to share that hope with those around us. May we, like Anna, find our purpose in a constant communion with You, regardless of our circumstances, or what we face in life. Amen.*

## 4<sup>th</sup> 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

**Key References:**

Luke 1:26-56

*“For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant” (Luke 1:48)*

*“O true lowliness, which has borne God to men, has given life to mortals, made new heavens and a pure earth, opened the gates of Paradise, and set free the souls of men. The lowliness of Mary was made the heavenly ladder, by which God descended upon earth. For what does regarded mean; For many seem in my sight to be lowly, but their lowliness is not regarded by the Lord. For if they were truly lowly, their spirit would rejoice not in the world, but in God.” (St Augustine)*

Born into this world with the human cloak, St Mary’s life, unbeknownst to her, would serve as the vital link between heaven and earth – death and life. It was her humility, as St Augustine reveals, that was the ladder by which our Lord descended to earth to save His beloved children. For He could not save humanity through a life that only promoted the self. God required a vessel emptied of worldly desires and purified so as to receive the heavenly.

Our mother began life guided by the saints who bore her. From a tender age, she entered the temple willingly, denying herself of a childhood filled with the caress of human parents, games that filled children with laughter and a freedom to follow her own desires. Through this act of self-denial, St Mary became lowly. She turned away from the worldly so that she may be embraced by the heavenly; for she did not have the comfort of a mother but lived in the presence of a heavenly Father who adored her and was surrounded by angels who cared for her. There was nothing on this earth that could bring such joy as dwelling amongst the unseen for she did not rejoice in the world, *“but in God”*.

And her lowliness continued throughout her life. Even as the Mother of God, she did not seek the glory of man but instead hastened to Elizabeth to serve her without a word of complaint, seeking any opportunity to serve rather than be served. With a lowly heart, her soul deeply bowed before her heavenly Father, who revealed Himself to her through her acts of service.

As Christ hid Himself in St Mary’s womb, she, through her humility, hid herself in Him. She barely spoke, she sought no attention, she only desired to be where her Beloved was. Surrendering herself completely, she made room for Him not only in her womb but in her heart, and our Lord, knowing her ultimate sacrifice, filled this sanctified vessel with Himself. Though she walked on the plains of the earth, her heart dwelt in the heavens. Her humility truly became the ladder by which heaven touched earth.

And so I ask myself. Where is your heart and what fills it? Are you so pre-occupied with yourself and the world that you are unable to see or hear Christ knocking on the door of your heart? *“Christ comes to this door and knocks; He knocks at these gates. Open to Him; He wants to enter, to find His bride waiting and watching.” (St Ambrose)*

Let us humble ourselves. Let us close our hearts to the distractions of the world and keep our hearts sanctified in Christ, who longs to make His dwelling within us. <sup>17, 18</sup>

**Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, You dwell in our mother St Mary because of her humility. Help me, Lord, to live a life of self-denial, forsaking worldly pleasures and humbly surrendering all to You, so that I too can have You dwell within me.*

**4<sup>th</sup> 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
	Catholicism	James 3:13-4:6
	Acts	Acts 24:24-25:12
	Psalm	Ps 61:1,5
	Gospel	Matt 21:33-46



<sup>1</sup>Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John

<sup>2</sup>(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples),

<sup>3</sup>He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. <sup>4</sup>But He needed to go through Samaria.

<sup>5</sup>So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

<sup>6</sup>Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from [His] journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

<sup>7</sup>A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

<sup>8</sup>For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>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."

<sup>11</sup>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?"

<sup>12</sup>"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?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup>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."

<sup>15</sup>The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

<sup>17</sup>The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband.'"

<sup>18</sup>"For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

<sup>19</sup>The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

<sup>20</sup>"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father."

<sup>22</sup>"You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."

<sup>23</sup>"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."

<sup>24</sup>"God [is] Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

<sup>25</sup>The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming<sup>2</sup> (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

<sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am [He]."<sup>27</sup> And at this [point] His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You see?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup>The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

<sup>29</sup>"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

<sup>30</sup>Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

<sup>31</sup>In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

<sup>32</sup>But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."<sup>33</sup> Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone bought Him [anything] to eat?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

<sup>35</sup> "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!

<sup>36</sup> "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."

<sup>37</sup> "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'"

<sup>38</sup> "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

<sup>39</sup> 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."

<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of His own word.

<sup>42</sup> 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."

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalms	Ps 28:9
	Gospel	Luke 12:22-31
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Psalms	Ps 32:11
	Gospel	Matt 22:1-14
Mass:	Pauline	Eph 6:10-24
	Catholicum	James 4:7-17
	Acts	25:13-26:1
	Psalms	Ps 105:3-5
	Gospel	John 4:1-42

# THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Day 29

Monday, 24 March

The Samaritan woman was a person who wanted to know the truth about worshipping God. At her baptism, she took the name “Photini”, which means “the enlightened one”. Photini helped to spread the ‘Good News’.

She is given one passage in all of Scripture, yet we can learn so much from this inspiring woman sometimes also referred to as “The Woman at the Well”.

We know she was ostracised by her village. However, God knew her name and every hair on her head. His beloved Son, Jesus, who respected women like no other religious leader, went out of His way to visit with her. He purposely diverted His route. John writes that Jesus “*But He needed to go through Samaria*” (John 4:4). Led by the Holy Spirit, Jesus travelled through there because he wanted to let a desperate woman know how much He loved her.

Jesus is never too tired to love you. Even though Jesus felt tired and thirsty as a Man, He kept His divine appointment with this woman. It was the hottest part of the day when they met. The other women would have gathered water early in the morning, before the heat of the sun beat down on them, before the tasks of the day wearied them. But not this woman. She was not welcome to join the others, so she gathered her water later. What a divine coincidence to be at the well just as the Son of God joined her!

Jesus wants to spend time with you – on purpose. This was no mere chit-chat between two strangers. Jesus invited the woman to dialogue with Him, to discuss theology and to argue honestly with Him. When He indicated who He was, she replied with a hint of sarcasm, “*Are You greater than our father Jacob...?*”

Back and forth they talked. Jesus offered her Himself, the living Water. She offered Him her authentic self. He declared himself to be the Messiah then listened as she dared Him to prove it. He gently told her the truth about her relationships, offering no condemnation, only simple facts, to a woman who probably believed lies about herself.

Jesus appreciates honesty and invites you to bring your authentic self to Him. Jesus offered her an eternal relationship. Within those few moments at the well, Jesus transformed this woman’s life. In St John’s account, we, too, find steps for living out the transformed life. Hear the truth, receive the Truth-giver, then obey. The Samaritan woman then became a missionary. She invited her village, those who had cast her aside, to come meet the Messiah.

Sometimes, we who profess to be closest to Christ forget we, too, are sinners saved by His amazing grace. Even as villagers hurried to meet Jesus, it was the disciples who continued to condemn the new convert, “*Why are you talking with her?*” (John 4:27).

Jesus affirmed this woman’s heart by speaking the truth to her and spending time with her. Perhaps this leads us to the best lesson: Spending time with our Saviour changes us. Speaking honestly to the King of kings allows us to find our true identities. Receiving His truth fills us with the eternal river that forever quenches our spiritual thirst.

## Key References:

*John 4:1-42*

## Prayer:

*Lord, may we have such an encounter with You today and every day that many people in our village will believe because of our testimony. Do Your work so mightily in our lives that we may be transformed and can't help but share with others what You have done for us.*

## 5<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Psalm	-
	Gospel	-
Prophecies:	Prov 3:5-18; Is 37:33-38:6;	
	Job 22:1-30	
Matsins:	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

The Sinful Woman is a figure of profound repentance and love, who anointed Christ's feet with expensive ointment, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair during a Pharisee's banquet.

# THE SINFUL WOMAN

Day 30

Tuesday, 25 March

"The sinful woman rejoiced when she heard that He was in Simon's house, reclining and being entertained. Her thoughts gathered, like the sea, and her love seethed like the waves. She saw how the Sea of Mercy had contained Himself in a single place, so she decided to go and drown all her wickedness in His waves. She bound her heart, because it had done wrong, with chains of tears and suffering; she began to weep herself." – (St Ephrem the Syrian)

The sinful woman embodies boldness, continual repentance and perfect love. While having full knowledge of her sinfulness, she does not allow shame to cause her despair. She realises that a change can only take place by approaching Christ. Acknowledging her need for healing and knowing that the Healer was present, she boldly approaches Christ, overcoming any obstacle in her way.

At His feet she falls to her knees in a posture of penitence, and discloses everything that was in her heart, without an audible word. St Ephrem highlights that she said nothing to Christ. For she did not dare, because she knew that as the guardian of thoughts, He had no need for words. For what can she say to the One who knows all things? With her tears she confesses the multitude of her sins, her perverse thoughts, her polluted ideas, her profane actions, and she exposed her lawless conversations. Her pure repentance was demonstrated through an act of love and devotion.

She goes directly to Christ, not using any intermediaries. St Ephrem uses this encounter as a fitting example of why God became man. The incarnation enables those like the sinful woman to approach God. She places her hope in the One who is compassionate and has the power to heal. Repentance combines both human action and divine grace; first she is drawn to divine beauty, then she recognises her sinfulness; on account of her boldness and willingness to draw close to Christ, she has a personal and intimate encounter with Christ and receives the forgiveness of her sins. She was forgiven because she recognised that she had nothing with which to repay - God seeks nothing from us other than repentance.

Then He said to the woman, "*Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.*" (Luke 7:50)

By these words, the woman and her future were transformed, her past was wiped out and she was granted God's own peace – a peace that would sustain her through the rest of her days on earth and into eternity.

St Ephrem says: "Listen and take heart, my beloved, how God is compassionate: He forgave the sinful woman her sins and supported her in her grief".<sup>19</sup>

## Key References:

Luke 7:36-50

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, You know everything about us – even our very thoughts. Grant us understanding to truly know ourselves and our sinfulness, and the courage to approach You with boldness, in repentance, knowing You are our only hope. Allow us to have a personal and intimate encounter with You, just like the sinful woman, so that we too may hear "your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you, go in peace".*

## 5<sup>th</sup> 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	
Mats:	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

Both Joanna and Susanna were among many women of means who followed Christ as He went around the cities preaching the Kingdom of God to the people. They ministered to Christ's daily needs from their own money. Both women had been healed by Christ from both evil spirits and various ailments.

*"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance." (Luke 8:1-3)*

Joanna was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward making her a well-known and respected public figure due to her husband's high position. As for Susanna the Bible does not reveal anything about her other than being healed by Christ and providing financially for Him and His ministry.

St Luke mentions the highest number of women by name in his gospel and shows us the important role they played in Christ's ministry. During the time of Christ, good women of faith were expected to marry young, run their households, produce and raise their children. The women were at the mercy of first their father and then their husband. As a gentile, St Luke focused on the role of women such as Joanna and Susanna in the ministry of Christ. He emphasised Christ's mercy and compassion on women and how His act of redemption gave them strength and determination once they accepted Christ. They were able to break through the social barriers imposed on them but more importantly, Christ accepted their service in His ministry. In today's world where there is much discussion on 'Women's rights', it's important to understand Christ loves everyone, men and women, accepts anyone into His ministry if they are willing. Christ never devalued women and appreciated them in various roles during His time on earth.

Joanna and Susanna both received grace from Christ in the form of healing – Joanna a woman with high social status and Susanna who may not have been as public as Joanna but was well known enough to have her name mentioned. Christ doesn't discriminate on whom He bestows His grace – rich or poor, public figure or someone unknown, sinner or saint – Christ heals all and saves all.

As the recipients of Christ's grace, Joanna and Susanna became His devout followers. They were no longer afraid and publicly declared their faith by following Christ openly and ministering financially to His needs. It's also believed they were part of the group of women at the cross and the tomb of Christ. When we receive Christ, we are emboldened to stand up and declare our faith through service and charitable deeds. We do this by any means God grants us – financially, through our talents and with our time. God granted these ladies the privilege of serving Him directly and sharing in the joy of spreading the gospel in the early church because they were no longer afraid of the society around them.<sup>20</sup>

# JOANNA AND SUSANNA

Day 31 Wednesday, 26 March

Commemoration of  
Fr Mikhail Ibrahim's departure

## Key References:

Luke 8:1-3; 24:10

## Prayer:

*Lord, please grant that we live a life of generosity, that we hunger to serve You withholding nothing that we possess. Grant us the strength and courage to serve You with conviction and faith. Amen.*

## 5<sup>th</sup> 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 1:1-2:12	
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

Mary, Martha and their brother, Lazarus, lived together in Bethany, a village just two miles from Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. All three were intimate friends of Jesus.

*“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”* (Luke 10:41-42)

Jesus responded to [Martha] with infinite tenderness, He didn't answer in anger, but with care for her soul and an ear for her frustration. He identified her state - “worried and troubled” and gently showed her a better path.

Take notice of the unique way He begins His response: *“Martha, Martha,”* He says to her, and with those words, she becomes one of only three people in the New Testament whom Jesus addresses in the emphatic doubled form of her name. He says, *“Simon, Simon,”* when He tells Peter He has prayed for him to be strengthened in his time of trial so that he, Peter, could in turn strengthen the other disciples; and He calls out, *“Saul, Saul,”* to Paul on the road to Damascus, when He confronts the Apostle to the Gentiles and turns his life around.

When one looks at His *“Martha, Martha”* in this context, His words sound less like those of an exasperated parent and more like a serious call to discipleship. Was He asking Martha to reset her priorities in the same life-changing way He transformed Paul's thinking? Martha's call to discipleship happened in her home. Her “road to Damascus” happened to run straight through her kitchen.

Of the three siblings, it was clearly Martha who was tied up in acts of service. It appears she ran the household and took the lead as a woman of action. For example, when she heard Jesus had come to join the family in their grief, she immediately went to meet Him. Mary waited, but not Martha.

She seized the opportunity to speak with Jesus, saying the following in John 11, verses 21 to 27: *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”* Jesus said to her, *“Your brother will rise again.”*

Martha said to Him, *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”* Jesus said to her, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* She said to Him, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*

This is an unreserved confession of faith. It echoes Simon Peter's confession when he says to Jesus, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). But here, in John's Gospel, those words come out of Martha's mouth, a woman, a woman who, as far as we know, has lived her whole discipleship in her home in her quiet little village of Bethany, a woman who has not traveled all over Judea and Galilee with Jesus and His disciples and who has not been witness (as Peter has) to the many miracles and healings and remarkable events of, Jesus's ministry. Still, she knows enough of Jesus to know the truth.<sup>21</sup>

# MARTHA

Day 32

Thursday, 27 March

## Key References:

*Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-12:3*

## Prayer:

*Lord, sometimes we are so busy serving You, we don't take the time to enjoy You, listen to You and learn from You. Help us Lord to sit at Your feet, especially on our busiest of days and respond to Your call to discipleship.*

## 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	
Mats:	Psalm	Ps 86:14
	Gospel	Luke 9:37-43
Mass:	Pauline	1 Cor 10:14-11:1
	Catholican	1 Pet 1:2-8
	Acts	Acts 21:5-14
	Psalm	Ps 86:17
	Gospel	Luke 13:10-17

# MARY OF BETHANY

Day 33

Friday, 28 March

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. She sat at Jesus' feet, anointed them with costly oil of spikenard and wiped His feet with her hair.

We see Mary three different times in the Bible, beginning with the incident in the home of her sister, Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was so distressed "distracted with much serving", and frustrated that her sister wasn't helping. Jesus' response gives us our first insight into Mary of Bethany.

Jesus commended her for "choosing the better," meaning Mary's desire to be near Him and hear from Him was far more beneficial. Jesus said choosing the better thing, learning of the Lord, would not be taken away from Mary.

By "choosing the better," Jesus meant those whose priorities in life are Christ, the knowledge of Him, and nearness to Him have chosen what will last through eternity, such as the "gold, silver and costly stones" referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:11-12...Mary's silence, which we will see again in another incident, indicates a lack of concern for herself, especially for defending herself. When we focus on Christ, He becomes our greatest passion and our tendency to self-absorption dims and fades.

The second incident in which Mary and Martha appear occurs in John 11 with the raising of their brother, Lazarus, from the dead. When Mary hears that Jesus has come and is calling for her, she immediately leaves the assembly of mourners in her home and rushes to meet Jesus. So great is her love for Him and her desire to please and obey Him that she leaves those who had come to comfort her to place herself in the arms of the greatest Comforter mankind has ever known. Jesus sees her great sorrow and weeps along with her, even though He knows her sadness is going to be short-lived and that her brother will be restored to her momentarily. In the same way, when we sorrow and grieve, our greatest comfort is found in Jesus, whose compassion is boundless. When we place our hand in the nail-scarred hand, we find comfort, peace and security, and we learn the truth of Psalm 30:5b: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

The third and final time we see Mary of Bethany is just days before Christ's crucifixion (John 12:1-8). A meal had been prepared, Martha was again serving while the resurrected Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus and the disciples. At some point, Mary poured a pint of very expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. In spite of criticism from Judas Iscariot about the waste of the costly substance, Mary said nothing. Rather, Mary allowed Jesus to defend her, which He does, saying that she has kept this perfume for His burial and has done a beautiful act of service to Him.

We see in Mary a settled conviction and confidence in her Lord, so much so that she is not compelled to defend herself in the face of criticism. How often do we jump at the chance to justify ourselves in the eyes of others who criticize and mock us, particularly where our faith is concerned? But if we, like Mary, make sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him our priority, we will have her depth of understanding, her passion for Christ, and her complete faith in His plan for our lives.<sup>22</sup>

## Key References:

Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-12:11

## Prayer:

*Lord, we thank You for giving us the example of Mary of Bethany who showed us to trust in You especially in moments where we are helpless, and everything seems to be at a dead end. We pray that we are focused on You and Your preachings so that we may be enlightened on what steps to take and to be confident in whatever outcome You have in store for us. Help us to give our very best of time, attention and resources in our service to You and the church. Amen.*

## 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

Maiden, full of beauty hidden in her and around her, and pure of heart that she might see the mysteries which had come to pass in her. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 25).

Mary appeared to us as a sealed letter, in which were hidden the mysteries of the Son and his depth. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 38).

No one but the Father perceived the mystery of the Son, and the Father sent it to the daughter of David by means of Gabriel. Only Mary learned that hidden mystery, but she did not reveal to anyone what was spoken to her by the angel. Yet when she had come into Elizabeth, though she was silent, she heard the mystery revealed and spoken in the house of the priest. For the priests had been aware of the hidden mystery of the Father that the beloved Son would be honoured among the Levites. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 58). (St Jacob of Serug)

Our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ transcends the mechanical or transactional whereby we seek Him for what He can do for us or give us. The highest form of love is when we seek the Lord for Himself alone. This is exemplified in St Mary who carried Her Son not only in her womb and in her arms, but also in her heart where she sought to know Him. If we, like St Mary, keep Christ in our hearts, make them pure for Him, and ponder Him day and night through prayer and contemplation, He will grant us the knowledge of Himself and reveal His hidden mysteries to us.

**Prayer:**

*You are truly exalted, more than the rod, of Aaron, O full of grace. What is the rod, but Mary, for it is the symbol, of her virginity. She conceived and gave birth, without a man, to the Son of the Highest, the Word Himself. Through her prayers, and intercessions, O Lord open unto us, the gates of the Church. I entreat You, O Mother of God, keep the gates of the church, open to the faithful. Let us ask her, to intercede for us, before her Beloved, that He may forgive us. (The Sunday Theotokia - Eighth Part).*

**5<sup>th</sup> 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."

### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

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



Salome is the wife of Zebedee and mother of apostles James and John. She is recognised for her presence at significant events in the life of Christ, including His birth, crucifixion and resurrection.

Salome's grandfather was a righteous man called Matthan, from the tribe of Levi and house of Aaron. Matthan had three daughters. The first, Mary, the mother of Salome, the midwife who cared for the Virgin St Mary during her virginal birth. The second daughter, Sofia, the mother of Elizabeth, the mother of St John the Baptist. The youngest daughter, Anna, the mother of St Mary, the mother of Jesus. Therefore, Salome, Elizabeth and St Mary were cousins.

*"...The first was called Mary, the mother of Salome, the midwife who cared for the Virgin Mary during her virginal birth"* (Synaxarium, Meshir 16). Salome, a figure of profound faith and devotion, provides a rich example of devotion in service. Her heritage was one of holy kinship; as a relative of St Mary, she was present at the birth of Jesus. She also became a witness to His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Salome was married to Zebedee, a fisherman. She was the mother of James and John who were in a boat mending fishing nets when the Lord called them to "follow Him", and they became two of His chosen twelve disciples. This holy lineage reflects Salome's deep commitment to nurturing faith within her family. When Jesus called her sons to follow Him, Zebedee supported their immediate obedience, demonstrating trust in God's providence over worldly concerns.

*"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your Kingdom'"* (Matthew 20:20-21).

Salome herself exemplified unwavering devotion as she followed Christ during His ministry. Her love for the Lord and her sons led her to request that James and John be granted places of honour in the Kingdom of Heaven. Though this request might appear ambitious, it arose from her overflowing love and her deep desire to see her sons serve Christ fully and faithfully.

Salome's courage and loyalty were evident at the cross, where she stood with other women, witnessing the Lord's suffering and death. Her steadfastness continued as she approached the tomb after the Sabbath to anoint Christ's body. For her faith and devotion, she was among the first to witness His Resurrection.

*"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen"* (Mark 16:1-2).

Through Salome's life, we learn the value of constancy in faith, service, and love. She shows us that true discipleship requires humility, sacrifice, and trust in God's plan. Her story inspires us to remain devoted to Christ in both joyous and challenging times, seeking His grace and fulfilling our spiritual duties with courage and perseverance.<sup>23</sup>

# SALOME

Day 36

Monday, 31 March

## Key References:

Matthew 20:20-24 & 27:56; Mark 15:40-41 & 16:1-2

## Prayer:

*O Lord Jesus Christ, who called Salome to witness Your miraculous birth, Your life-giving ministry, and Your triumphant resurrection, we thank You for her steadfast example of faith and service. Grant us the courage to follow her example, to nurture faith in our families, and to remain devoted to You in all circumstances. Help us, O Lord, to trust in Your divine providence, as Salome and Zebedee did when they permitted their sons to follow You. May we too be willing to let go of worldly attachments and place our hope in You. Strengthen us to stand firm in times of trial, as Salome stood at the foot of Your cross, and grant us the grace to seek You with the same love and devotion that brought her to Your empty tomb.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> Monday of the Holy Great Fast

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

The widow with the two coins, often referred to as the widow's mite, is unnamed and is referred to in only a few lines in the Holy Scriptures, through the words which Christ spoke about her.

The woman with the two coins teaches us the spirit of generosity and of giving. She gave what would be considered a small amount of money, especially when compared to the lavish amounts of money others were donating. In this moving scene, we see the heart of Jesus and the love and purity in which He looks upon His children.

Jesus says to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:43). Christ uses this woman's actions to teach the disciples about giving. He highlights that the little which this woman gave is greater than any larger amounts given by others, because she sacrificed all that she had. She did this with deep faith.

Jerusalem was busy that day with many people coming from all over the world to celebrate the Passover. This widow wanted to celebrate the Passover too, but she decided that it was better to give all that she had. She thought what she did was unnoticed, but Christ had seen her and used her actions as an example for others to learn from. Our Lord notices the small things we do which are done in faith, with a pure heart and love for God. This is how He wants us to go about our days, in honesty and faithfulness. Christ contrasted her actions with those of the rich people who put money in the treasury box, those who put the money in for show and to be noticed and praised by others.

The worth of what the widow gave is not the monetary value, but rather it is the amount of love she had as she gave the offering. It is not what we do in the open for all to see and praise that matters, but what we do in the hidden, which only God sees, that matters; "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Matthew 6:2-4).

We learn true faith and sacrificial giving from this woman. If we are faithful in our giving, the Lord will always bless us and provide for us many times more than what we have given.<sup>24, 25, 26</sup>

# THE WIDOW WITH THE TWO COINS

Day 37

Tuesday, 1 April

## Key References:

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, make me to have a heart which gives generously without expecting anything in return, like this poor widow did. Keep me from wanting to do things just to get praise from people and forget that the praise from my Heavenly Father is far greater than that of the praise of others.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> 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	
Matsins:	Psalm	Ps 35:13
	Gospel	Luke 4:22-30
	Pauline	1 Cor 14:18-28
Mass:	Catholicon	James 1:22-2:1
	Acts	Acts 19:11-20
	Psalm	Ps 42:1
	Gospel	Luke 9:18-22

# THE WOMAN WITH THE FLOW OF BLOOD

Day 38

Wednesday, 2 April

The lady with the 12-year blood flow had spent all her money on doctors who not only could not help her, but had made her worse. She had hit rock bottom and saw only one more option – touch the hem of the healing Christ and she would be healed as well.

Her story is mentioned by all three of the synoptic gospels. Her faith was commended by Christ who spoke to her with kindness and told her to go in peace because her faith made her well.

*“And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, ‘If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.’ But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And the woman was made well from that hour.” (Matthew 9:20-22)*

In the Jewish custom, a bleeding woman was considered unclean and anything or anyone she came into contact with was rendered unclean too. Therefore, the woman was ostricised from society and could not be seen openly without causing anger and fear with people running away from her. And on a physical level, a 12-year haemorrhage with none of our modern medicine, amenities or sanitation meant this woman lived a sickly life – she would have suffered many ailments. She lived a lonely life.

She took a huge leap of faith and her plan was to go in quickly and anonymously, touch the hem and leave. But Christ had other ideas – this woman showed more courage and faith than many more prominent characters and He wanted to show others her great deed. Christ wanted everyone to know this lonely sick lady personified true faith. By doing this Christ helped the woman to overcome her fear and hold her head up high – when we have Christ in our lives we have nothing to fear and we walk in confidence of His love and protection. CHRIST ALWAYS HAS OUR BACKS!

By showing this woman’s faith, Christ shows us what we need to strive for. She became the example we should learn from and emulate. Her faith was full of courage and conviction – if only I can touch His hem I will be made well. We need the same faith in our daily struggles. Don’t let fear get in the way of receiving Christ’s healing.

St Ambrose teaches, ‘When we find ourselves in some grave danger we must not lose courage but firmly trust in God, for where there is the greatest danger, there is also the greatest help from Him who wants to be called our ‘Help’ in times of peace and in times of tribulation.’ In your tribulations hold onto Christ in complete faith and He will show you unimaginable solutions.

True faith is humble, recognises the awesomeness of God, is determined, doesn’t waiver when faced with difficulty, requires boldness and is a light of encouragement for others. True faith is rewarded with the Power of Christ Himself, power to strengthen us to continue on the journey.

## Key References:

Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34;  
Luke 8:43-48

## Prayer:

*Lord, grant me the courage to remain unwavering in my faith in You, to take the leap even if I can’t see the whole path. Please Lord forgive my weakness and help my unbelief. Amen.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> 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	
Mats:	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

The Canaanite woman is an example of true faith and humility. As Christ enters the region of Tyre and Sidon, she follows Him and persists in pleading with Him, to heal her demon-possessed daughter.

She comes to Christ and acknowledges that He is Lord, then makes her request, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed"* (Matthew 15:22). Although the Canaanite woman was of Greek origin, Syro-Phoenician by birth (Mark 7:26), she had heard about Christ and had faith that He could heal her daughter, *"She came and fell at His feet"* (Mark 7:25).

Initially, Christ ignores her, and the disciples ask Him to send her away, *"But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us'"* (Matthew 15:23). Christ tries to dismiss her, but she persists and reasons with Him that, even though she is not a Jew, she can still believe and be helped. Christ responds in an unusual way. He says, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 15:24). Yet she persists saying, *"Lord, help me!"* (Matthew 15:25). Christ responds, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"* (Matthew 15:26).

Her reply, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"* (Matthew 15:27), demonstrates to everyone how great her faith is. Christ, recognising her faith, heals her daughter saying, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire"* (Matthew 15:28).

Let us learn from this woman and ask God, through the Holy Spirit, to give us the faith, persistence and determination to keep on praying, even when we seem to be getting no response. Even when we are exhausted, let us remember, *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God"* (Romans 8:26-27). Let us give thanks that even when we feel like we can't go on praying any longer, the Holy Spirit keeps interceding on our behalf.

The story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter inspires us to keep on bringing the needs of our children to Christ, to persist even when we don't seem to be getting an answer, to never give up but to know that if she could change the mind of God then so can we! <sup>27, 28, 29</sup>

# THE CANAANITE WOMAN

Day 39

Thursday, 3 April

## Key References:

Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, help me to have the faith of this Canaanite woman. I want to see You as the answer to all my problems. So much so that I will not worry about what people are thinking. When I focus on You as Saviour and Lord, everything else falls into its rightful place, underneath Your Lordship. This Canaanite woman knew that and that was why she was so bold. Thank You for making a way for all people to know You and be with You in Your Kingdom. Amen.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> 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
	Catholicum	Jude 1:19-25
	Acts	Acts 27:16-20
	Psalm	Ps 9:13-14
	Gospel	John 6:47-71

\* Second Canonical Book

Mary Magdalene was born in Magdala by the Lake of Gennesaret. Our Lord Jesus Christ cast seven demons out of her.

Mary Magdalene was the first person Christ appeared to after His resurrection. What an honour! She first met Jesus at the shore of the Lake of Galilee near Capernaum. Her journey with Christ began there when He delivered her from seven demons, “*Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons*” (Luke 8:2) and from that moment, she went from darkness to light and spent the rest of her life following our Lord.

Like all the disciples, Mary was sad and heavy hearted when she saw Jesus hanging on the cross. She watched as the soldiers drove nails into Jesus’ hands and feet, a spear into His side and a crown of thorns on His head. Then she heard His words, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). Mary stayed at the Cross of Jesus until His body was brought down and buried. The body of Jesus had been brought down from the cross on Friday afternoon and hurriedly buried because the next day was the Sabbath. She and the other women rose early Sunday morning to finish placing the spices on the body of Jesus.

The women had their concerns though. How would they roll away the stone which was placed in front of the tomb and how would they get past the soldiers who were guarding the tomb? As they arrived at the tomb, they could not believe their eyes, the stone had been rolled away, “*On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb*” (John 20:1). Immediately she turned and ran back to the disciples, “*Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him’*” (John 20:2).

Following this, Mary returned to the tomb and found two angels sitting there, one at the head and the other at the feet (John 20:12). At the time she was weeping and they inquired as to what was causing her such distress. She answered them, “*Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him*” (John 20:13).

Immediately after this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; however, she believed He was the gardener. Jesus said to her, “*Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?*” (John 20:15). She answered Him saying, “*Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away*” (John 20:15). Then Jesus said to her, “*Mary!*” (John 20:16). This is what disclosed His true identity to her. Isn’t it beautiful that what revealed Jesus to Mary was that He called her by name? She then went and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus and what He revealed to her.

We learn from Mary’s unwavering faith that she immediately believed it was Jesus in front of her. In particular we learn about the importance of repentance and how transformation through God’s mercy and love is attainable for all of us. We learn from Mary’s devotion and faith, through her presence at the cross and tomb, as well as her being the one to announce Jesus’ resurrection to everyone.

# MARY MAGDALENE

Day 40

Friday, 4 April

## Key References:

Matthew 27:56,61; 28:1; Mark 15:40,47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-18

## Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we ask that You grant us a repentant heart like Mary Magdalene and remind us that You are always waiting for us to return to You. Lord, we ask that You allow us to grow in the Spirit and have unshakeable faith throughout our journey here on earth no matter what trials and tribulations we must work through. Amen.

## 6<sup>th</sup> 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

*"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."* (Luke 1:38)

St Mary obeyed - not out of compulsion but from an intimate relationship with God. She loved and trusted her Bridegroom with all her heart, soul, strength and mind that disobeying Him and fracturing their relationship was not an option since she had no doubt in His faithfulness and wisdom. He was her treasure, and she adorned herself with His beauty. Through her deep love for her Saviour, her heart and soul were bowed in constant communion with Him. She was always conversing, praising, loving and waiting – ready to act upon His requests...any request...at any cost. She simply was His and her resolute goal to remain in His presence - on earth and for eternity - was nonnegotiable.

Whilst Eve's disobedience caused the fall of mankind, the second Eve's (St Mary) obedience resulted in salvation. *"Mary the virgin is found obedient, saying 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word.' In contrast Eve was disobedient. For she did not obey when she was still a virgin...Having become disobedient she was made the cause of death, both to herself and the entire human race. Correspondingly, Mary, who was also a virgin (although betrothed to a man), by yielding obedience, became the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race."* (St Irenaeus)

Her obedience, however, was the cross she carried that led to suffering but resulted in the most incredible joy for humanity and indeed herself. "St Mary heard the message from the angel; and although she was totally baffled by the seeming impossibility and absurdity of it, yet because the message was coming from God, she answered obediently, *"Let it be to me according to your word" without thinking of the hazardous, vague, undefined consequences. Was it not because of her obedience perhaps we would still be hopelessly in bondage with no future nor destiny. St Mary's obedience came like fresh water bringing satisfaction to the human race. As cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country (Proverbs 25:25). The outcome of obedience is always a hundredfold blessing. St Mary is revered by all generations.*" (Bishop Youssef)

Regardless of the challenges set before her, St Mary was steadfast. She chose to embrace faith over fear. Having complete trust in Him, doubts could not enter her soul for she was relentless in *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"* 2 Corinthians 10:5. By surrendering everything on earth, even the tiniest of thoughts, she gained everything in heaven—not just for herself, but for the salvation of the entire human race.

Although her submission turned her earthly life upside down, her plea to each of us is *"Whatever He says to you, do it."* John 2:5. For those who live in obedience to God, dwell in His presence, and carry an unshakable assurance – one not rooted in this world.

They walk in truth, and live in freedom, *"knowing that all things work together for good to those who love God"* (Romans 8:28).<sup>33, 34</sup>

### Key References:

*Luke 1:26-56; John 2:1-10*

### Prayer:

*Dear Lord, it is not always easy to say yes to Your will. Yet, I know You are the Author of life and everything rests safely in Your hands when I entrust it to You. Help me dear Lord, to follow the example of our beloved Mother, St Mary, in her unwavering obedience to You. Strengthen me to overcome doubts and grant me the grace to say "yes" to You always, trusting in Your infinite love and wisdom.*

### 6<sup>th</sup> 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
	Catholican	1 Pet 1:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:9-26
	Psalm	Ps 32:1-2
	Gospel	Mark 10:46-52

# SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

Day 42

Sunday, 6 April

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. [continued]  
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. [continued]  
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."

## 6<sup>th</sup> 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
	Catholican	1 John 5:13-21
	Acts	Acts 27:27-37
	Psalm	Ps 143:7,1
	Gospel	John 9:1-41

Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, is a beloved disciple in Joppa known for her acts of charity and good works, particularly her care for the poor and the making of garments for the needy.

As a widow who was raised from the dead by the Apostle Peter, it is very clear that Tabitha was a beloved member of the Christian community in Joppa. Her life displays a wonderful example of what it means to submit our talents to the Lord. As God gives, we in turn must give. God will always multiply the blessings that come from our selfless giving:

*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

When Tabitha became ill and died, it left her community devastated *“All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them”* (Acts 9:39).

Due to the many hearts that were touched through her charitable deeds, news was brought to Peter, who, when he arrived, prayed and spoke the words *“Tabitha, arise!”* and she was raised back to life. What an incredible display of God’s glory! Her worthiness of being brought back to life allowed many to believe in God: *“Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord”* (Acts 9:41-42).

We too can share our gifts and be a constant service to the Lord and others by:

- wisely using everything we have to serve each other;
- being an example of agape love in our community;
- being alert wherever there is a need whether spiritual or practical;
- submitting to God’s will and not our own.

Let us all prepare to die to the self and resurrect in showing God’s glory in all that we do. Through obedience and submission to the Lord’s will and not our own, we can also be renewed and become an offering to each other through our gifts (talents), time, and any means we have been given.

# TABITHA

Day 43

Monday, 7 April

Feast of the Annunciation

## Key References:

Acts 9:36-43

## Prayer:

*Lord, we live in a world of focusing on ourselves and our own troubles. Help us to reframe our mindset to focus on the beauty of the gift Christ gave us, the giving of Himself, and help us to do the same for everyone around us.*

## 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
	Catholicism	1 John 1:1-2:6
	Acts	Acts 7:23-34
	Psalm	Ps 45:10-11
	Gospel	Luke 1:26-38



Lydia, a wealthy and influential businesswoman from Thyatira, was the first recorded convert to Christianity in Europe.

# LYDIA

Day 44

Tuesday, 8 April

Lydia was a seller of purple goods, a luxury item associated with wealth and nobility, indicating her affluence. She encountered Paul by the riverside in Philippi and was baptised, along with her entire household.

Her story is a testament to the transformative power of faith and the importance of generosity and service in the early Church. Her openness to God's call, demonstrated by her immediate response to the Gospel, led to her baptism along with her entire household. Following this, she offered her home as a meeting place for the early church in Philippi, showing remarkable generosity and a heart for ministry.

*"And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' And she constrained us."* (Acts 16:15)

As such, she became the first woman to offer hospitality to an apostle in that region. St John Chrysostom says the following of her: *"She constrained us,"* then look at her wisdom, how she importunes the Apostles, how full of humility her words are, how full of wisdom."

She attended to the apostle Paul in her home, while serving the Lord with virtuous works and good acts.

*"So they went out of the prison, and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed."* (Acts 16:40)

Her hospitality and support of Paul and his companions highlight the vital role of service in advancing God's kingdom and underscore her foundational role in the growth of the Church in Philippi.

As a woman of faith, influence, and wealth, Lydia played a critical role in the establishment of the Philippian church and is honoured as an early leader in the Christian community. Lydia's life inspires us to be open to God's call, to support ministry through hospitality, and to recognise the significance of laypeople in building and sustaining the Church.

## Key References:

Acts 16:6-40

## Prayer:

*Lord, You have blessed me with so much. Help me to always be open to Your call and to give from what You have given to me with generosity and openness of heart, in service to others.*

## 7<sup>th</sup> 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

Priscilla was a prominent early Christian mentioned in the New Testament, known for her partnership with her husband Aquila in ministry and their support of the Apostle Paul.

*"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles."* (Romans 16:3-4)

Priscilla was a Jewish woman, originally from Rome. At the time, the Roman Emperor Claudius exiled all Jews from Rome and so they moved to Corinth. It was there that they met St Paul who they welcomed into their home and preached Christianity to them. When St Paul decided to visit Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila followed him and preached Jesus Christ fervently. They became preachers of the Gospel in a pagan city where the pagan priests were fiercely opposed to the Christian faith.

There are three key features that we can learn from Priscilla;

1. True service and mission in Jesus Christ
2. Partnership in marriage
3. Love and kindness, in particular her hospitable nature

On numerous occasions, Priscilla and Aquila would preach to pagans who would become enraged with their teachings, hence St Paul's comment that they "risked their own necks". However, this did not deter them and made them more fervent in their service and preaching of Jesus Christ. While in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos. Apollos was teaching people about the Lord as had been taught to him by John the Baptist and was speaking boldly at the synagogue they attended. Priscilla and Aquila invited Apollos to their home and taught him more about Jesus Christ, particularly about the difference between John the Baptist's baptism of repentance and the baptism of Jesus Christ, where one also receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 18:25-26).

All the references of Priscilla in the Bible, mention her together with her husband Aquila, never separately. This shows that in everything they did they were true partners - in life, in work and particularly in their service of preaching Jesus Christ. Many times, St Paul mentions Priscilla first which denotes her great role and her strong support to her husband in their preaching ministry.

St John Chrysostom says of Priscilla and Aquila that they were the perfect example of the true Christian marriage. It is so important that Jesus Christ is at the centre of our marriages. Even in death they were together, and they are thought to have been martyred at similar times.

According to the tradition, Aquila and Priscilla hosted St Paul in their home for 16 months and became his important collaborators. There are various references where Priscilla and Aquila's home is mentioned as an early church where gatherings of ministry were held.<sup>35, 36, 37</sup>

## PRISCILLA

Day 45

Wednesday, 9 April

### Key References:

Acts 18-19; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

### Prayer:

*Lord, help us to serve You and preach to others about You with the fervency of Priscilla. Help all those in marriage be true partners in life and particularly in the service of Your Holy Name. Amen.*

### 7<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

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

Lois and Eunice were the grandmother and mother of St Timothy the Bishop of Ephesus. They raised him from an early age to know and live by the Scriptures.

# LOIS AND EUNICE

Day 46

Thursday, 10 April

The names Lois and Eunice cannot be separated because of their sincere faith and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Although their names occur only once in the Bible, their influence was by no means insignificant. On the contrary, their names are forever written down in history because of the indelible impression they made on the Apostle Paul. Paul tells Timothy that his genuine faith was passed on to him through his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

As St Paul neared the end of his life, he was preparing Timothy to continue the work he had started. He knew that Timothy had a good foundation of the Scriptures as he had been taught by Lois and Eunice. St Paul was instructing Timothy to teach these truths which he had shared with him to others, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2).

Lois and Eunice took every opportunity to give the scriptures to Timothy and it was not just theoretical knowledge, but they showed him how the faith should be applied in practice, through their own lives. The son of Eunice and the grandson of Lois became the son of our Lord and served Him all his life. The mother and grandmother followed the words of King Solomon, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). The Scriptures Timothy had been taught by his mother and grandmother in his early years, he took with him in his life’s work.

Like the mothers of many famous Christian leaders, Lois and Eunice did not know what their efforts would produce in their children, but they gave the Holy Scriptures to their children faithfully, trusting God with the rest. They were two women who were convinced of the power of God’s word and the influence it had on human life. From this we can learn that the most important function of a Christian family is transmitting the faith. We can leave our children an inheritance, but what good is that to them if they lose their eternity, *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matthew 16:26).

Therefore, parents have a responsibility towards their children to bring them up in the way of the Lord, *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). God commanded the Israelites saying, *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Then they can stand before the Lord and say, *“Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!”* (Isaiah 8:18). <sup>38, 39, 40, 41</sup>

## Key References:

2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:14-17;  
Acts 16:1-3

## Prayer:

*Dear Lord, help us to remember the importance of the Holy Scriptures in our life and the life of those children in our care. Lord, teach us that knowing the Holy Scriptures is not just theoretical knowledge, but our faith should be applied by practicing it in our own lives.*

## 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

Phoebe was a Gentile Christian from the small port city of Cenchræa, near Corinth, who was a deaconess and helpful to both St Paul and her church.

## PHOEBE

Day 47

Friday, 11 April

St Paul has often been falsely accused of being prejudiced against women in his epistles when in fact he mentions the highest number of women by name with praise for their role in the ministry. He is vocal about the women's faith, their hard work in the church, their strength of character to name just a few attributes.

*"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchræa, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also"* (Romans 16:1-2).

One such woman is Phoebe who he commends ahead of all the other acknowledgements in the letter to the Romans. Also, it is believed he entrusted her with the task of delivering his letter to the church in Rome – 800 miles away – he wouldn't have trusted just anyone for this important and difficult journey. St Paul considered Phoebe to be trustworthy, committed and dependable.

The couple of verses which St Paul writes about Phoebe give us many lessons to take away in our service. She is referred to as 'our sister' meaning she was a beloved and valued member of the church family. In any church all the members are family members and should be loved and valued, encouraged to thrive and serve. Strive to treat everyone as a sister, brother, father, mother, son or daughter.

St Paul calls Phoebe his helper and the helper of many. We are all useful in the ministry. Serving God comes with many roles and all we have to do is open our hearts to be guided by the Lord to serve Him in any way He sees fit. St Paul doesn't specify in what way Phoebe was helpful. From this we learn that all service is helpful and acceptable if we serve with honesty and dedication.

In a world where we are encouraged to battle the opposite sex, it is interesting that in the eyes of Christ all are important and valuable – male or female, rich or poor, young or old. Phoebe was sent to Rome with an important task despite being a woman. The world likes to take away our focus from the important concept of honest and committed service with false ideas about how God views men and women. Stay focused and test every idea that comes your way.

Phoebe was a deaconess in the church – this was a role of service. Deacons were there to assist new church members, minister to the poor and sick and give their time and energy wherever they were needed. Let us all strive to become true deacons in the church and serve each other with love and commitment.

### Key References:

Romans 16:1-2

### Prayer:

*Lord, grant me the willingness to open my heart and mind to Your service and guide me where I can be useful and helpful like Phoebe. Amen.*

### 7<sup>th</sup> 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

Come, O all you women who desire virginity, emulate the example of Mary, the mother of the Lord. Consider her coarse and meager food and her sleeping on the ground. She craved for none of the things of this world. The mention of her was always in the mouths of the priests. She never washed herself in a [public] bath. She never adorned herself with face-paint, and eye-paint, and powder. She never decked herself out in brightly colored raiment, as do all [other] women who love fine clothes. She never tasted wine. She used to sit always with her face turned towards the east, for she was always awaiting the Creator of the world. She never met and talked to anyone, except her father, her mother, and her brethren. (St Cyril of Alexandria in: E.A.W. Budge, Coptic Texts: Edited with Introductions and English Translations (London, 1910, vol. 5, 717-724). (St Cyril of Alexandria)

Why should I detail her sparseness of food, her abundance of services – the one abounding beyond nature, the other almost insufficient for nature? And there were no seasons of slackness, but days of fasting, one upon the other. And if ever the desire for refreshment came, her food was generally what came to hand, taken to keep off death, not to minister to comfort. Necessity before inclination caused her to sleep, and yet when her body was sleeping her soul was awake, and often in sleep either went again through what had been read, or went on with what had been interrupted by sleep, or carried out what had been designed, or foresaw what was to be carried out. (Sayings of the Fathers on the Theotokos, 138). (St Ambrose of Milan)

Her original nature was preserved with a will for good things because there were always tokens of virginity in her body and holy things in her soul. (Hansbury, Mother of God, 24). (St Jacob of Serug)

Some people are called to physical virginity which is reached in a celibate, consecrated life, but all of us, regardless of our marital status or gender, are virgins of our Lord Jesus Christ. This calling refers to spiritual virginity in which the soul wholly and utterly belongs to Christ and is consecrated for Him alone. Let us look to the virginity of St Mary who demonstrated, through her ascetic example and never-ending vigil, how to live a life of true virginity. She showed us how spiritual virginity involves renouncing the world and its pleasures, because virginity is the desire for Christ in the pursuance of holy and heavenly things instead of earthly and temporal.

**Prayer:**

*You are called, O Virgin Mary, the holy flower, of incense. Which came out, and blossomed, from the roots of the patriarchs, and the prophets. Like the rod, of Aaron the priest, which blossomed, and brought forth fruit. For you gave birth to the Word, without the seed of man, and your virginity, was not corrupted. Wherefore we glorify you, as the Mother of God, ask your Son, to forgive us. (The Sunday Theotokia - Ninth Part).*

**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
	Catholicism	1 Pet 1:25-2:6
	Acts	Acts 27:38-28:10
	Psalm	Ps 129:8,2
	Gospel	John 11:1-45

## Palm Sunday

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 49

Sunday, 13 April

### **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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; 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. 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." So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" 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."

(Mark 11:1-11)

- Gospel of the Palm Sunday Liturgy

## Monday of the Holy Pascha

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 50

Monday, 14 April

### **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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

## Tuesday Eve

### **Events:**

- In the evening, Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

### **Rites:**

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 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. In response Jesus said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it. 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. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 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.’”

“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. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

(Mark 11:12-21)

– Extract from the Gospel of the First Hour of Monday of the Holy Pascha

## Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 51

Tuesday, 15 April

### **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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 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. 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—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” 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. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.”  
(Mark 13:32-14:2)

- Gospel of the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday Eve 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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hour prayers).
- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour, Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.

"Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 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. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor." 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. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. 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." Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 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. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."  
(Matthew 26:3-16)

- Gospel of the Ninth Hour of  
Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

## Holy Thursday

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 53

Thursday, 17 April

### **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 (1<sup>st</sup>) 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the Pascha prayers are 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 1<sup>st</sup> hour of the Pascha prayers, the Paraclete chapters are read.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual. The four Gospels are read in each hour.

"When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 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." Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it." 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." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 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." (Matthew 26:20-29)

- Gospel of the Covenant Thursday Liturgy

## **Events:**

- The trial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, condemning Him to be crucified.
- The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the 6<sup>th</sup> hour.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's words on the Cross.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross at the 9<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> hour.
- The burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new tomb at the 12<sup>th</sup> hour.

## **Rites:**

- The 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed in the second chorus.
- In the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> hour from the Agpia, then the 'O-mo-no-ge-nees' hymn is chanted. After the 6<sup>th</sup> hour is prayed, the Right thief's creed is read.
- In the 9<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> hour from the Agpia, then continues as usual.
- The prayers of the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 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!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 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. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name.

Him they compelled to bear His Cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. 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." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. ... Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land."  
(Matthew 27:27-38, 45)

- Extract from the Gospel of the Sixth Hour of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha

## 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.

## HOLY PASCHA

Day 55

Saturday, 19 April

“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. 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. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 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.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 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. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.” ... And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. 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, 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.”

(Matthew 28:1-10, 18-20)

- Extract from the Gospel of the Joyous Saturday Liturgy



*Christ is Risen - Indeed He is Risen*  
*Ekhristos Anestee - Alithos Anestee*

Icon from:  
St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral  
Sydney - Australia

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