



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

St. Mary and St. Moses Coptic Orthodox Church

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Under the auspices and guidance of H.G. Bishop Mina bishop of Mississauga, Vancouver and west of Canada

THE LIFE OF THANKSGIVING

BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

He who lives the life of thanksgiving is a noble person, acknowledges and does not forget a favour NEVER forgets any good offered to him, and expresses his thanks. Thanksgiving is in his heart on the tip of his tongue, for God and men.

The Lord Jesus blessed the Samaritan - one of the ten lepers who were cleansed. When the only one returned to Jesus. *"and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks"*. So Jesus answered and said, *"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"* (Luke 17:15-18) Therefore, when you give



thanks, you are glorifying God, acknowledging his loving, kindness to you.

If God has done something good to you through anyone, you give thanks to God and also to this person, who was the means in receiving such goodness.

Most people give thanks to God at the beginning and end of the each day, and on occasions like new year, feasts and certain important events in their lives, but the life of thanksgiving has its

characteristics, perhaps in the first place is the saying of the apostle: *"Giving thanks always for all things"*(Eph. 5:20).

Giving Thanks Always

Then our giving thanks to God has no specific occasions but it is "Always". And as long as it is continuous, it covers the whole life and therefore the expression "Life of Thanksgiving" applies to it.

The same teaching was explained in the first epistle of the Thessalonians, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks"* (1 Thess 5:16-18).

On account of this, the Prayer of Thanksgiving precedes all prayers:

All the church rituals and masses begin with the prayer of Thanksgiving, also the seven prayers (in the Agbia) either in the morning or at night. We always give thanks to God "evening and morning and at noon". Also we says the Psalmist *"at midnight I will rise to give thanks to you, because of your your righteous judgments"*.

In addition to the general prayer of thanksgiving, we give thanks in absolutions of the hours:

In the first Hour we say " We thank you O Eternal King, for you permitted us to pass this night in peace and brought us to the day break " ... we thank Him for keeping us safe during the night and giving us a new day in life.

In the Third Hour we say "We give you thanks for raising us up to pray at this holy hour, where you poured Your Holy Spirit in abundance, upon your disciples and honourable apostles like tongues of fire"

In the Sixth Hour, we say "We give thanks to you O our King The Almighty, Father of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, we glorify you because you made the time of suffering of your Only Begotten Son , a time of prayer and comfort".

In the Sunset prayer, we say " We thank You , O our Compassionate King, for you granted us to pass this day in peace, and brought us thankfully to the evening, and made us worthy to see the light until sunset.

We thank God for every hour that passes in peace. Then, it is a continuous thanksgiving either at the beginning of every prayer or at certain occasions.

Levels Of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving in the life of the children of God is in levels:

The least is giving thanks for the miracles, gifts, great pleasures and the plentiful good things, which no one doubts its goodness and benefit. Perhaps, other than this, some do not give thanks! (Simple). Pleasures might pass over them, and other good things they might see as natural and normal and needs no thanks!

There is a higher level of thanksgiving; to give thanks over little:

It might be a normal level in the life of thanksgiving to give thanks over the recover from a serious illness like cancer. But , if a person gave thanks for the recovery from a flu or cold, it indicates that in his life he is used to give thanks over many or little things.

If we gave thanks over a few things, God will make us rulers over many things.

Perhaps, among the advantages of thanksgiving are the continuity of the blessings and its increase, as one of the Fathers said, "Not a gift without increase, except that without thanksgiving".

There is also thanksgiving over what is hidden, over what is unseen.

Thanksgiving for the wars and troubles which were possible to come to us but did not because of God's keeping and care.

Thanksgiving for the work of God in looking after us, although we cannot see that, but we completely believe in it.

Undoubtedly, Satan is doing his utmost to harm us and to make us fall . If we are now well, it is because God has stopped the harm which we do not know and we thank God over the tribulations from which He saved us, but there are difficulties that He stopped on the way before it come to us.

We do not know it, but we thank Him for protecting us ..

Our thanksgiving for saving us, this is something we can see. But , thanksgiving for protecting us is for something which we cannot see.

Believe me, if God disclose the calamities we were exposed to and He cast away from us if He uncover this, our whole life will not be enough to thank Him.

We give thanks on the hidden matters - which are in God's knowledge, and which we might know later, in time, or might never know.

In all this, thanksgiving is mixed with love. Another level is giving thanks always for all things, in which the

whole life of man is to give thanks for whatever condition he lives in, and we have explained this matter. Constant thanksgiving does not need a specific reason but it is enough that we are in God's care, and we are His children, and such feeling is connected with the life of submission. Our thanks do not absolutely depend on the specific condition in which we are.

TRUST IN THE DIVINE PROMISES

By Pope Tawadros II

There are three signs or means that help you trust in the promises:

1. Faith

Your inner faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is based on:

- a. **God is present and always with us.**
- b. **God is able.** Just as He worked in the past, He works today and tomorrow. This beautiful expression “the Almighty” is found in *Revelation 21:22*.
- c. **God is active.** He continually works with you—yesterday, today, and forever.



You may be like any character we encounter in the Bible, facing life's difficulties, but then the strong right hand of God comes to stand by you and uphold you. That is why St. Paul could say: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13). The word *“strengthens”* here carries the meaning of continuity. As Christ Himself said: *“Without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

If we look back at the promise given to Abraham and Sarah, human logic would say it was impossible to be fulfilled. But by divine logic, nothing is beyond God's will—for with Him all things are possible. It is the human being who makes the possible seem impossible. St. Paul says of Abraham, the father of the fathers: *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God”* (Romans 4:20). And about Sarah it is written: *“By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised”* (Hebrews 11:11).

Similarly, when the angel announced to the Virgin Mary, all she replied was: *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38). She had nothing but faith.

2. Obedience

A monastic expression says: *“Upon the child of obedience, blessing descends.”* Obedience to the promise brings blessing.

The history of our Church tells us about St. Anthony the Great, the first monk and founder of monasticism. The story goes that after his father’s departure, he entered the church and heard the verse: *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”* (Matthew 19:21). He took it as a promise and obeyed it.

When St. Anthony went out into the desert, he had no idea that his name would become so famous, that churches and monasteries around the world would be named after him, or that thousands upon thousands of monks would follow his path and imitate his life. But because he was a son of obedience, blessing came upon him.

When God gave Abraham the promise, He told him: *“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 28:14). Abraham may have wondered, *“Where is this seed?”* Yet because of Abraham’s obedience, his keeping of God’s commandments, and his response to the call, God fulfilled His promise and indeed blessed all nations through his seed.

Sometimes the promise is not explicit. For example, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the hosts had run out of wine. The Virgin quietly approached Jesus and said: *“They have no wine”* (John 2:3). This meant that the family was in deep embarrassment. Christ answered her: *“Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come”* (John 2:4). If you look closely, you’ll see that her request and His answer were not the same. But it seems that His gestures and expressions gave her a hidden reassurance, like an unspoken promise. So she told the servants: *“Whatever He says to you, do it”* (John 2:5).

This was a promise, even if not plainly spoken. And her words, though few and wise, are considered *“the shortest sermon in the Bible.”* Whatever promise He gives you, you must live by it.

3. Prayer

Keep your heart always lifted up to the Lord, longing for His promise to be fulfilled.

When King David was settled in his kingdom, he desired to build a house for the Lord. He told Nathan the prophet, but the word of the Lord came that it would not be David, but his son Solomon, who would build it. Scripture says: *“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said... ‘Now, O Lord God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said’”* (2 Samuel 7:18–25).

When we pray *“Thy will be done”* in the Lord’s Prayer, do we really mean it from the heart? Everything God does with us is good, and we must accept it all from Him. Yet in the midst of the promises in Scripture, there are also vows made by people to God. As it says: *“That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth”* (Deuteronomy 23:23).

Jacob, the father of the patriarchs, when he dreamed of a great ladder reaching up to heaven and heard the voice of God promising to keep him and give him the land, made a vow to God. He set up a stone pillar, anointed it with oil, and called the place *Bethel*. He promised God three things:

1. “Lord, I will worship You all my life.”
2. “I will build an altar for You here.”
3. “I will give You a tenth of all that You give me.”

There is also the well-known Russian story: A prince promised a man all the land he could cover on horseback in one day, provided he returned before sunset. The man rode far and wide, covering as much land as possible, but in his effort he collapsed and died before returning.

When you sit with your father of confession, taking him as a witness to your repentance—do you keep it? Do you fulfill your vow, even partially? It is very important to trust in the promises of God.

False Promises

Some promises are actually deceptive traps. For example, Herod, when Herodias’ daughter danced before him, promised to give her whatever she asked—even half his kingdom. She asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. The Bible says: *“The king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison”* (Matthew 14:9–10).

Be careful: there are deceptive words that are not truly promises, but the lies of the devil. He deceived Adam and Eve, saying: *“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:4–5). There are also the deceptions of astrologers and sorcerers, who claim to predict the future. Even the devil may appear in false dreams.

But the promises of the Bible are for goodness and growth. Scripture says:

“Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28).

“And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them” (Deuteronomy 28:13).

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

Promises, dear brothers and sisters, are a joyful matter in the Holy Scripture. As you read, you may come across promises that God is sending to you—hold fast to them with your faith, your obedience, and your prayer. Trust that God fulfills His promises whenever they are for your good. For *“all things work together for good to those who love God”* (Romans 8:28). God uses everything and turns it into blessing for humanity, just as Simeon the Elder received the promise, saw it with his own eyes, and said: *“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before*

the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”

Rites:

THE PRAYER OF `EPHNOTI NAI NAN' – “LORD HAVE MERCY UPON US”

by H.G. Bishop Mettaous

After the Doxology and the Creed, the priest holds the cross with three lit candles to signify that He Who was crucified is the Light of the world, sacrificing Himself to give light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. The priest stands in reverence in front of the Sanctuary. He spreads both his arms, holding the cross with the three lit candles in his right hand, while the left hand is being opened in supplication and humility.

While facing due East, and without signing Without Making The Sign of the Cross, he chants, "Lord have mercy, establish Your mercy upon us." Still facing East, he then

makes the sign of the cross, and says, "Have compassion upon us." He turns to face the North and, while signing the cross, says, "Hear us." Then he turns towards the West,

gives the blessings to the congregation, and says, "Bless us."

The congregation bow their heads to receive the blessings. The priest then turns to the South and says, "Protect us," while making the sign of the cross. He then turns to the East once more, and with the sign of the cross, he says, "Support us." Still facing East, he completes the Litany without signing, saying, "Take Your wrath away from us, tend to us with Your salvation and forgive us our sins."

Some Points on the Prayer Of `Ephnoti Nai Nan'

During Vespers Incense the priest chants this Litany in the `long tune', but in the Morning Incense he uses the `short tune' because the service is too long.

When the priest chants the Litany in the `long tune', the congregation responds by singing "Lord have mercy" three times, also using the `long tune'. During the congregation's response the priest remains facing East with his hands raised, being absorbed in a warm

prayer of pleas for mercy. Some Liturgy Books state that during this time the priest prays inaudibly the second litany in the Gregorian Liturgy, which begins, "Healing for the sick, comfort for the needy".

THE LITANY OF THE GOSPEL

At the end of the congregation's response, the priest makes a sign of the cross over the congregation with the cross and the lit candles, and says, "Let us pray", followed by, "Peace be with you all."

He then blows out the candles and gives them to the deacon, crosses the box of incense, and puts another spoonful of incense into the censer while saying the Litany of the Gospel.

Standing before the sanctuary, he then offers incense to the Bible while saying, "We worship before the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers of David the Psalmist and Prophet. O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins."

Entering the sanctuary with the censer, the priest then goes around the altar performing the Round of the Gospel while saying, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace." Then the Gospel is read in Coptic and in Arabic or English.

AUDIO SERMONS

THANKSGIVING

Fr. Raphael Hanna LA, Ca

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGzrp3sqzEE>



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

“Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?”

Heb 13:7

ST.JULIUS EL-AKFEHAS

St.Julius El-Akfehas, the writer of the biography of the martyrs. The Lord Christ set him up to care for the bodies of the holy martyrs, to shroud them and to send them to their homes. The Lord brought blindness into the hearts of the governors, and no one objected to him. They never forced him to worship idols. The Lord protected him to care for the martyrs. He used three hundred young men for this



purpose. They wrote the biography of the holy martyrs and sent it to their homes. But Julius used to minister to the holy martyrs by himself and dress their wounds. The martyrs blessed him, saying, "You must shed your blood in the Name of our Lord Christ, so you can be counted among the martyrs."

When the reign of Diocletian the infidel came to an end, Constantine the righteous reigned. The Lord Christ wished to fulfill what the saints had prophesied about him to be counted among the martyrs. The Lord commanded him to go to Arkanus, the governor of Samanoud, and to confess the Lord Christ. He went there where the governor tortured him many times, but the Lord strengthened him. When the governor ordered to bring him to worship the idols, this saint prayed and the earth opened and swallowed up the seventy idols and the one hundred and forty priests who were serving them. When the governor beheld the destruction of his idols and their priests, he believed in the Lord Christ. The governor went with the Saint to the governor of Athribis who tortured Saint Julius with great severity, but the Lord Christ strengthened him.

One day there was to be a festival for the idols and they decorated the temple with ornaments and lamps and with palm branches. They closed the gates till the following day to start celebrating the festival. The saint asked the Lord to blot out their idols and the Lord sent his angel who but the heads of the idols and blackened their faces with ashes and burnt up all the palms, and all the idols in the temple. On the following morning when the people came dressed to celebrate the feast and saw what had happened to their gods, they recognized their weakness. The governor of Athribis and a large number of people believed in the Lord Christ. From there, the Saint went to the city of Towa and with him were the governor of Samanoud and the governor of Athribis, and they met with Iskandros its governor. First he refrained from torturing them, but later he ordered his men to cut off their heads. Julius and his two sons, Tadros and Yunias, his slaves, and the governors of Samanoud and Athribis and a great many people were martyred. They numbered fifteen hundred. They took his body with the bodies of his sons to Alexandria for it was there that they used to live.

May the blessings of his prayers be with us all, and Glory be to God forever Amen.

Sayings of the Fathers:

❖ There is nothing more beneficial for a person than to always give thanks to God, even when things happen contrary to his will.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Giving thanks in times of affliction lifts our prayers to God like fragrant incense.

St. Isaac the Syrian

❖ If we give thanks to God in all circumstances, then our afflictions become wings that carry us to heaven.

St. Anthony the Great

❖ Let your heart be filled with gratitude at all times, for you do not know of any greater gift than the one you have received.

St. Basil the Great

❖ He who gives thanks to God for what he does not understand offers a greater sacrifice than he who gives thanks for what he can see.

St. Augustine

Question and Answer:

By: H. H. Pope Shenouda III



What is the highest level of thanksgiving?



The highest level is to give thanks over tribulations, not just the blessings from which we have been spared. A person who thanks God only for good gifts proves they love the gifts, not God. But giving thanks during trials, with complete surrender and joy, proves one's love for God Himself. The Coptic Church's practice of always beginning prayers with the Prayer of Thanksgiving, even at funerals, reinforces this idea.



How can we truly be thankful for tribulations?



We give thanks by faith, believing that "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom. 8:28). Tribulations strengthen our spiritual life and deepen our

prayer and relationship with God. They offer a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, which the apostles considered a gift to be rejoiced over, as seen in Acts 5:41.

A whisper in your ear

- ❖ People of principle live hundreds of times, while people of self-interest die hundreds of times.
- ❖ I don't see you as the most beautiful thing in the world; I see you as a world where everything in it is beautiful.
- ❖ Keep your heart always open before God in prayer, even with just a small word.
- ❖ Humble yourself, and God will lift you up more than your strength ever could.

VERSE OF THE MONTH

*Whoever wants to be my disciple
must deny themselves and take up their
cross and follow me.
Mark 8:34*

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH "SYNAXARIUM"

- ❖ Commemoration of St. Mary the Virgin (21 Tout)1 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Julius El-Akfehas, the Writer of the Biography
of Martyrs (22 Tout)2 October
- ❖ Departure of Jonah the Great Prophet (25 Tout)..... 5 October

- ❖ Commemoration of the Major Lordly Feasts (the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Resurrection) (29 Tout)9 October
- ❖ Commemoration of the Miracle that God performed to St. Athanasius the Apostolic (30 Tout)10 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Anastasia (1 Babah) 11 October
- ❖ The Coming of Saint Severus the Patriarch of Antioch to Egypt (2 Babah)12 October
- ❖ The Martyrdom of St. Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople (5 Babah)15 October
- ❖ The Departure of the Righteous Hannah, the Prophetess and Mother of Samuel, the Prophet (6 Babah)6 October
- ❖ The Departure of St. Paula El-Tamouhi (7 Babah)7 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Sergius, the Companion of St. Bacchus (10 Babah)20 October
- ❖ Departure of St. James the Patriarch of Antioch (11 Babah)21 October
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Matthew the Evangelist (12 Babah)22 October
- ❖ Commemorative Feast of Michael the Archangel (12 Babah)22 October
- ❖ Departure of St. Philip, One of the Seven Deacons (13 Babah) 23 October
- ❖ Assembly of a Council in Antioch for Paul of Samosat (19 Babah) 29 October
- ❖ Departure of the Great Saint Abba John the Short (20 Babah) 30 October

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

Please check church website in the first page

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/video