



Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

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THE APOSTLES' FAST

Pope Shenouda III

The Apostles' Fast is one of the fasts that the Lord Christ referred to, saying, “But when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast.” Pope Shenouda III gave special attention to the Apostles' Fast, saying about it:

“No one should underestimate the fast of our fathers, for it is the oldest fast of the apostles known to the Church throughout all generations. The Lord referred to it when He said, ‘But when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast.’”

The Apostles fasted at the beginning of their ministry. The Lord Himself began His ministry with fasting—forty days on the mountain. The Apostles' Fast, therefore, is a fast specifically for service and the Church. It was said of our teacher, the Apostle Peter, that he fasted until he “was very hungry and desired to eat” (Acts 10:10).

In his hunger, he saw heaven opened and received a vision concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles. Just as their fasting was accompanied by visions and divine guidance, it was also accompanied by the work and descent of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture says:

“While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia” (Acts 13:2–4).

The Apostles' Fast was distinguished by several important aspects: fasting, prayer, service, and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is fitting that the Holy Spirit works through fasting, that divine

calling comes through fasting, that the ordination of servants occurs during fasting, and that those who serve begin with fasting before commencing their ministry.

There are fasts specifically for repentance, such as the fast of the people of Nineveh, or the fasts of humility mentioned in the Book of Joel. There are also fasts for specific purposes, like Esther's fast, or fasts for casting out demons, as the Lord said, "This kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting."

There are fasts we observe before receiving every blessing from the Lord, such as the fasts preceding the sacraments—Baptism, Chrismation, Communion, and Ordination. The Apostles' Fast, however, is for the sake of service and the Church, at least to teach us the necessity of fasting for ministry and its benefit. We fast so that God intervenes in the ministry and aids it. We fast so that we may serve while in a spiritual state. We fast, aware of our weakness... how we longed for this fast during the Pentecost season.

What is the goal of your fasting?

Why do we fast? What is our purpose in fasting? The means are aligned with the purpose. Likewise, the result depends on the goal.

Do we fast simply because it is the practice? Because it appears in the liturgical calendar, or the Church has prescribed it? If so, the inner, heartfelt factor is incomplete. Of course, obedience to the Church and to the commandment is necessary. But when we obey, it should be spiritually, not superficially. Even though the Church has arranged this fast for us, it arranged it for the spiritual depth contained within it.

So, what is this spiritual depth? And what is our goal in fasting?

Is our goal merely bodily deprivation and mortification?

In reality, bodily deprivation is not a virtue in itself; it is only a means to a virtue: to give the spirit its proper scope. So, do we limit ourselves to the means, or do we enter the goal itself, which is to give the spirit room to operate?

Many false goals hinder a person's fasting:

Some fast merely to please themselves, to feel they are righteous, spiritually diligent, and not neglecting any commandment. Others fast to receive praise from people for their fasting or the degree of their fasting—thus falling into vain glory, which is sin.

What, then, is the proper goal of fasting?

The proper goal is that we fast for the love of God.

For the love of God, we want our souls to be attached to Him. We do not want our bodies to be obstacles to the spirit's work. Therefore, we subject them through fasting so that they may follow the spirit in its work. In fasting, we seek to rise above the material and bodily level, so that we may live in the spirit and allow our human souls to partake in the work of God's Spirit, enjoying the love and intimacy of God.

Truly, enjoying God's love and the sweetness of His intimacy should be the way of life itself. Yet, we attain it in a focused manner during fasting, with greater depth and diligence, as a training and preparation for this enjoyment to become the way of life.

We fast because fasting draws us closer to God.

Fasting includes seclusion, which is an opportunity for prayer, spiritual reading, and contemplation. Fasting helps with vigils and prostrations, which are means of prayer. Fasting involves self-discipline and victory over desires, aiding repentance, the path to God and reconciliation with Him. We fast, nourished by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4).

Thus, for the love of God and His intimacy, we fast.

We fast because fasting encourages detachment from worldly things and death to materialism. This strengthens us for eternity and attachment to God.

If fasting is, then, days dedicated solely to God, and we fast for God and His love, a question arises:

Are there fasts not dedicated to God?

Yes, some fasts may not have God's share in them. A person may fast yet have no part for God in their life. They may fast but remain unchanged, keeping all their faults. Or they may fast out of habit or fear of embarrassment regarding their reputation as a servant. Or their fasting may be purely bodily, unrelated to the spirit.

Or they may fast merely to display skill, the ability to abstain from food, yet indulge in other pleasures they cannot restrain from.

Some think fasting is simply a relationship between the person and food, without God being involved. All their concern is: how long to abstain, when to eat, how to prolong the fast, what to eat, and how to avoid certain foods. It becomes a two-party matter: person and food, or person and body, without God as a participant. Is this truly fasting?

Fasting is not merely dealing with the body; it is a relationship with God. Fasting without God is not fasting at all.

We eat for God, and we fast for God.

We eat for God so that the body may gain strength to serve Him and faithfully fulfill its duties toward others. We fast for God so that the body does not sin against Him. So that the body is under our control, and we are not under the body's control, ensuring bodily desires do not govern our actions. Rather, we walk according to the Spirit, not the flesh, for the love of God and the preservation of our fellowship with His Holy Spirit.

Otherwise, fasting is rejected by God.

FEAST OF ENTRANCE INTO EGYPT

Sermon By H.E. Metropolitan Dimetrius, the Holy Diocese of Mallawi, Ansena and El-Ashmunein

The Church celebrates the Feast of our Lord's Entry into Egypt on the 24th day of the month of Bashans (June 1st). This feast is among the Seven Minor Feasts of the Lord. As the Holy Family entered the land of Egypt, St. Mary the Virgin mother carried the child Jesus in her arms, with Joseph the Carpenter at her side and Salome, who accompanied them. They had done so in order to escape from Herod, who had sought to kill the Child. This was instructed to Joseph by the Archangel Gabriel in a dream where the Gabriel told him: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son" (**Matthew 2:13-15**).



The entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into the land of Egypt is an opportunity for rejoicing and delighting for the many blessings that his entry has impacted upon Egypt. The Church is aware of how important this event has been. And this is the reason it is one of the Lord's feasts. There are several symbols and spiritual meanings that are indicated by the coming of the Lord Christ into Egypt. God's plan for Christ's entering the land of Egypt contains, as far as we can assume, four spiritual meanings that indicate the benefit for us from this divine plan.

1. The first spiritual meaning:

The first spiritual meaning was that the Lord has been willing to remove his anger from this land. God wanted to show how his forgiveness works and how he was going to replace the old by the new and the curse by the blessing. God is willing to abolish the curses of the plagues that he had once inflicted upon the Egyptians, when he punished them severely with the ten plagues in the old time, pouring his wrath upon them and the whole land of Egypt. Now by sending his Son to Egypt, He is restoring his favor instead of his wrath, his blessing instead of his curse; purifying everything, renewing everything: the people, the land, the water, and the air. This is the first reason for which our Lord came to bless the land of Egypt that he had once cursed. He made his entry into Egypt in order to establish there the benediction instead of the malediction. The lesson for us here is that God is teaching us about conversion. A life spent far away from God needs repentance. Otherwise this life will be condemned to perish in the hell of fire. Therefore, the person whom converts, repents, turns back from the wicked ways to God, will deserve the renewal of life in our Lord Christ Jesus, instead of deserving the condemnation to the hell of fire.

Conversion is by excellence the figure of the transformation from the curses to the blessings, from the sinful nature to the renewed and purified being. As the converting person receives a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the same way, as Egypt that received the Lord received a blessing compensating her old curses caused by sin. In both the converting person and the land of Egypt receiving the Lord Christ one common trait unifies their destiny: Holiness shines instead of darkness.

2. The second spiritual meaning:

The second spiritual meaning for the coming of Christ into the land of Egypt is the meaning of escape from evil. By His coming to Egypt, our Lord gave us the key of the practical application of his command to escape evil, not to resist it in (**Matthew 5:39**). Our Lord escaped from the face of the King Herod. Nevertheless, His escape is not based on cowardice and does not come out of weakness! His escape is based on divine plan; he made this journey to Egypt to fulfill the divine purpose of redemption, aiming to redeem all of mankind. We have a special remembrance for the slain children of Bethlehem on the third day of the Coptic month of Tuoba, when we celebrate their memory as we consider them being for us among the cloud of witnesses.

Therefore, the Lord's plan for us is that we follow His example, walk into His steps, escape from evil, escape from sin. This escape is a program that we should always remember, consider, trust, and follow.

3. The third spiritual meaning:

The third spiritual meaning for the Lord Jesus Christ's entering into Egypt is to establish a Temple for the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and to abolish and destroy the idolatrous temples spread and perverting the whole land. So we can consider the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt a journey with a building purpose, a foundational-minded journey aiming to install in Egypt the establishment of the Temple of God. In the Old Testament, the only temple of God was in Jerusalem. The Lord has been willing to add geographically Egypt to come to His knowledge. The Lord is willing to announce to the people of Egypt His love for them. He is calling them to acknowledge Him and to worship Him, to love Him and to adore Him; He is destining them to build His Church. Isaiah the Prophet prophesied about that saying: "So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them." (**Isaiah 19: 21**) Therefore, the Lord is not only making Himself known in Egypt in a habitual way of traditional knowledge. Rather, a deep and profound knowledge is involved, giving the Egyptians the privilege to become also the flock of God. They are from now on making vows to God and keeping them. After they were Israel's enemies. The Holy Book of Isaiah eloquently tells the story of the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt. It is a journey that causes "the idols of Egypt to tremble and the hearts of the Egyptians to melt." Our Lord does not want us to love anything more than we love Him. If a person loves something more than the Lord, the Lord wants

that idolatrous thing to tremble. Idols could be things such as the Ego or the ancient self prior to conversion. By the melting of the hearts of the Egyptians, the Lord wants to teach us that conversion gives humility to the heart and repentance; two elements that are vital and necessary in the adoration of God.

4. The fourth spiritual meaning:

The fourth spiritual meaning of the Lord's journey to Egypt is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Hosea: "Out of Egypt I called my Son." (**Hosea 11: 1**) "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my Son." The Lord wants to teach us an important lesson concerning the traveling and the continual moving without rest. He journeyed inside Egypt without a home or a specific place of his own where he could rest. He was as a stranger that had no support and no place to lean his head upon. Thus He wants us to be familiarized with the feeling of being strangers to both the heavenly homeland (that we didn't reach yet!) and the earthly homeland. We want to be like our Lord Jesus Christ, considering ourselves strangers, having nowhere to rest. It is a precious lesson for us to learn that the earthly home is only a temporary one and our heavenly home is the perpetual one.

The journey of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Family to Egypt was a hard and difficult one, where He was seeking souls longing for Him and souls hungry and thirsty for Him.

St. Wadamoun El-Armanty met with our Lord in the region of El-Ashmounin located in the south of Egypt. He was from a city called Armante, which is distant 500 kilometers from Mallawi or El-Ashmounin. St. Wadamoun was the first to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord told him that he was going to be the first martyr. As St. Wadamoun was performing miracles with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the pagans and idolatrous people – seeing the idols trembling, crushing, and falling in destruction – persecuted him and killed him. He died effectively as the Lord Jesus Christ told him, as a martyr. In the records of our Church, he is counted with the 44 thousand or the Children of Bethlehem, as their martyrdom occurred at the same period of time, historically. This was the inauguration of the martyrdom and the starting of the sufferings for our Lord's faith.

To our God be the eternal Glory for ever, Amen.

THE FAST OF THE APOSTLES

by Fr. Yohanna Meshreki

We read in the Gospel of St. Mark: "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with THEM, they cannot fast. But

the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days” (Mark 2:18-20).

Therefore, the early church, after the ascension of Christ to heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit, joined her preaching with fasting and prayers. The church believes that fasting is a powerful weapon that supports her ministry, delivers her from the snares of the devil, and keeps the spirit of asceticism of the church and the feeling of being sojourners in this world. So we, as Orthodox Christians, wait eagerly for the fast of the apostles after the long holy fifty days without fasting to be recharged again with spiritual strength through metanoias "prostrations" and abstaining from food.

The fast of the apostles is practiced till now in most of the traditional churches, however its length varies from one to another. It always ends with the commemoration of the martyrdom of the two great apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, which is on Abib 5th according to the Coptic calendar.

It is important to note that before the year 1582 AD, Abib 5th corresponded to June 29th, but, after adjusting the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, Abib 5th came to correspond to July 12th. This means that the apostles fast increased by 13 days in the Coptic church, will increase by an additional day after the year 2100 AD, and will continue to increase thereafter. But if we succeed in adjusting the Coptic calendar, the apostles fast would return to the length it was before 1582 AD, and the Apostles feast on Abib 5th would correspond to June 29th and remain on that date, without adding any additional days to the fast, going forward.

The church chants many beautiful specific hymns during the fast of the apostles, like "Assomane," "Ontos," and "Niromi," as well as the hymn "Enthoten thaa ~N0wten de" which is one the most beautiful hymns of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Its lyrics are three verses that came from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory, when He talked with His disciples after the Last Supper, and which St. Luke recorded in his Gospel. The Lord Jesus appreciates His disciples, who labor in the service and bear suffering with Him, and He promises them great glory in His kingdom. He said: "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:18-20). These golden words are carried on in an amazing tune that lasts about 15 minutes. It starts with deep, quiet melodies, and, as the hymn progresses, the tunes become very joyful and fly to heaven many times. When I hear it, I always wish it would not come to an end.

Generally, the fast of the apostles is a joyful period in the Coptic liturgical year, in which the church, inspired by the spirit of the holy apostles, is renewed in her pastoral and missionary work, taking them as role models, beseeching God through fasting and prayer to remember the salvation of the whole world, to bless His people, to keep them away from all evil, growing in His love, being filled with the knowledge of His will, and fruitful in every good deed for the glory of His holy name. Amen.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF DAYS OF THE APOSTLES' FAST

It is known that the duration of the Great Lent and the Holy Fifty is 105 days. This means:

- 186 days or 187 days is the period from Christmas to the Feast of the Apostles.
- 150 days is the duration of the Great Lent and the Holy Fifty.
- Therefore, 81 days or 82 days are the days of Christmas Feast and the Apostles' Fast.

The Christmas Feast is integrally related to the Apostles' Fast in its duration, meaning if one increases, the other decreases, and vice versa, as long as the total does not exceed 81 or 82 days. The Great Lent and the Holy Fifty must fall within this period, and they must adjust according to the Jewish Passover system, which is in turn connected to the Jewish lunar-solar calendar. This causes the days of the Christmas Feast to decrease if the Feast of the Resurrection (Easter) comes earlier, which allows for the visitation of the Apostles' Fast days.

Similarly, the days of the Apostles' Fast decrease if the Feast of the Resurrection is later, and this leads to an increase in the days of the Christmas Feast.

We can determine the day of the Feast of the Resurrection and how many days have passed in the month.

- If the feast falls in **Barmhat**, we take the remainder of Barmhat and add 45 days, and the total will be the number of days of the Apostles' Fast.
- If the feast falls in **Barmuda**, we take the remainder of Barmuda and add 15 days, and the total will be the number of days of the Apostles' Fast.

Example: Year 1742

If the feast falls on 4 Barmhat,

Then: $22 + 15 = 37$ days.

So, the Apostles' Fast will be 37 days.

Note:

It is well known that the total number of days for the Christmas Feast and the Apostles' Fast together is 81 days in a regular year or 82 days in a leap year. Therefore, if we subtract the number of days of the Apostles' Fast from 81, the remainder is the number of days of the Christmas Feast. However, in a leap year, we either add one day (the 28th of Kiahk) to the remainder from the 81 mentioned, making the total days of the Feast, or we apply the subtraction to 82 instead.

Rites:

The Seven Sacraments in the Coptic Rite

The Sacrament of the Eucharist — Anba Benjamin

The Sacrament of Communion: Why is the Sacrament of the Eucharist called the “Sacrament of Thanksgiving”?

Because the Lord Jesus, the very first thing He did when He took the bread before giving it to the disciples, was to give thanks. Why did He give thanks, and to whom did He give thanks?

He gave thanks because He is the Redeemer and the representative of humanity, and therefore He had to give thanks on behalf of humanity. Ever since man was expelled from Paradise — from the presence of God — the Lord longed to see again the heavenly image that appeared when Christ first gathered the disciples and began giving them His Body and Blood.

Through the Body, the disciples demonstrated that they represented the Church. The Church was represented in them, showing that they abide in Christ. For the first time, the image that God intended when He created man was restored once again: that man would abide in Him, draw near to Him, and live with Him. But through sin, man had been cast out.

So the Lord Jesus thanked the Heavenly Father for this heavenly image. For it was the Father who sent Christ — along with the Holy Spirit. Had They not sent Him, redemption would not have been accomplished.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Thus, the image realized through Communion — by giving the Body and Blood to the disciples — is the return of humanity to the presence of God in a sublime way that could never have been attained except through redemption and the granting of the Body and Blood, so that the Church may abide in Christ and the image may be completed both now and forever in blessed eternity.

It is the image of Christ firmly established: Christ the Head and the Church the Body. Therefore, the very first thing Christ did was to give thanks.

And likewise, the first thing we do when blessing the bread is to say, “And He gave thanks.” For Christ gave thanks on our behalf to the Heavenly Father for the exalted angelic image that the Father longed to see, which was fulfilled through redemption represented in giving the Body and Blood to the disciples through the Church’s abiding in the person of Christ. Therefore, we call it the “Sacrament of Thanksgiving.”

It is the gift of abiding — the Church abiding in Christ so that she may live the heavenly life in its most splendid form, in a transcendent way, with Christ reigning over her through her abiding in Him.

Here the problem of sin was treated: it was forgiven on the Cross, and the Blood bears witness to this. Death was also conquered through the Resurrection, and the Body bears witness to this.

So when Christ first took the bread in order to give it, He gave thanks, blessed it, and broke it. First, He gave thanks — and this is the action of the Church that has received a gift. The first thing a person does when receiving a gift is to give thanks; therefore it was called the “Sacrament of Thanksgiving.”

It is the thanksgiving of the Church longing for the Kingdom, which saw the fulfillment of the Kingdom in the image of Christ and the disciples — the complete image of Christ abiding in Him — which received life through the Body and received forgiveness through the Blood.

Therefore, the Body and the Blood are given in the same order that Christ established. We never give the Body together with the Blood, and the Church forbids this so that we may not think of this Body as bloody. Rather, it is the Body of the Resurrection.

AUDIO SERMONS

WHY THE HOLY FAMILY FLED TO EGYPT (SHORT)

Fr Botrous Philopos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V2GkrcFK_Q



INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

by Fr. Peter Farrington

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fNKXrBOr0M>



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

“Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?” Heb 13:7

SAINT ANBA ABRAAM

Saint Anba Abraam, Bishop of El-fayyoun and El-Giza, departed. This was in the year 1630 A.M. (June 10, 1914 A.D.).

He went to El-Muharrak monastery where he was ordained a monk by the name of Paul Gabriel El-Muharraki. He was nineteen years old. He was meek, humble, had a pure life, and he prayed much in seclusion



As he increased his charity toward the poor, the orphans and the widows, some of the monks became more resentful of him, for they considered these charitable works as squandering and extravagant acts. They complained against him to Anba Morcos, Metropolitan of El-Behira, who was the acting Patriarch after the death of Pope Demetrius. Anba Morcos accepted their complaints and deposed him as the abbot of their monastery. Shortly after his dismissal, he left El-Muharrak monastery and went to the monastery of El-Baramous. Several monks from the El-Muharrak monastery went to the monastery of El-Baramous, with archpriest Bolous (Abba Abraam), because they did not like the attitudes of the complaining monks. He stayed there for some time studying the Bible and teaching the monks. The abbot of the monastery of El-Baramous at that time was archpriest Youhanna the Scribe, who became later on Pope Kyrillos the fifth (112th Patriarch). In the year 1597 A.M. (1881 A.D.), Pope Kyrillos the Fifth chose and

ordained him a bishop for the parish of El-Fayyoun and El-Giza. He replaced its reposed bishop, Anba Eisak, and was ordained with the name of Abba Abraam. During his episcopate, he became famous for two attributes: The First: His charity to the multitude of the poor that came to the bishopric residence. The Second: He was famous for his prayer of faith. Many miracles were performed, through his prayers, on his hands.

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

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ The apostles fasted and became disciples to teach believers the power to overcome the flesh and to seek God's help in every missionary endeavor.
..... **Pope Athanasius**
- ❖ It was, is, and always will be the fast of preaching, service, and mission; it is fundamentally about bearing witness to Christ.
..... **Fr. Mathew the poor**
- ❖ The oldest fast known to the Church, and their fast (that of the Apostles), was accompanied by visions and divine guidance; it was also accompanied by the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
..... **Pope Shenouda III**
- ❖ The Didache stressed the necessity of fasting immediately after Pentecost, considering it an apostolic duty to consecrate the lives of servants and to invoke the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Yesterday we were born children of men, today we are born children of God.

Question and Answer:

By: H. H. Pope Shenouda III

Question *Since the Bible says, 'Being justified freely by His grace' (Romans 3:24), then salvation is free. So why do we then associate it with baptism, which is a work?*

Answer The phrase "justified freely" means that we do not pay any price for this justification. This is because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), as stated in the same letter to the Romans. And this price was paid by Christ through His death, by shedding His blood on the Cross. We are justified without paying this price, i.e., freely.

However, baptism is not the price; it is the means.

An example of this is when Protestant brothers say that we are saved by faith. Faith is the means, not the price. The price is the blood of Christ, and nothing else, as the Scripture says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). Christ Himself brought these two means together: faith and baptism, as He said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). We are not the ones who associate salvation with baptism; it is Christ Himself, and also His holy apostles, as St. Peter said about Noah's Ark, "who in it a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water, which corresponds to baptism, which now saves you" (1 Peter 3:20-21). St. Paul the Apostle also said, "but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

You might object and say, "So, if I don't get baptized, will I be damned, even though Christ died for me?"

Yes, Christ died for you. But you must follow the means that Christ Himself put in place for your salvation—the means through which you receive the salvation Christ offered you freely.

For example, even though Christ's blood is sufficient for salvation, can you be saved without repentance? Christ's blood is there and sufficient for salvation. However, the Lord also said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). Repentance is not the price of salvation; rather, it is a necessary means through which you are justified freely by the blood of Christ. Baptism is also a necessary means through which you are justified freely by the blood of Christ. The Lord Himself said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Faith is also a necessary means for receiving the free justification that was accomplished by the blood of Christ.

Therefore, we must distinguish between the price and the means.

The price of justification is the blood of Christ alone. The necessary means are faith, baptism, and repentance.

St. Peter the Apostle connected these three means on the day of Pentecost after the Jews believed and were pierced in their hearts, and they asked, "What shall we do?" The Apostle responded to them:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Here we have the three means: faith in the name of Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism... All of them are means, and the only price for justification is the blood of Christ, which Christ alone paid for us.

We receive this justification freely because we did not pay its price, i.e., the blood. We receive it through faith, repentance, and baptism—the three means together... all means, and the only price for justification is the blood of Christ. Then, we enter into righteous works, which are the fruit of faith, the fruit of repentance, and the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which we received through the sacrament of Chrismation, and the fruit of renewal and sonship, which we received in baptism. St. John the Apostle says about this righteousness:

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

The Lord Jesus Christ paid the price for your justification—His blood. He offered you this justification freely—i.e., without paying the price again. Now, it is up to you to walk in the means that the Lord Himself defined... To explain this, I will give you an example: Suppose you have a check for a very large sum of money that you received freely as an inheritance, for example, but you did not go to the bank to cash it. You will remain, of course, without the amount, even though it is available for you. But you did not follow the means... I will say it once again: The only price for justification is the blood of Christ, and we receive this justification freely through faith, baptism, and repentance.

A whisper in your ear

- ❖ The Fast of the Apostles is not just abstaining from certain foods; it is training in steadfastness, service, and love.
- ❖ After the apostles received the message, they no longer lived for themselves. This fast encourages each person to ask: *What am I living for?*
- ❖ If you are fasting, try not to make the focus only about food. Instead, pay attention to:
 - Quiet prayer, even if brief.
 - Calming your reactions and responses.
 - Offering a simple act of service to someone in need.
 - Reducing anything that steals your heart or your time.
 - Most importantly: do not turn fasting into a competition. God looks at the heart more than the dietary rules.

VERSE OF THE MONTH

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live...Rom 8:13

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM

- ❖ Commemoration of the Entry of the holy family to Egypt (23 Bashans)1 June
- ❖ Departure of the most honored Layman Ibrahim El-Gohari (25 Bashans)2 June
- ❖ Departure of Lazarus the beloved of the Lord (27 Bashans) 4 June

- ❖ Departure of Pope Mikhail the First, the 68th Patriarch of Alexandria (30 Bashans) 7 June
- ❖ Consecration of the Church of St. Abe-Fam (Epi-Pham) the soldier (1 Baounah).....8 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the Appearance of the Bodies of St. John the Baptist and Elisha the Prophet (2 Baounah)9 June
- ❖ Departure of Bishop Anba Abraam Bishop of Fayoum (5 Baounah) 12 June
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Abaskhiroun the Soldier (7 Baounah)14 June
- ❖ Martyrdom of George (Girgis) the new martyr (8 Baounah)15 June
- ❖ Departure of Samuel the Prophet (9 Baounah)16 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the closing the Pagan Temples and opening of churches by order of King Constantine (10 Baounah)17 June
- ❖ Martyrdom of Saint Mother Dulaji and those with her (10 Baounah)17 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel Michael (12 Baounah)19 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the Archangel Gabriel, the Announcer (13 Baounah)20 June
- ❖ Consecration of the Church of Mari Mina at Maryut (15 Baounah)22 June
- ❖ Turning Over the Relics of the Great St. Mark the Apostle by the hand of Pope Paul the Sixth, Pope of Rome Children (15 Baounah)22 June
- ❖ Departure of St. Abba Nofer the Anchorite (16 Baounah) 23 June
- ❖ Return of the Relics of the Great St. Mark to the New St. Mark Cathedral (17 Baounah) 24 June
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. George (Girgis) known as El-Mozahem (19 Baounah)26 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the First Church for The Virgin Mary in the City of Philippi (17 Baounah)28 June
- ❖ Commemoration of the Holy and Pure Virgin Mary (21 Baounah).....28 June
- ❖ Consecration of the Church of Saints Cosmas, Damian, Their mother, and Brothers (22 Baounah)29 June

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

Please check church website in the first page

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_MI2B3NKL1Y8P3nQR5Amw/video