

2-2023

Becoming All Flame Orthodox Spiritual Formation Curriculum and Lenten Meditation Based On the Liturgical and Monastic Tradition

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

BECOMING ALL FLAME

ORTHODOX SPIRITUAL FORMATION CURRICULUM AND LENTEN MEDITATION BASED ON THE
LITURGICAL AND MONASTIC TRADITION



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

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PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2023



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Dedication

To my dear wife, Elleni Bisrat,

This work stands as a testament to your heartfelt prayers and selfless love. With profound affection and gratitude, I dedicate this work to you.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God the Father, who loves me eternally; God the Son, who redeemed me; and God the Holy Spirit, who guides and supports me throughout my journey.

I am deeply grateful to His Grace Abune Barnabas, Archbishop of the Diocese of Southern California and Alaska, for his constant words of encouragement and blessings. Above all, he has been my role model in serving the Holy Church in both challenging and joyous times.

My heartfelt thanks go to my fellow priests and parishioners of Los Angeles Debre Tsiyon Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church for their prayers and love. A special thank you to the brothers and sisters who supported me throughout this doctoral program. May God grant you His heavenly blessings.

To Kedist Negash, I am grateful for your invaluable help in editing the draft of this paper under a tight schedule. Your generous spirit has played a vital role in bringing this work to fruition.

I extend my thanks to Deacon Solomon for the stunning book design, which beautifully captures the essence of the project.

To the amazing cohort I had the privilege of being a part of: Despite our diverse cultures, backgrounds, and faith traditions, I found our group to be full of grace and understanding. I appreciate your openness, respect, and your willingness to embrace my story and that of the Ethiopian people. Scott, your friendship and prayers mean the world to me.

I am grateful to my lead mentors, Dr. Mary Kate Morse, Dr. Ken Van Vliet, and Dr. Kurtley Knight, as well as project faculty Dr. Ekaterina Lomperis, for their mentorship, encouragement, and wisdom, which demonstrate a deep love for God and His people. Your leadership, humility, and openness serve as beacons of hope amidst the challenges faced by the church in recent years.

To my wonderful wife, Elleni Bisrat Yiberhu, and my children, Mihret Melaku and Jonathan Melaku, thank you for the unwavering love and support you continuously provide, particularly throughout this journey.

Epigraph

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, 'Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?' Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, 'If you will, you can become all flame.'¹

¹ Benedicta Ward, Jr. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publication), 103.

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Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called ‘Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts’. In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using ‘just enough’ feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

Abstract

The monastic and liturgical tradition and literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is underutilized to address the need for spiritual formation and direction ministry. This poses a challenge to Ethiopian Orthodox youth and the laity in general who are struggling to identify their spiritual needs and necessary spiritual disciplines. The goal is to provide practical solutions for addressing these needs and to make the Church's liturgical and monastic traditions more accessible to the broader Orthodox community, thus allowing the congregation to align with the precepts of spiritual formation that have been passed down in the church from generation to generation. *Becoming All Flame*, an eight week session on Orthodox spiritual formation, explores these spiritual traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, in an effort to revitalize the spiritual formation of believers. To address these challenges, I plan to publish a curriculum based on Ethiopic liturgical texts geared towards spiritual discipline along with a training manual for priests and Sunday school teachers.

The project also includes a daily meditation for the Lenten season using translations of the liturgically significant hymns of St. Yared the Ethiopian, a famous church composer whose spiritual compositions dating from the 5th century are still used today. This Lenten season, one of the most significant in the Orthodox calendar, allows believers to utilize their fast for their spiritual benefit as they prepare for Easter.

Overall, the dissertation aims to demonstrate how the Church's spiritual traditions can answer the spiritual thirst of the generation and provide a deeper understanding of the Church's liturgical monastic spirituality. While the program is mainly designed for Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church members, I hope it will contribute to the ecumenical dialogue on spirituality and that other churches will also benefit from this spiritual treasure.

Introduction

Discovery of the NPO

When I started this program, there were many questions in my mind because of the many crises the Ethiopian Church has faced in recent years. On the one hand, the Ethiopian Church is a church that has developed a great spiritual tradition in its long history. Its monasteries, the manuscripts inside them, contain a never-ending spiritual treasure. The leaders of the Church who arose throughout its history have left exceptional historical marks. But, on the other hand, those who received this spiritual treasure have failed to communicate and pass it on to the next generation. The root of this failure lies in the fact that they are not actively applying the spiritual disciplines they received in their day to day lives. Furthermore, it has become common nowadays to view the spiritual way of life as a cultural practice or norm, instead of the transformational path to union with Christ it is truly meant to be. Additionally, the rich ancient teachings found in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are written in Ge'ez, the liturgical language of the church. This has become a stumbling block to the youth in the diaspora who are unable to understand Ge'ez and struggle speak and read Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia. The result is that they do not have access to the spiritual literature of the church, or even the few translations that have been made from Ge'ez to Amharic. The combination of the language barrier, the reduction of spirituality to a cultural norm, and the failure of application of spirituality in the day to day life poses a threat to the existence of spiritual formation in the modern day.

Another problem that has troubled the church is the issue of ethnic conflict. Historically, the church was the symbol of unity in Ethiopia. However, some church leaders have involved themselves in ethnic and racial hatred, becoming perpetrators of countless civil wars and causing unimaginable suffering for the people of Ethiopia. The saddest part is that the Church's current leadership has failed to solve this political, social, and spiritual crisis, and as a result, has lost this generation's trust. This confusion and lack of spiritual direction has also led many young people to abandon the Church and embrace false teaching masked with slick presentation. These false teachers have dragged them into shallow "spiritual" practices.

Therefore, to get out of this spiritual malaise, I tried to study the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's necessities, problems, and opportunities (NPO). Accordingly, the problem the Church is currently facing is not a problem that originated from its dogma or canon; I noticed that it was a defect in the spiritual life. To fill this deficiency, I looked to the great spiritual wealth that the liturgy of the Church and its monastic tradition holds. Thus, my NPO suggested that these liturgical and monastic traditions and their literature would be helpful in reintroducing spiritual formation in the Church and into the daily lives of the faithful.

To get the stakeholders' input, we held an NPO discovery workshop on October 24, 2020, where I met with seven individuals. We met on Zoom due to the restrictions placed during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the stakeholders, we had extensive discussions on the NPO and its implications for the church's current challenges. The participant stakeholders in my discovery session included a

clergyman, a musician /community activist, a high school teacher, a retired business leader, a charity worker, youth ministers, and Sunday school teachers, most of them being from the Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, California. In this discussion, the workshop participants discussed the root cause of underutilizing the church's liturgical and monastic tradition for spiritual formation and identified two major problems. First, they identified the church's neglect for the spiritual need of the youth. Second, they identified the language barrier of Ge'ez in the liturgy, as well as the length of the liturgical service, which makes it hard for some of the faithful, especially those in the younger generation to attend.

The issues raised in the workshop focused on the current challenges of the Ethiopian Church. For some participants, the word liturgy is daunting; it recalls the outdated thinking that pushed young people outside the Church. These voices come from a deep distrust of tradition. They have seen many abuses and forms of neglect in the name of tradition. But as the other participants point out, tradition by itself is not bad: in fact, we can use it for a positive outcome.

After much discussion, the participants not only confirmed the NPO that I presented but also pointed out that using this liturgical and monastic literature to introduce spiritual formation into the daily life of the faithful is beneficial in many ways. The joint statement we reached said, "considering the value of the Ethiopian Church and the cultural and social challenges it faces in the 21st century, we have discovered that many people of all ages but especially those under 40, are underutilizing the monastic and liturgical tradition of the Ethiopian Church which is caused by many factors including cultural and social factors as well as competing world views and ideologies. If solved, it would mean increases in church attendance and participation as well as the growth of an authentic community of faith where everyone feels valued and engaged and has a sense of ownership and leadership within the Church."

After my stakeholder workshop, I had one-on-one interviews with three scholars with deep knowledge of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its liturgical and monastic literature. My one-on-one interviewees included a retired seminary professor/researcher on Ethiopic manuscripts, an associate professor of liturgical theology, and a priest and church leader and scholar on the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. One of the ideas brought up during the interviews, particularly on the topic of addressing young people's concerns, was the benefit of exploring how other churches use their liturgical traditions to help bring more young people into the Church. Ultimately the three scholars I interviewed also affirmed the NPO statement of the workshop, and their feedback helped me to broaden my exploration of the project.

The workshop's outcome and the one-on-one interview recognized the concern of those who have difficulties accepting tradition as a positive force. Simultaneously, it also acknowledged the potential of the Ethiopian Orthodox church's liturgical tradition to address the problems raised in the workshop. The one-on-one interview outcome also helped me with the NPO's academic aspect and added a unique view to the discussions.

How the Project Addresses the NPO

Based on my discussion on the NPO with the stakeholders and scholars, I developed a project called *Becoming All Flame*, an eight week program centered on spiritual formation. The aim of this program is to have the faithful engage with the liturgical and monastic spirituality of the church in an accessible way. The first way the project addresses this is by creating weekly in depth discussions on how to apply spirituality in the day to day life. This shifts the focus from just learning content, to learning how to apply it. The second way the project addresses this is by providing English translations of the liturgical and monastic texts used in the program. This allows believers that don't understand Ge'ez, including those outside the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to engage with the material.

This project is innovative in three major ways. Firstly, it puts forward a program completely oriented towards the goal of spiritual formation, especially in English, which is new step forward for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and will ideally inspire other ministers in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to create similar spiritual formation based programs. Secondly, this project involves English translations of a collection of texts from the St. Yared's famous work *Tsome Deggwa*. This work has not been translated into English by anyone as of yet, and thus gives English-speakers a new access to the liturgical and monastic literature of the Church. Finally, this project can contribute to meaningful ecumenical dialogue, especially on the topic of spirituality, by making the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's teachings on spiritual discipline more apparent and in the public.

Design

Based on the stakeholder's and the scholars' input, I concluded that using the spiritual treasure of the church and reintroducing spiritual formation would benefit many. I say reintroduced here because in the monastic and liturgical tradition of the Church, spiritual formation has been practiced and is part of the church's spiritual tradition. Although it is not a new experience in the church's history, in our time, many have forgotten its value, and it is necessary to reintroduce and teach it. Therefore, I prepared two prototypes that addressed this problem and opportunity and presented them to the design workshop.

The first prototype is the eight-week spiritual formation curriculum consisting of summaries of each chapter, as well as one fully written chapter as a model. The curriculum is mainly for the clergy and youth ministers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The second prototype is a spiritual guide for the Lent season based on the spiritual exercises of St. Yared the Ethiopian. Again, this prototype also shows a sample passage from the guide. The guide is mainly for the laity to guide them on how to use St Yared's chant for Lent in their daily devotions.

The participants of this design workshop were clergy, youth ministers, and congregation members. I selected participants from my congregation as well as other churches. In the selection process, I tried to include women and men from different age groups. I gave special attention to young people because of the urgent situation in my ministry context. When I selected the two prototypes, I assumed that most people would prefer the Lenten Guide. But to my surprise, they chose the

curriculum on spiritual formation unanimously. They told me that, as spiritual formation is a forgotten topic in the current church, the curriculum will allow the congregation to study and practice spiritual formation more deeply. Therefore, I decided to create Becoming All Flame: Orthodox Spiritual Formation, a spiritual formation curriculum for clergies and youth leaders. Becoming All Flame also includes a selection of meditations for the Lenten season based on the hymns of St. Yared as an example of how to use liturgical hymns for daily meditation.

Delivery

Becoming All Flame: Orthodox Spiritual Formation (BAF) consists of eight weeks of spiritual formation lessons for Ethiopian Orthodox Church congregations. The project's primary audiences are clergymen and members of the congregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), with special attention given to young people. Although the primary audience is the congregation in the EOTC, our hope is that the project, especially the new translations of St. Yared's hymns and meditations, will appeal to the broader audience and contribute to the ecumenical dialogue and scholarship on spiritual formation.

The success benchmarks for the project include:

- Following the project launch, we will have two workshops to introduce the curriculum to clergies and the congregation within the Southern California EOTC diocese.
- Three parish congregations will start the spiritual formation program based on the curriculum for the first six months.
- 70% of the participants finish the eight weeks sessions and receive certificate of completion.
- 80% of participants participate via survey and feedback forms to evaluate the curriculum.
- We review the project every six months with the leaders of the churches who have adapted the curriculum.
- Within one year, we will publish a book containing the eight-week course for the program for participants to use as a textbook. Also, we will prepare posters and flyers to promote the program.
- 75% of the churches within the diocese will start BAF programs within the next two years.
- Within one year we will have one workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to introduce BAF.

Lent fasting is the holiest season in the Orthodox liturgical calendar. Like my program, the Ethiopian Lent season is eight weeks, including a preparatory fasting week and Holy Week. Therefore, launching Becoming All Flame (BAF) during the season of Lent is the most appropriate timing. The 2023 Ethiopian Lent fast starts Feb. 20, 2023. Having received the blessing of my bishop, I will launch the program this Lenten season in my church Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church. I plan to have selected participants from my congregation participate in BAF throughout the Lent fasting. After the experience of the initial launch of the program within my local church, I will expand it to the diocese-wide program in July/August 2023 with two workshops.

Reflection

Shortly after I started this doctoral program, Ethiopia entered into a perilous civil war, and the subsequent atrocities which happened to my people had a significant impact on my project and my conversations with my brothers and sisters in class. Therefore, when I designed the project, although it was mainly for the use of the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church here in America, I hoped to take the program to Ethiopia and for the church there to use it.

During the discovery and designing process of the project, I encountered many challenges as well as opportunities. One of the challenges, especially in the early stages of the project, was the issue of COVID-19 and the Ethiopian civil war, which was in the mind of my stakeholders. Talking about the spiritual formation program of the church at that time was seen as ignoring the suffering of our people. In every conversation, there were people that expected us to talk about the people who are suffering in Ethiopia. In a certain way, they were correct. At that time, there was a vast propaganda campaign on both sides of war, so it was necessary for the church to be an unbiased voice for all those who became victims of the war, regardless of political and ethnic affiliation. But this was only a temporary solution. The permanent solution is to uproot the things that have brought the Ethiopian church and people into ethnic hatred and civil war.

For so many years, I assumed that the solution to Ethiopian society's social and political crises was national reconciliation and peace. But we have learned from the reconciliation and peace process in South Africa that for genuine reconciliation and peace to come, work must be done to change the community's mindset. Therefore, the more I think about the challenges of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the more I believe that spiritual formation can get to the root of the problem.

I piloted this program on a limited scale in two churches in two different U.S states. The response I got was more than satisfactory. After participating in the session and the discussion, the participants deeply reflected on their inner life and the current situation of their world. Overall, I realized from the conversations and feedback I had with the participants, both individually and in groups, that the project would make a great contribution to eliminating racial hatred in society, helping young people become participants in the church's life, and becoming a major source for ecumenical dialogue.

I started this doctoral program after 17 years of priestly ministry at Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the oldest churches in the world. It is no exaggeration to say that the Ethiopian Church is the icon of African Christianity. Despite many trials and tribulations over the past 1600 years, the church has been a faithful witness of Christ and a symbol of the unity and freedom of Ethiopians. "The church gave its people literature

with its grammar, hymns with their beauty, the faith with its order.”² I look forward to see what the Ethiopian Orthodox Church can do even now in the 21st century.

² Abba Gorgoryos (Bishop), *Yä-Etyopäya Orätodokəs Tāwahədo Betäkərəstyān Tarik* [History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church] (Addis Ababa: Tənsa’e Zä-Guba’e Printing Press, 1974 E.C), 10.

Doctoral Project

Part One:

Becoming All Flame:

Curriculum of Orthodox

Spiritual Formation

Preface

In the Orthodox spiritual formation, the liturgical life of the church and the monastic life plays a great role. As so many scholars have stated, the monasteries are the center of the Orthodox Church's spirituality. Along with monasticism, the liturgical life of the church, with its fasts and feasts, invites the congregation to participate in deep spiritual experiences. Yet, with these deep rich spiritual treasures, for some people, the church's experience seems more cultural, lacking spiritual impact in the day to day life of the faithful. It is considered a form without content. For that reason my NPO is: *The monastic tradition and liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is underutilized as far as addressing the need for spiritual formation and direction ministry.*

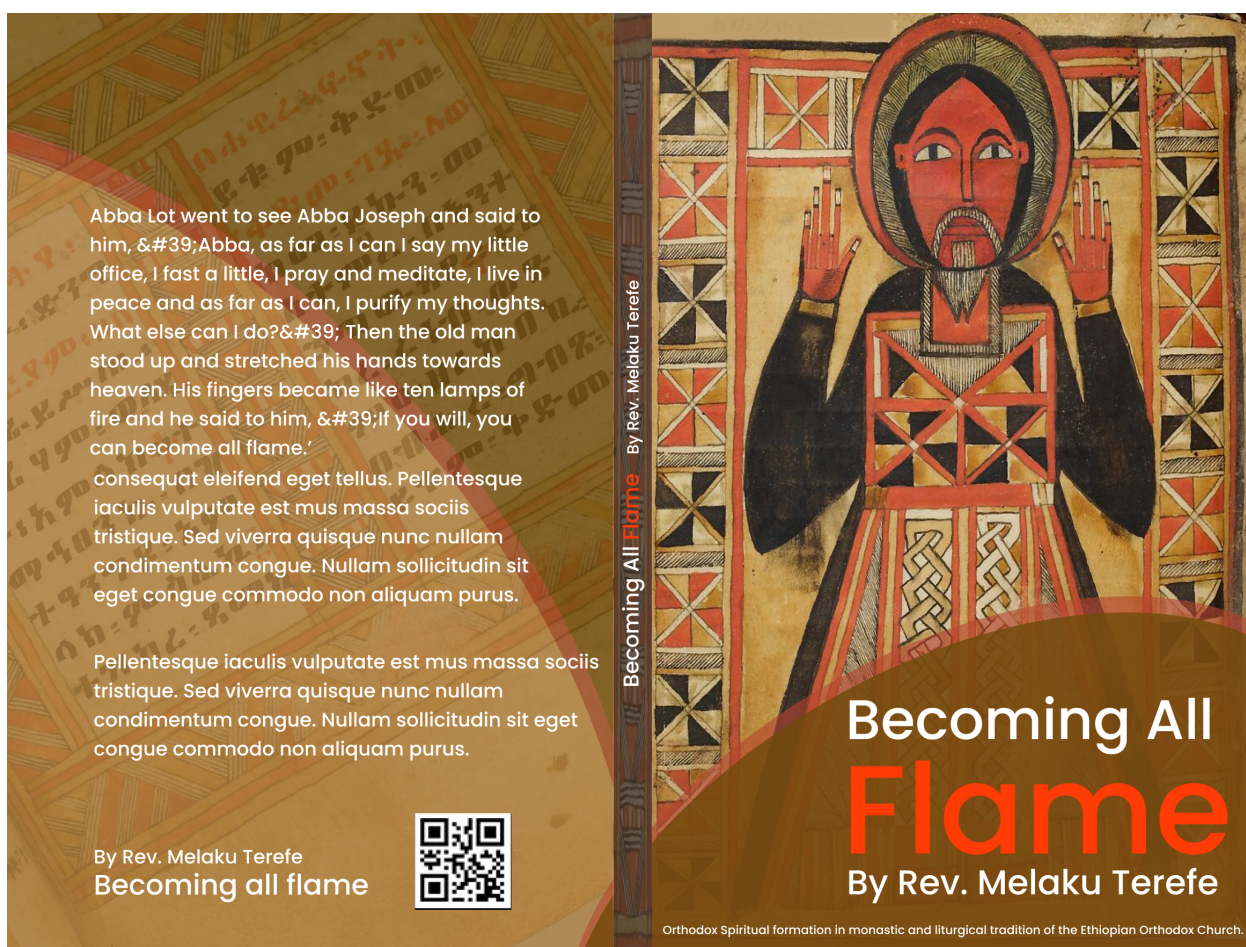
My NPO's root cause is the urgent need for spiritual renewal in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, especially among the youth, and the opportunity to use the church's rich liturgical and monastic traditions. As one of the ancient churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox church has ancient liturgical chants and monastic writings, but most of these materials are hidden from the public. Very few members of the clergy are knowledgeable enough to understand the content of these works of literature. Still, if we put aside the language barrier, we can find ancient wisdom for our time's challenges, and the spiritual hunger we are witnessing in our young people's lives will be satisfied with this wisdom. That is the core of my doctoral project.

The first part of the project includes Becoming All Flame (BAF), a curriculum on Orthodox spiritual formation implemented as an eight-week class. The project also includes selected Lenten meditations based on St. Yared's Lenten Antiphony. The project's main objective is to study the liturgical and monastic spirituality of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in relation to the ministry of spiritual formation. The primary audience of the curriculum is congregation, clergy and youth ministers in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For the last 20 years, I have been a priest at the Los Angeles Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Cathedral. For this very reason, the church I

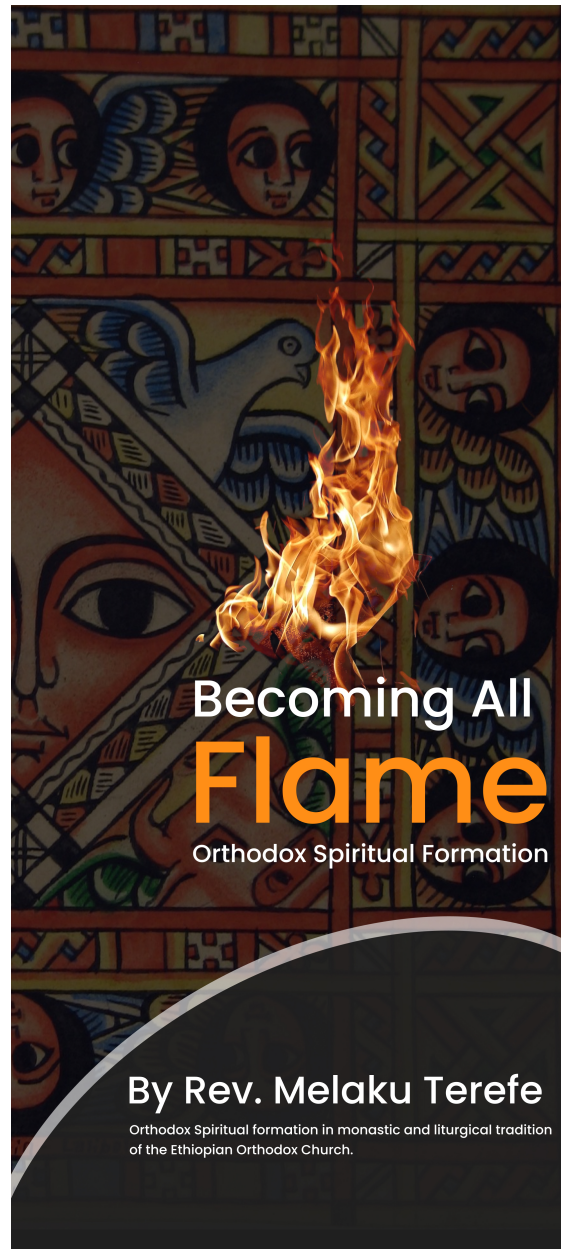
am serving and the diocese under whom I am serving will be the primary focus to launch my project. Although the EOTC is my primary audience, my hope is that this project will serve as vehicle for ecumenical dialogue.

The second part of the project contains mediations for the Lent Season. It is based on St. Yared's Antiphony for the Lenten season. It contains original English translations of St. Yared's works from Ethiopic (Ge'ez), the church's liturgical language, along with guiding meditations for each day of the Lenten season. We hope that with these guiding meditations, the participants of BAF will practice spiritual discipline daily throughout their Lenten season.

Book Cover for the BAF Workbook designed by Deacon Solomon



Poster for BAF Eight Weeks Sessions designed by Deacon Solomon



Session One: What is Spirituality

"He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:16-19



"The glory of God gives life; those who see God receive life. For this reason, God, who cannot be grasped, comprehended, or seen, allows himself to be seen, comprehended, and grasped by men, that he may give life to those who see and receive him. It is impossible to live without life, and the actualization of life comes from participation in God, while participation in God is to see God and enjoy his goodness." St. Irenaeus³

"We, who are carnal, mind the things of the flesh and do the works of the flesh and walk in the way of the flesh. But You taught us the work of the Spirit and make us to understand law of the Spirit and leads us in the way of the Spirit" Anaphora of St. Epiphanius⁴

Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about

- The meaning of spirituality
- The challenge of defining spirituality
- Orthodox spirituality and its characteristics.

Introduction: From Spirit to Spirituality

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality is derived from the Latin word *spiritus*. In the scripture, the Hebrew word "ruh" and the Greek "pneuma" translate as spirit. In Geez, the liturgical language of EOTC, it is called "menfes." The word indicates breath, the wind, the breath that gives life to the body, and the soul. When mentioned together with the body (gr. sark), the word refers to the invisible body of man. (2 Cor

³ Against Heresies Book IV, 20:5 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. I, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 489.

⁴ Anaphora of St. Epiphanius, No. 111, in EOTC Patriarchate Office, *The Liturgy of Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Tensae Publishing House, 2010), 326.

7:1; Col 2:5) In addition, it is the source of mind, emotions, and will, representing man's inner essence. (Sirach 9:9) In the New Testament, however, the word spirit, or pneuma mainly refers to the Holy Spirit, and the work He performs in the life of a believer. When the Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer, the believer becomes spiritual (pneumatikos). It refers to being led by the Holy Spirit.⁵

The New Testament writers use "pneuma" (spirit) and "pneumatikos" (spiritual) frequently to describe the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of believers. For example, in the Gospel of John, we find Jesus' teachings about the work of the Holy Spirit in human life, specifically on the topic of rebirth from the Holy Spirit, as well as the issue of worshipping in spirit and truth. (Joh 3:1-8; 4:23;) In his Gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke the Evangelist tells us how the Holy Spirit founded the first church.⁶

As we have read, the word "spiritual", indicates the work of the Holy Spirit in the believers and distinguishes the material from the immaterial. In The New Testament, we can see it being used as an adjective in several places. However, the noun "spirituality" is not written in the Bible; it was in recent years that it started widely being used to describe the state of the spiritual life. Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate bible, was the first to use the word spirituality as a noun.⁷ After Jerome, in the sixteen century, John Altensteig, in his *Vocabulary of Theology*, associated the word spirituality with religious life and spiritual discipline.⁸ The word became part of the broader discussion in spiritual matters after the 1932 publication of the French-language Dictionaire de spiritualité (Dictionary of Spirituality).

THE CHALLENGE OF DEFINING SPIRITUALITY IN OUR TIME

Nowadays, Spirituality is a trendy buzzword. From athletes to movie actors, from politicians to gurus, almost everyone invokes the word spirituality. With all its popularity, " 'spirituality' is an elusive word with a variety of definitions—some compelling, some nifty, some downright dangerous"⁹ It has become a word that everyone arbitrarily interprets as they wish. From listening to how different people express and interpret spirituality, spirituality can be understood as self-awareness, mindfulness, compassion, advocating for animals and nature, etc. The promoters of this

⁵ Peter Feldmeier, *Christian Spirituality: Lived Expressions in the Life of the Church* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2015), 11.

⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷ Bernard McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 25–41.

⁸ Feldmeier, *Christian Spirituality*, 12.

⁹ Bruce W Speck. "What Is Spirituality?" *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* No.104 (2005): 3.

kind of spirituality, the famous teachers of "spirituality" who we watch in the media, have become the ones who also justify what people want and desire for themselves. The listeners (followers) often hear about spirituality without a commitment from these spiritual gurus, who are " 'spiritual' but not religious."

When people say, "I am spiritual but not religious " they may be trying to indicate one of the following three things. The first meaning indicates that the person has a spiritual relationship with God, but is not a member of any religious institution. The second meaning indicates that they do not belong to an institution, even though they have taken their spiritual practice from other religious institutions. The third one is only to clarify that they believe "in some higher power". Although it is nice that spirituality has attracted the attention of many people, since it does not have an "institutional structure", the spirituality presented for public consumption has become "in the air, "which expands according to anyone's convenience."¹⁰

The interest so many people show in the spiritual things in our time should not be taken lightly. It should in fact be encouraged, because as scripture clearly says, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and thus the tendency to want and seek God is in their being. Therefore, this interest in spirituality we observe during our time is related to human identity. Yet, this tendency towards spirituality is due to the inability of people to bring peace and happiness through their methods and inventions, particularly through science and technology.

It is no secret that we as humans have tried to replace our hunger for God with human inventions and institutions thought to cure the problems of our existence. These global and continental institutions we established were not able to prevent our social and political crises. For instance, when the European industrial revolution arose, many thought that this would be an opportunity to create a utopia, to construct a heaven on earth. Yet the futility of human attempts to replace God were made apparent when World War I and II turned that human hope into ashes. Likewise, Marxism, which was supposed to liberate many from oppression, devolved into an ideology whose implementation caused human suffering throughout the world.

A similar flaw can also be seen in even religious institutions, which sometimes focus on inanimate and human activities instead of showing the work of God that is life; when they talk about God, it often turns into merely conveying information about God. This prideful endeavor to mold God in humanity's image and likeness has caused the human race to suffer a spiritual drought. Ultimately, this spiritual drought, and the culmination of failed attempts to quench the spiritual thirst, is "... either aridly rationalistic, consisting of definitions, explanations, diagrams, and instructions (whether by psychologists, pastors, theologians, or strategic planners), or impersonally functional,

¹⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 5.

consisting of slogans, goals, incentives, and programs (whether by advertisers, coaches, motivational consultants, church leaders, or evangelists)."¹¹

ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY AND ITS DEFINITION.

As the great Orthodox theologian Fr. Dumitru Staniloae put it, "Spirituality is union with God in Christ."¹² In this definition, we will understand four fundamental truths about Orthodox spirituality.

First, Orthodox spirituality is primarily about God. Defining spirituality in our time is challenging because it revolves around people. Therefore, the definition of spirituality is very much related to the ideology and needs of people. Orthodox spirituality, however, begins with God. When God created human beings in His image and likeness, He invited them into a wonderful fellowship. He called them to have a relationship with Him and ultimately to become a partaker of His divine nature. Therefore, the premise is that human beings were created in the image of God to become like their creator. Secondly, the center of Orthodox spirituality is Christ. God created human beings "in His image, according to His likeness." (Genesis 1:26). The Son, Jesus Christ, is called the image (icon) of God. Therefore, as St. Irenaeus said, man can reach the eternal goal God has planned through the incarnation of the Son. He says: They had found a way to communicate those memories via the cultural/religious feast, to us. He writes, saying:

This is the reason why the Word of God was made flesh, and the Son of God became Son of Man: so that we might enter into communion with the Word of God, and by receiving adoption might become Sons of God. Indeed, we should not be able to share in immortality without a close union with the Immortal. How could we have united ourselves with immortality if immortality had not become what we are, in such a way that we should be absorbed by it, and thus we should be adopted as Sons of God?¹³

For this reason, the incarnation of the Son is predestined from eternity. It is not based on the human condition or fallibility. As we will see in the future, if it is not through Christ, we cannot reach God and be one with God because He is the only mediator who can fill the gulf between the creator and the creation through His assumption of human nature.

This leads to the third tenet, which is that the goal of Orthodox spirituality is to be one with God. Many people think that spirituality is about improving their personal life, and identify self-

¹¹ Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 4.

¹² Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Monastery Seminary Press, 2002), Chap.1 Kindle.

¹³ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, III.19.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. I, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 448-449.

improvement as the central message. Some put freedom from spiritual or physical oppression as the goal of their spiritual life. While these can be a part of our spiritual life, the ultimate goal of spirituality is above and beyond these things. God created us to sanctify His name and inherit His glory. We are called to be partakers of His divine glory. In Orthodox spiritual teaching, this is called *theosis*.

This union with God in Christ is not a one-time event. It is a never-ending process. Staniloae expounding on his previous explanation says this: "The goal of Christian Orthodox spirituality is the union of the believer with God, in Christ. But as God is unending, the goal of our union with Him, or of our perfection, has no point from which we can no longer progress."¹⁴ This means there is no stopping place for spiritual growth—we are always growing.

Fourthly¹⁵, Orthodox spirituality is realized through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power but the third person of the Holy Trinity. In the New Testament, He is called "the other Paraclete."¹⁶ As the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed says, "we worship Him with the Father and the Son"¹⁷, who is also called paraclete (1 John 2:1). The Holy Spirit was sent to the disciples and those who believe in Jesus to teach them, guiding them into all truth. (John 14:13,26;20:22). Now, the Holy Spirit dwells and leads the Body of Christ, the church. According to Paul, a spiritual person is "taught by the Holy Spirit" and has the power of discernment to judge "spiritual things." Contrary to this, "the natural man" is a person who cannot receive or understand the Spirit of God. Therefore, because he is not filled or possessed by the Holy Spirit, "the wisdom of God" is foolishness to him (1 Cor 2:6:16).

Evagrius and the church fathers adopted this Pauline distinction, a distinction between "spiritual" (gr. pneumatic, of the Spirit) and "natural" (gr. psychic, of the unaided human soul). For this reason, when they call something spiritual they are indicating that it is from the Holy Spirit. For example, a spiritual father is one who has "received the charism of the Spirit."¹⁸

CHARACTERISTICS OF ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

1. Orthodox Spirituality is Trinitarian

When we say that Orthodox spirituality is Trinitarian, we are saying that in the salvation of human beings, the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is present. God has invited us to be in

¹⁴ Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.1 Kindle.

¹⁵ In this section I am heavily dependent on Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer According to the Patristic Tradition* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press,2002), 28.

¹⁶ Gr. Comforter, advocate, intercessor.

¹⁷ Prayer of Faith, Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

¹⁸ Evagrius, Epistula 52,7, quoted in Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels*, 29.

the perfect communion and unity of the three persons of the Trinity. In the high priest's prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for the church to have communion, which is present among the three persons of the Trinity. Because of this, we say the church is an icon of the Trinity. God has loved us in the perfect love which exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father has loved us with His eternal love. The Son became our redemption through His incarnation. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us and brings us to perfection. The apostolic benediction, which the church uses in its liturgy, explains this truth. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Cor. 13:14).

This balanced view saves us from forgetting or minimizing the work of any one of the three persons of the Trinity. It also helps us to understand the mystery of communion, which is of great significance in spiritual life, more deeply and intimately. "We are given an understanding of God that is most emphatically personal and interpersonal. God is nothing if not personal. If God is revealed as personal, the only way that God can be known is in personal response."¹⁹ Above all, when we make the mystery of the Trinity the basis of our spirituality, we stop relying on our understanding. Instead, we aim to approach God's deepest mystery and be amazed by it.

2. Orthodox Spirituality is Christological

When St. Paul talks about our baptism in Romans 6:3, he describes it as "baptized to be one with Christ Jesus." We are baptized to enter inside His body. This mystical union of being one with Christ is the foundation of our spiritual life. As the Lord said in His prayer:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (John 17:20-23)

This passage effectively contains the mystery of our entire salvation. Christ became human in order to make us partakers of His divine glory, which is what His prayer illustrates. In the prayer, the Lord tells us how we can participate in the divine life (Theosis). We reach His glory by becoming one with Him and becoming perfect in His image. This means that a spiritual life that is not centered in Christ is not a true spiritual life, and it does not lead us to God. "Christianity teaches that any other union with the divinity, thus that which isn't realized through Christ and in Christ, is an illusion, because Christ is the only 'Mediator' which God has given to man as a ladder to Him 'For in Him all the

¹⁹ Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 45.

fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the Blood of His Cross.' "²⁰

3. Orthodox Spirituality is Pneumatological

At the beginning of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church liturgy, the priest says, "How awesome is this day and how marvelous this hour wherein the Holy Spirit will descend from heaven and overshadow and hallow this sacrifice."²¹ In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the word spirituality mainly refers to the movement or activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no spiritual life. As the apostle St. Paul shows us, a spiritual person means someone the Holy Spirit guides. Therefore, to grow in spiritual life and lead a life of deep spiritual experience, it is necessary to be guided by the Holy Spirit. "This is why the Church, in all her sanctifying services, invokes the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit we are raised up to the divine world, or the divine world penetrates us. This changes us, with this our deification starts. This is what Orthodox spirituality, or our spiritual life, consists of."²² We chant this truth in the "*Epiclesis*" in our liturgy. "Grant us to unite through Your Holy Spirit and heal us by this oblation that we may live in you forever."²³

4. Orthodox Spirituality is ecclesial

One of the fundamental mistakes people make in interpreting spirituality today is that they see spirituality as an individualistic exercise. If spirituality means the life we have in Christ, then we can approach Christ as the head through His body the church (Romans 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12-13). Saint Cyprian said, "There is no salvation outside the church,"²⁴ showing the paramount role of the church, which is the body of Christ, in our salvation.

Saint Paul makes the following three points in his letter to the Ephesians, where he elaborates on the mystery of our salvation and the church. First, he identifies the church as the body and the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23). As the fullness of Christ, the church is His body, where Christ speaks and works, and His presence fills everything, that is, all creation in heaven and on earth. Second, the church is where God's mystery of salvation is revealed (Eph 3:8-11). God has carried out the eternal plan of salvation that He prepared before the creation of the world through His Son Jesus Christ, which is revealed through the church. Third, since the goal of salvation is to

²⁰ Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.1 Kindle.

²¹ Preparatory Service, 3.1 in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 35.

²² Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.4 Kindle.

²³ The Anaphora of the Apostles No.54 in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 110.

²⁴ Cyprian, "On the Unity of the Church," trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 5, chap. 6 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886).

be one with Christ, Christ purchased the church as His body by His blood to bring it into this ineffable life of unity.

The church is where this excellent mystery of salvation will be fulfilled until the end of the world. Thus, as the fathers gathered in Nicaea and Constantinople stated in their creed, the church is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic. We will not forget what God has done with the fathers and mothers of the past. Their teachings, prayers, and discipline will be our guide for our current spiritual life. Because of this, Orthodox spiritual life is just as patristic as it is ecclesial.

5. Orthodox Spirituality is Sacramental

In the Church, we receive the invisible grace of God through visible means, namely the water, the bread, the wine, and the oil. We call them the Mysteries of the Church, by which we receive the invisible grace through visible instruments. Any spiritual activities in the Orthodox Church are mysteries where we find grace, but following the western tradition there are seven main mysteries. These mysteries are the ones through which we believers experience the spiritual life, and through the Holy Spirit, grow to resemble Christ. These seven sacraments of the Church are: Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion, Penance, Crowning, Priesthood, and Unction of the sick.

The Orthodox Church has a reason for using the Greek term *mysterion* instead of the Latin word *sacramentum*. *Mysterion* means hidden or secret, which is revealed by the grace of God. The great *mysterion* is "the salvation of the world, now manifest in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word (Logos)."²⁵ Because of this, the word mystery refers to Christ in two ways. On the one hand, "Christ himself is the primordial mystery", and on the other hand, He is "the very celebrant of all the mysteries."²⁶

6. Orthodox Spirituality is Liturgical

The church is called by the Holy Spirit to worship God and to have fellowship with Him. The church is called a worshipping community because it achieves its identity and goal through worship.²⁷ It is no coincidence that worship is firmly connected to the identity and goal of the church. When God first brought this world into being, He created humanity in His likeness and image so that creation could have fellowship with Him. The creation of human beings, primarily in his image and likeness, is to bring creation to God, with human beings as a mediator, so that God's glory may be revealed in all of His creation. This approach of creation and the manifestation of God's glory in creation is realized through liturgical worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

²⁵ Alciviadis C. Calivas, "The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church," accessed October 20, 2022. <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-sacramental-life-of-the-orthodox-church>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Alciviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*. Vs. 3. Aspect of Orthodox Worship. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press), 1.

This liturgical worship is eucharistic. That means it is centered on the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. God showed His love for His creation by giving His only Son for the salvation of humankind. Therefore, the church gives thanks to God, who loves His creation, by placing the mystical lamb who redeemed His creation in her midst.

In the liturgy, as Olivier Clement said, "The eternal God, the unfathomable deep beyond all, takes us to Himself as a father does his child. He admits us to an area of non-death... His sweetness invades our heart, we thirst for Him, we long for all mankind to share this Joy of ours, we pray that all may be saved."²⁸

Just as the Orthodox liturgy is eucharistic, it is also scriptural. The Liturgy of the Word, where the reading of scripture takes place, is a central part of the liturgy. However, the role of the scripture is wider than just the liturgy. As we shall read in the following chapters, not only is Orthodox liturgy scriptural, but the entirety of Orthodox spirituality is scriptural, as reading and meditating on the Holy Scriptures are part of the daily spiritual life.

7. Orthodox Spirituality is Eschatological

The Lord began his earthly ministry by saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." The kingdom of God has two forms. On the one hand, it is "among us," or "within us." That means the kingdom of God is alive here and now through the body of Christ, the church. Therefore, when the priest reads the gospel in the liturgy, the deacon declares, "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." On the other hand, the kingdom of heaven is also what we are waiting for. We are called to be prepared like the faithful servants, using our talents, and like the wise virgins, carrying our oil and lighting our lamps. Because of this, watchfulness and vigilance are key words in Orthodox spirituality.

Orthodox teachers point out three types of eschatology.²⁹ At one extreme, there is an eschatology that has turned apocalyptic. According to this opinion, the kingdom of God is coming soon, so nothing is expected of people. It says that Christians should do nothing to change the status quo around them. Christians often take this kind of view when faced with a very hostile culture and situation around them. At the other extreme, there is a humanistic or optimistic understanding of eschatology. This type of eschatology tries to make heaven on earth by looking at history positively. Especially since the Enlightenment period, it has been manifested in various ideologies, especially in the West. This type of eschatology is the mindset of those who think that the New Jerusalem will be established on earth through human efforts. In other Orthodox countries, it often manifests itself in extreme nationalism with the prophecy that "a righteous king will reign."

²⁸ Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 199

²⁹ J. Meyendorff, "Does Christian Tradition Have a Future," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 26, no.3 (1982):141-144.

The third type is a prophetic eschatology which is in the middle of these two extremes, and is revealed in the Old and New Testament. Biblical prophecy is not simply about the future. The prophet speaks of the hope that God has prepared for His people and the coming judgment. By doing so, the prophet gives people the opportunity to make their own choices. When we say that Orthodox spirituality is eschatological, it does not mean that it is blindly prepared to accept what will come in the future. Here and now, we are fulfilling our responsibility on earth. At the same time, we are waiting for our hope, which is the coming of the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Based on what you have learned, describe spirituality in your own words.
2. Which of the listed characteristics of Orthodox spirituality have a great place in your spiritual life? why?
3. If there is a person or situation that has had a great influence in your spiritual life, please elaborate?

Session Two: Orthodox Spiritual Formation

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:2

"Faith is superior to rational methodologies when it comes to drawing the soul to assent. It is not the logical necessity of deductive proofs that engenders faith, but the activity of the Spirit." +Basil the Great³⁰

"Let your thought be above, and your heart in heaven, recognize where you stand; hear the word of righteousness and listen to the good news." + Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom³¹



Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about

- The meaning and character of spiritual formation
- The foundations of spiritual formation in EOTC
- The five steps which transform our spiritual life

What Is Spiritual Formation?

As we read in the previous chapter, the ultimate goal of spirituality is union with God in Christ.³² To reach this union, by the grace of God, we have to undergo a journey of being formed into the image of Christ, and this formation process is not instant but rather a lifetime process. In Orthodox spirituality, the formation process is inextricably linked with the church's worship life. The liturgy, the sacraments, the liturgical cycle of the church are integral parts of this process. This process touches every aspect of the believer's life. For an Orthodox Christian, this formation process is the center of the mystery of salvation.

The theologian Jeffrey T. Greenman's definition gets at the essence of spiritual formation. According to Greenman, "Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God's

³⁰ St. Basil the Great, "Homily on Psalm 115" No.1, in Basil the Great, *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*. Trans. With intro. and Annotations, Mark DelCogliano (Yonker, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 218.

³¹ Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, No.3 in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 328.

³² Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.1 Kindle.

grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”³³ According to this definition, spiritual formation is the activity of God’s uncreated energies in the believers and the response from believers to this grace.³⁴

One of the gifts of the Orthodox Church to the broader spiritual formation discussion is its teaching on the meaning of grace. In the West, much of the discussion is about what grace does. The question of what grace is has not arisen much. “The description of grace as ‘unmerited merit favor,’ valuable as it may be, does not tell us what grace itself is.”³⁵ We know that grace is from God. But what is its relationship with God? This kind of question does not come up very often, especially in the Protestant or Roman Catholic world. In the Orthodox spiritual life, “grace is a word for God’s work within us.” But when we say this, it is not just God’s work in us. Grace “is more than a relation of God to man; far from being an action or an effect produced by God in the soul. It is God Himself, communicating Himself and entering into an ineffable union with man.”³⁶

At the same time spiritual formation helps us to understand the role of the spiritual person in this world. One of the challenges in our churches is the lack of understanding of how “the necessary result of spiritual formation is an active participation in serving God and sharing in God’s work in the world”³⁷ For some believers, spirituality is a private exercise. There is a wall between their spiritual world and their daily relationship with this world. As the church fathers have emphasized time and time again, true spirituality happens in the context of the community.³⁸ Our relationship with others determines the outcome of our spirituality. As one theologian said, “a socially disengaged spirituality or Christianity is inconceivable and inexcusable.”³⁹

³³ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010), 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁵ James R. Payton. *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), Kindle Location 1932-1933.

³⁶ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, p. 59 in James R. Payton. *Light from the Christian East*, (Kindle Locations 3355-3356).

³⁷ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010), 27.

³⁸ Some people try to undermine the “active life” (the *praktikos*) by elevating the contemplative life (the *theoretikos*) and vice versa, but for monastic fathers and mothers, these two sections are not independents. They are two spiritual stages of one path. In theoretikos, the contemplative life is active life, yet in a higher degree. See Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer According to the Patristic Tradition* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), 33-37.

³⁹ David P. Gushee, “Spiritual Formation and the Sanctity of Life” in Greenman and Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit*, 113.

In this regard, an expanded definition of Christian spiritual formation lays out the "interactive"⁴⁰ process by which God the Father fashions believers into the image of His Son, Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, fostering development in our spiritual growth.

Through spiritual formation, God invites us to enter into the mystery beyond definition and arguments, accessible only through love and wonder and 'fear and trembling. 'He invites us to this experience, so that we can enjoy the divine-infused life. The ultimate goal of true spirituality is this divine life. "Living full and well is at the heart of all serious spirituality."⁴¹ We have to join the divine dance in communion with the Holy Trinity to have this full life. To experience that, God invites us through the incarnation of His Son to the holy community, the church.⁴² Although creation and history are part of the playing field of our spiritual life, the ultimate context of our spirituality is always the community. As we said, the ultimate goal of our spirituality is union with the triune God, and the church is the icon of the Holy Trinity in which we are experiencing the life-giving fellowship.

Why Do We Need Spiritual Formation?

The question of why we need spiritual formation leads us to why we need salvation. Many Christians are afraid to associate spiritual formation with salvation, Because they think of salvation as a one-time event with no human participation. But God's word tells us that salvation is a gift of grace that God gave through the work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the church testifies that Christ is "the truth, the way, and the life" (John 14:6) and that there is no other name of salvation given to us to be saved other than Him (Acts 4:12).

With the Holy Spirit within us, we can accomplish our salvation; in that regard, God's word says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil 2:12). This is the mystery of salvation given to us by Christ's becoming a man, His death and resurrection. This is not a one-time event, but a process that takes place until the life of the believer has wholly (in their body, soul, and spirit) united with Christ, and becomes a partaker of His divine nature. This process occurs when we participate in the church's life while we are on this earth.

PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

When the church says that Christ has saved us, it is through Christ's work of salvation, that is, through the mystery of the incarnation. Christ means the anointed one, the fulfillment the prophets, priests, and kings who were anointed in the Old Testament and served as shadows for the Messiah's coming. Christ saved us as the Prophet of prophets, the High Priest, and the King of Kings. As a prophet, He brought us to the knowledge of God. Sin had kept us ignorant, but now we have come

⁴⁰ The church fathers use the word "synergy" for this divine and human interaction.

⁴¹ Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 26.

⁴² Ibid., 24.

to know God through Christ, who has revealed God. He revealed to us who God is by words and deeds. He said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father," because He is one with the Father.

Adam was created to be the mediator, the priest of creation, one who brings the whole cosmos to God and represents creation before God, but because of sin, he could not accomplish this great mission. Christ, being the High Priest, offered Himself as a sacrifice and brought us to His Father (Hebrews 7:27). He redeemed us from death by His death. The devil and his army had imprisoned humanity, but now, through the saving work of Christ, the King, the kingdom of darkness has been overthrown. Christ, the King, destroyed the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the wonderful light (Col 1:13).

PASCHA FOR THE WHOLE COSMOS

Salvation is the reconciliation of creation with God. It is also the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose which is to recapitulate the world in Christ (Eph 1:10). God gave this plan to Adam, but because of the entrance of sin in his life, Adam could not do it. Christ, the second Adam, reconciled not only humanity and God but all the cosmos as a mediator between creation and God. St. Yared the Ethiopian in his Easter hymn, sang this:

Hallelujah! Let the heavens rejoice,
and the earth be joyful,
May the depth of the foundation [of the earth] blow the horn.
May the mountains and the hills shout, And all the trees of the forest.
Today is great joy in heaven.
Let the earth make Pascha,
It is cleansed by the blood of Christ.⁴³

This event of Pascha, realized by Christ's work of salvation, comes to us through the life of His body, the church. Therefore, spiritual formation is the process of making the salvation worked 2,000 years ago, a reality now, by participating in the divinity of Christ through His body, the church. We will read more in the chapters to follow about how this process of becoming one with God (theosis) takes place.

ORTHODOX SPIRITUAL FORMATION

As one of the ancient and historic churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a rich spiritual tradition. The Church's liturgical life based on well-established monastic and sacramental spirituality is a source of spiritual formation. The monastic and liturgical literature, the Church's feasting and fasting, and the liturgical cycle with the feast days of the saints, display the spiritual heritage of the Church. Yet, with all this spiritual heritage, for some, Orthodoxy is a mere repetition

⁴³ Habte Maryam Workneh, and others, eds. *Ämäsətu Säwatəwä Zemawoc* [The Five part of chants] (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam H.I.M. Printing Press, 1968), 387.

of events, whose external form remains without the inner content. For many people, being Orthodox is more about cultural obligation, and not for spiritual benefit in the believer's daily life. Because of this misunderstanding, the Church is in a deeper social and spiritual crisis. The best solution to get out of this crisis is to return to the Church's spiritual roots and reintroduce the spiritual formation in the context of its liturgical and monastic traditions.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, monasteries are the center of spirituality. By carefully studying the monastic books that the Church has, it is possible to apply the spiritual way of life that the monastic fathers and mothers practiced in our day-to-day life. We will look at this in more detail in the chapter written on monastic spirituality. In addition, the Church's liturgical cycle, feast days, and fasting seasons, serve as great spiritual means for the growth and shaping of our spiritual life. The Ethiopian Church has more than two hundred fasting days in a year, the largest number of fasting days among the historical churches. The Ethiopian Church also observes major and minor feasts of the Lord. In addition, the feasts of the Holy Virgin Mary, angels, martyrs, and saints are also celebrated. All these observances are great instruments for spiritual formation.

To reach this lofty goal, we must have activities touching the two aspects of spiritual life. On the one hand, we must see God everywhere in our daily life. We must see God in our family, workplace, and in our daily enjoyment of life. On the other hand, we must look toward to the finality of our main goal, which is the union of the believers with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. When we say Orthodox spirituality is eschatological, we look forward to the great hope that will be revealed in the future while we work out our salvation every day in our present life. By this, we become partakers of the glory of God. By being partakers of Christ's life through the church every day, we imitate him and wait in hope for his glorious appearance.

Steps toward Spiritual Formation

THE FIRST STEP: PARTICIPATING IN THE DIVINE LIFE THROUGH DIVINE LITURGY AND SACRAMENTAL SPIRITUALITY.

When we experience a deeper spiritual life, we will be blessed with the gift of knowledge from God and ourselves. In Orthodox theology, knowledge is not mere information; it requires intimate relationships to acquire it. To have authentic spirituality and to acquire the knowledge of God and ourselves, we must participate in the life of the divine. The church is the body of Christ, and when we participate in its life, we participate in the divine life. As St. Paul said, the church is "His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:3). The church participates in the divine life through worship. "The church is primarily a worshipping community,"⁴⁴ worshipping its creator and redeemer.

This knowledge of God comes from participating in the life of the church through the divine liturgy and mysteries (sacraments). In Orthodox spirituality, liturgy holds the highest place from any other

⁴⁴ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in theology and Liturgy*, 1.

activities. It summarizes our belief and our life in Christ. Prayer, spiritual hymns, repentance, communion with saints⁴⁵, and the holy kiss⁴⁶ is practiced in the liturgy. Our salvation through the person, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated in the liturgy. For this reason, we can say that through the liturgy, we celebrate our faith.⁴⁷ In the midst of that celebration of faith, we will have communion with our redeemer's Eucharist. "The Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, is present to His people, fulfilling His promise to be in their midst when they gather together in His Name."⁴⁸ The theologian Susan K Wood summarized what happens in the liturgy as such.

Within the liturgy we come to know ourselves and God because the liturgy orders our relationship with Him: my relationship to others within the body of Christ sacramentally constituted within the Eucharist, my relationship to God as a recipient of God's graciousness, my relationship to the world by being not only sent, but missioned and commissioned to live ethically within history as has been experienced in the meta-historical time and space of the liturgy. In short, in the liturgy we do not acquire knowledge about God; we acquire knowledge of God.⁴⁹

As we saw in the previous chapter, Orthodox spirituality is sacramental. This is attained, through the visible nature, (the water, the oil, the wine, and the bread), to find the invisible grace of God. These church mysteries "communicate the supernatural life of the risen Christ to the faithful, drawing them closer and closer to the full union with God that is consummated in heaven."⁵⁰ Therefore, in the absence of these mysteries, spiritual life cannot be imagined. These mysteries are not reserved for certain "spiritual elites."

As their names indicate, they are church mysteries given to all believers who enter the church by baptism. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one of the things that has led to a severe spiritual crisis is the absence of the believers from the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist,

⁴⁵ The communion of the saints is the unity between the believers of the church on earth (the militant church) and the departed believers and angels in heaven (the triumphant church). We commemorate and remember them, and they intercede and pray for us, which is signified by the censuring of the church.

⁴⁶ In the Divine Liturgy, the holy kiss is a form salutation that is done by the congregation before the beginning of the Anaphora. It is a demonstration of the *agape*, or fellowship love the believers have with one another.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹ Susan K. Wood, "Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy" *Studia Liturgica* 29 (1999), 30. Quoted in Calivas *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*, 10

⁵⁰ Roger W. Nutt. *General Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 185.

which are essential for their spiritual life. Scholars and leaders who have noticed this deficiency have worked hard to bring a eucharistic renewal, but there is still much work to be done. The main goal of this spiritual formation education is to lead to a life of sacrament and repentance.

THE SECOND STEP: FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF ANCIENT CHRISTIANS TO WORK OUT OUR SALVATION.

Abba Poemen, one of the desert fathers, says: "Go, and join a man who fears God, and live near him; he will teach you, too, to fear God"⁵¹ This journey of being like God and sharing the glory of God is not lonely. We need those who are strong in the spiritual practices. "More important than all possible books if we are climbing a mountain for the first time, we need to follow a known route; and we also need to have with us, as companion and guide, someone who has been up before and is familiar with the way. To serve as such a companion and guide is precisely the role of the "abba" or spiritual father."⁵² Sometimes we face spiritual challenges. As we enter into more trials, we need those spiritual guides who have deep spiritual experience, to guide us through our tribulations, so we do not fall in despair because of the trials we face. In the Orthodox spiritual life, the spiritual father has a great place. In Ethiopia, this spiritual guide is called "father of the soul". It is a translation to the Greek word *pneumatikos pater*.

In Orthodox spirituality, just as we have to have spiritual guides who are now present in the flesh and strong in faith, it is also necessary to mold our lives by reading the lives of the saints. That is why, it is said in the previous section that Orthodox spirituality is patristic. For example, in monastic spirituality, novice monks are advised to follow the example of those who preceded them in experience and age, so they are made to read the stories of the saints of the past. This practice is not just for novice monks. In fact, during mealtime in the monasteries, no personal chat is allowed; instead, the whole community listens to the lives and teachings of saints while they are eating.

THE THIRD STEP: EXAMINING OUR DAILY ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF THE HEART

Christianity in our time, is exposed to many challenges. Living a "Christian life" full of hypocrisy without any transformation of life has become a common practice and a sign of the times. The main reason for this is that people forget their inner life. They think that doing various external activities is Christianity's goal. But as the Orthodox fathers tell us, we can access true spirituality only through the heart because Christ resides in our hearts. For that reason, the fathers say that, spirituality is a descent into the heart.

⁵¹Benedicta Ward (trans.), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: Mowbray, 1975),148.

⁵² Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, "The Spiritual Guide in Orthodox Christianity" (part one) accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.pravmir.com/article_640.html#_ftnref1.

Although our hearts are in our inner being, it is very challenging to reach, especially in this day and age, where many things are keeping us from reaching our hearts. There are so many distractions that catch our eyes and steal our thoughts. In a world where we hear so many noises, we don't have time to listen to ourselves. If we do not silence this noise, the journey to the heart will not be successful. To do this, we should have time to weigh our daily activities and the daily movement of our hearts.

How much time do we spend without realizing what is happening around us? Avoiding this "autopiloting" of our daily activities and "returning to the heart" is at the core of all spirituality. To return to our hearts, we must have time to watch the movement of our hearts on a daily basis. There is a time in our daily activity when we are close to God. There is also a time when we do something that takes us away from God; If we are happy, sad, or become a source of happiness for others, we must examine those emotions. This examination will help us to locate the spiritual wounds and flaws in our life, and present them to God for healing.

When have we taken the time to truly rest? Living a restful life or Sabbath is key to instilling a calm, self-reflecting life. Sabbath observance has a great place in the spiritual life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Saint Yared's hymns, along with the Divine Liturgy, speak in-depth about it. But now, for many, the Sabbath has become a concept that only means participating in church gatherings on Sunday mornings. Yet, the Sabbath is more than that. God has given us a day to rest our bodies, souls, and spirits, therefore we should spend it thanking God and obeying that spiritual calling. The life of silence and solitude before God, keeping oneself away from daily activities, and withdrawing from crowds, is also an important spiritual exercise to access our hearts. When our body, soul, and spirit gets this rest, silence, and calmness, it receives the strength to listen to itself in depth.

THE FOURTH STEP: CREATING SPACE FOR OTHERS IN OUR LIVES THROUGH HOSPITALITY, ALMSGIVING, AND ADVOCATING FOR THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED.

When we say that God has called us to a wonderful communion, this communion or fellowship is not only with God but also with our neighbors. As we find in the Old and New Testaments, loving God and loving our neighbor are the two aspects of spirituality. (Deuteronomy 6:4) We show this love for our neighbors when we have an open heart for others. When we read the history of God's people, almsgiving, hospitality, and helping the poor are virtuous activities that please God.

In Ethiopian Orthodox spirituality, hospitality has a great spiritual value. Even now in our time, most Ethiopian Christians welcome strangers to their homes, putting food on the table and washing their feet. They call the stranger "God's guest." It reminds us that we should accept our guests as if God is our guest. According to the tradition of the church fathers, Abraham received God because it was his custom to welcome guests.

In addition, almsgiving is a spiritual practice that makes us open our hearts to others. It is one of the three spiritual experiences the Lord raised in his Sermon on the Mount. He often made it the subject of His lessons. Orthodox fathers have advised us to make almsgiving a part of our spiritual life. Most

notably, St. John Chrysostom repeatedly taught about almsgiving in his homilies. He described almsgiving as an "excellent counselor, the queen of the virtues, who quickly raises human beings to the heavenly vaults."⁵³ That is why St. James calls almsgiving and supporting the poor the "pure and undefiled religion." (James 1:27) Advocating for the poor is not an alternative political ideology, but it is the heart of spirituality.

St. John Chrysostom and the church fathers realized the connection between almsgiving and repentance. He said, "Give to the poor, so that even if you keep silent (and thousands upon thousands of mouths defend you) almsgiving will take your side and plead on your behalf. Almsgiving is the salvation of the soul. For this reason, just as wash basins are found before the church's doors filled with water, so that you may wash your hands, the poor sit outside of the church so you may wash the hands of your soul. Have you washed your physical hands with water? Wash the hands of your soul with almsgiving."⁵⁴ Our relationship with the poor is alienated in our time, especially in the West. Therefore, to think of the poor and to practice almsgiving, we should include it in our weekly and monthly spiritual plans and practice it as a way of life.

THE FIFTH STEPS: UNDERSTANDING THAT SPIRITUALITY IS A LIFETIME PROGRESSION REQUIRING DAILY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (ASCETICISM).

St. Paul uses the analogy of running and wrestling, popular sports in the ancient world, to describe the spiritual disciplines. In 1 Cor 9:24-27, he says, "Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection," and elsewhere he says, "If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.... Be diligent to present yourself approved to God.... "(2 Tim 2:5,15).

Monastic spirituality shows how Christians can put this advice of St. Paul into practice. The monastic fathers and mothers used the term asceticism to describe this spiritual exercise. The word *askesis* is a Greek term that refers to athletic training. So for the fathers, monasticism is a way of life that trains the inner person to combat the passions of this world. For that reason, they called the monasteries a training ground. According to Fr. Staniloae, the goal of asceticism is "to free our nature not only from the movements of sinful appetites, but also from the ideas that appear in the mind after cleansing from passions. This is only to gain its independence from created things, which have enslaved our nature by the passions, and make it long more for God."⁵⁵

⁵³ John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998.), 30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁵⁵ Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.1 Kindle.

This goal of the ascetic life, which Father Staniloae has described, is necessary not only for those who live in monasteries, but for all Christians who want to have an authentic spiritual life. True Orthodox spirituality is ascetic, which means it is a life illustrated in the life of prayer, fasting, prostration, solitude, silence, and reading scripture in the daily life.

For Discussion

1. How much have you used the spiritual tradition that the Orthodox Church gave you? Is there anything preventing you from using it?
2. The absence of spiritual disciplines in our day-to-day life is not because of the lack of interest in spirituality. We do not have daily, weekly, or monthly plans for our spiritual life. As we can see when discussing spiritual discipline, spiritual discipline is daily training with dedicated time. Managing your time according to your spiritual needs is what monastic fathers and mothers called the "rule of life." It is how we use our time working on our relationship, with God, ourselves, family, and society, including creation. This week, in prayer, prepare an actionable daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly "rule of life."

Session Three: Spirituality and the Human Condition

Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain.
He is like the beasts *that* perish. (Ps.49:12)

"Let us make" suggests deliberation, collaboration, and conference with another person. So, what is it whose pending creation is granted so great an honor? It is humanity, the greatest and most marvelous of living beings, and the creation most worthy of honor before God. St. John Chrysostom⁵⁶



Everything good is given as a gift by the Lord, and whoever believes that this is true will not lose the good, that he has been given. Steadfast faith is a strong tower, and Christ becomes everything for the person who has faith. +St. Mark the Monk⁵⁷

⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Sermons on Genesis, quoted in Louth, A., & Conti, M. (Eds.). *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 28.

⁵⁷ St Mark The Monk, "On the Spiritual Law" No. 2 in *St Mark the Monk, Counsels on the Spiritual life*, Trans. Tim Vivian and Augustine Casidy (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 92.

Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about

- The honor bestowed on humanity
- The Image of God in humanity
- The Fall and its implication

The Honor and Dignity of Being Human

When we talk about Spirituality and spiritual formation, we must start by considering the nature of human beings and their relationship with the Creator. To do that, we have to discuss the image of God, which is "the birthplace of Christian spiritual formation,"⁵⁸ and the impact of the Fall on the spiritual life of humankind. Throughout church history, the image of God has been discussed from different perspectives. Some identify the divine image with human rationality, others identify the image in humanity's unique relationship with God and their fellow creation. Finally, others define the image of God as the ability to imitate God and become one with Him.⁵⁹

Human beings were created in God's image to have a union with God, but the fall of humanity changed the course of this journey. Human beings became separated from God, and corruption, disintegration, and death became a part of human nature.⁶⁰ In this section, we will see how God created human beings in His image and how the fall of human beings affected their relationship with God and creation.

The Church Fathers and the Creation Story

In the history of the church, when we talk about the fathers of the church who taught expansively about creation, St. Irenaeus and the Cappadocian fathers come to mind. Based on his dispute with the Gnostics, St. Irenaeus wrote an important book that laid the theological foundation for the church called *Against Heresies* (*Adversus Haereses*). The Cappadocian Fathers, whether it was St. Basil with his writing the *Hexameron*, or St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Nazianzus with their treatises and poems, taught extensively about human nature.⁶¹ According to the teachings of these

⁵⁸ Diane J Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶¹ When St. Basil analyzed the creations of the six days in his *Hexameron*, he stopped on the sixth day without saying much on the creation of humankind. After his death, Saint Gregory of Nyssa wrote *On the Making of Man* to complete what his brother had begun. See Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Making of Man," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Vol.5) Gregory of Nyssa Dogmatic treatises: Second Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1892).

fathers, in order to understand the creation and order of this world (cosmology), they stressed that it is necessary to understand human nature, and that we should start from it.⁶²

Humanity's ability to perceive and understand nature makes them different from other creatures. As St. Gregory said, "For he alone has worthily considered the creation of God who truly was created after God, and whose soul was fashioned in the image of Him."⁶³ To understand our spiritual life, we must first understand our nature. Who are we? What makes us different from other creatures? What motivates us to think and reflect on our relationship with God, nature, and ourselves? We can answer these similar questions when we think about ourselves in depth.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED AS THE CROWN OF GOD'S CREATION

Since God created humankind in His image and likeness, humans are a higher and more special being than all the creatures that God created. Psalm 8 presents this wonderful glory of man in its most beautiful expression. He says:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands.
You have put all *things* under his feet,
All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas (Psalm 8:3-8).

When we understand the true nature of humanity, how God created us with honor and has an eternal plan for us, then we can realize what we lacked or lost when Adam and Eve fell into Satan's temptation. When we understand the height of our glory, then we will start to think about how we should lead our lives towards that eternal plan that God has prepared for us. In the Nicene Creed, we call God the Father "creator of heaven and earth (gr. *Pantokratos*), the visible and invisible." About God the Son, we say, "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made, neither in heaven nor on earth." When we talk about God's Holy Spirit, we say, "We believe in the

⁶²Jaroslav, Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 120.

⁶³Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Making of Man," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Vol.5) Gregory of Nyssa Dogmatic treatises: Second Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1892), 387.

Holy Spirit, who is the Lord, the one who gives life." God created the world with what St. Irenaeus calls "the two hands of God" with His Word and His Breath.⁶⁴ The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the world, one God in His Trinity. The crown and conclusion of His creation is humanity.

"LET IT BE" OR "LET US MAKE"

When David says "the work of your fingers" about the heavens and the earth, he is talking about humans. God created the others by saying, "let it be." But when He created human beings, He created us after a Trinitarian deliberation with His two hands, His Word and Spirit. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). He formed him from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life. Again, the scripture says, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7).

The church fathers expound in great detail the phrase "let us make". For example, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, this phrase shows the dignity and honor of human beings. He says:

This same language was not used for (the creation) of other things. The command was simple when light was created; God said, "let there be light." Heaven was also made without deliberation.... These, though, were before (the creation of) humans. For humans, there was deliberation. He did not say, as He did when creating other things, 'Let there be man.' See how worthy you are! Your origins are not in an imperative. Instead, God deliberated about the best way to bring to life a creation worthy of honor.⁶⁵

We understand three things when contemplating the truth of God's creation. First, God is the source of our existence; it is God who brought us from non-existence to existence. I did not create myself; my creator is God. He is the reason for my existence. Second, when we say God is our creator, we are also saying He is our sustainer. It is not our wisdom and ability that has sustained us today, but God's providence and protection. "In Him, we live and move" (Acts 17:28). It is God who established and supported the world. Third, the God who created us and this visible and invisible world is a God who is infinite in His wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, He created us with a purpose. God did not create us under any obligation. He who created us did not need us for Him. He made us with His love and grace. He created us to inherit His glory, to be partakers of His divine nature, and to have fellowship with Him. Consequently, our longing and eternal desire is to be with our creator.

⁶⁴ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 46.

⁶⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Origin of Man*, quoted in Louth, A., & Conti, M. (Eds.). *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 28

"LET US MAKE" AND ITS TRINITARIAN INTERPRETATION

Like his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil the Great also interpreted the phrase "Let Us make" with a trinitarian interpretation. St. Basil's exposition of the text "shows that the persons of the Trinity took council among themselves about creating the human being. Basil explains that this supports the Nicene faith by identifying the Son and Spirit as co-creators with the Father."⁶⁶ In his homily *On the Origin of Humanity* he said:

You have that there are two persons, the one who speaks and the one whom the speech is addressed. Why did he not say, 'Make,' but, 'Let us make a human being'? That you may know the sovereignty, that in acknowledging the Father you may not reject the Son; that you may learn that the Father created through the Son, and the Son created by the Father's will; that you may glorify the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷

HUMAN BEINGS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The scripture recounts humankind's creation, writing: "God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion ... So, God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them." (Gen 1:26-28). In Orthodox spirituality, humanity as the image and likeness of God is a necessary truth, which the early church fathers discussed in greater detail. If we do not fully understand this truth, we will not be able to fully understand and experience the spiritual life.

God created us in the image of His Son.

About this great mystery, St. Irenaeus, the follower of the apostles, says this. "Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modeled after, His own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God."⁶⁸ Again in *On the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus said:

But He fashioned man with His own Hands, taking the purest, the finest of the earth, and mixing with the earth. In due measure, His own power; and because He sketched upon the handiwork His own form—in order that what would be seen should be godlike, for man was placed upon the earth fashioned in the image of God and that he might be alive, 'He breathed into His face a breath of life': so that

⁶⁶ St. Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. with an introduction by Nonna Verna Harrison (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 21.

⁶⁷ St. Basil the Great "On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1" in St. Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, 33.

⁶⁸ Irenaeus, "Against Heresies (Adversus Hereses)," 5.6.1 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 531.

both according to the inspiration and according to the formation, man was like God.⁶⁹

In this explanation, St. Irenaeus gives us three essential truths. Firstly, we see that the creation of the first man in the image and likeness of God is the work of the three persons of the Trinity. Secondly, God the Father created human beings in the image of His Son. Therefore, through the Son, human beings can attain perfect godliness, which is why the Son of God became man later. Thirdly, God the Holy Spirit transforms people to become like the image of the Son and makes them perfect children of God through grace.

God's image is in the body, soul and spirit of human beings

In the image of God, we find the meaning of being human. According to Irenaeus, all parts of the person, including the body, soul, and spirit are bearers of the divine image. Some think God's image is only in the human spirit or soul and does not include the body. Irenaeus, however, saw the danger of this kind of thinking. He said, "For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of the man, but certainly not *the* man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was molded after the image of God."⁷⁰ St. Irenaeus used to emphasize this to defend the church from the false teaching of the Gnostics, who taught that the body is inferior and created by another lesser god.

THE DANGER OF THE UNBALANCED VIEW

Ignoring the truth about these three parts of humankind leads to much spiritual harm. Those who think that human beings are only physical, have forgotten the most important aspect of the person, which is the spiritual. Again, those who try to disparage the body and focus only on spiritual things have fallen into many mistakes. They considered every material thing evil and, for that reason, they, "forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods" led their followers to extreme asceticism. The apostles and the church rejected their teaching and called it the "doctrine of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

Because we are Created in the Image of God, we have a Special Honor.

In his interpretation of Leviticus, Origen said, "Understand that you are another universe, a universe in miniature; that in you there are sun, moon, and stars too."⁷¹ This is an important fact. According to the Nicene creed and the teaching of the church fathers, the cosmos is divided into two realms:

⁶⁹ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 46.

⁷⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies (Adversus Hereses)*, 5.6.1).

⁷¹ Origen, *Fifth Homily on Leviticus*, 2.

the visible and the invisible. "Everything in creation belongs to either one or the other of these two realms, except humanity. Only human beings were created with both spiritual and material components."⁷² For this reason, "humanity is a microcosm the whole of creation in small, the unique partaker of both realms."⁷³

The truth that humans are created in the image of God is great and transcendent. As the image of God, humanity also holds the attributes of God within themselves. As St. Gregory of Nyssa said, "An image is not truly an image if it does not possess all the characteristics of its pattern."⁷⁴ Therefore, the biggest problem for us is that we are short of words to express the fact that we are created in the image of God. "Our spiritual dimension, which is precisely that wherein are the image of our Creator, is beyond our ability to explain."⁷⁵

Created for Communion

Because human beings are created in the image of God, they are in communion with God. When we talk about fellowship or communion with God, firstly, this fellowship is due to God creating humans with free will or with true freedom. Human beings find their true identity and freedom in this fellowship with God. When that unity is broken, human beings will die a spiritual death for they have no life within them. To be alive, human beings must have an eternal fellowship with God. This fellowship comes from being created in the image and likeness of God. St. Gregory Nazianzus said, "In my earthly nature I am attached to life here below, while I also have in me a portion of the godhead; there before my heart is tormented by the desire for the world to come."⁷⁶

The Crown of God's Creation

God created human beings after He finished creating everything that human beings need, just as a king enters his palace when everything is in order.⁷⁷ David says first, "You crowned him with glory and praise." It indicates that God created man as different from other creatures. Human beings are appointed over all creation as kings, prophets, and priests. A king to rule creation, a priest to be

⁷² James R. Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), Chap.6 Kindle.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Making of Man," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Vol.5) Gregory of Nyssa Dogmatic treatises: Second Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1892), 390.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Gregory of Nazianzen, *Dogmatic Poems*, 8 quoted in Olivier Clement, *Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 79.

⁷⁷ Gregory of Nyssa *Dogmatic treatises*, 387.

the mediator between creation and God, a prophet to announce God's will to creation. The image and likeness in humanity indicate that human beings have received God's extraordinary love. God, indeed, loves the world, but His love for humankind is special (John 3:16). Through this love, God gave to human beings wisdom and reason.

We are Created in the Image of God to Progress into Perfection

Beginning with St. Irenaeus, the fathers taught that Adam and Eve were created with the ability to grow to perfection. Bunge, when discussing the patristic interpretation of the Divine Image, says: "the Fathers profoundly interpret [the image of God] 'As the image of the Divine Image' (Origen), of the Son, therefore, who alone is the 'image of God' in the absolute sense".⁷⁸ God created man in His image and gave him the grace to grow into the likeness of His Son. But St. Irenaeus tells us that although human beings were created to have communion with God, it was not possible at the outset for human beings to have full communion with God. "For it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But in as much as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect."⁷⁹ Adam was created in God's image to progress into God's likeness, to the point of participating in the uncreated. This growth into God's likeness was accomplished by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Based on this patristic interpretation, Ethiopian scholars also said Adam was created "to be renewed after a thousand years."⁸¹

God created Adam and Eve with freedom. He made them in His image, with the freedom to have genuine communion with Him, as only a free relationship can be a true relationship. They were given the "tree of life," a meditation tree, so that they could know creation in God and present creation to God's glory, as well as meditate on the eternal life they will have with God.⁸² Although they were not created with full perfection, according to St. Irenaeus, Adam and Eve were created with an innocent, and childlike mind. Irenaeus says, "Adam and Eve... were naked and were not ashamed, since there was in them an innocent and childlike mind and they thought or understood nothing whatsoever of those things which are wickedly in the soul through lust and shameful desires, because, at the time, they preserved their nature intact ...and thus 'they were not ashamed' , kissing and embracing each other in holiness as children."⁸³ But God covered this nakedness with

⁷⁸ Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer According to the Patristic Tradition* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), 12

⁷⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies (Adversus Hereses)*, 4.38.3.

⁸⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies (Adversus Hereses)*, 4.38.3.

⁸¹ *Commentary on the Two Books (Genesis and Exodus) of the Old Testament*, 24.

⁸² Olivier Clement, *Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 84.

⁸³ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 48.

light, as St. Ephraim the Syrian said⁸⁴. God planned for human beings, with this childlike mind, to grow into holiness and share in God's glory. But they fell from this honor by listening to Satan's advice.

The Fall and its Consequences

Instead of living forever by meditating on God and having fellowship with Him, Human beings sought a life independent from God. They listened to the advice of Satan instead of God. When they heard the serpent's words saying, "you will be like God," they wanted to be God. Because of this, the Orthodox fathers say that the first sin of human beings is idol worshiping. Human beings worshiped the created instead of the creator. They worshiped themselves. This selfishness led human beings to go against the will of God and creation. Because they listened to the creature instead of the Creator and turned their faces away from God, corruption and death came to their lives. The Anaphora of St. Athanasius puts the consequence of the fall as follows: "Oh, You did show the hard hearted man death and life, but he desired death and disdained life... Man who had been clothed with a garment of light let his body be found naked and was covered with garments of skin."⁸⁵

THE FALL AND THE CREATED WORLD

Before the fall, Adam's relationship with God was that of father and son. St. Luke the evangelist describes the first man as, "Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). His life was full of praise and worship. It was fearless and worry-free. However, when sin and rebellion reigned in his heart, he fought with God, himself, and creation. He began to view God with hostility. God called him to a fellowship, but he ran away from God. The source of his life was this fellowship, but now he lost his life because he turned his face away from God. Corruption and death became his. As Saint Paul wrote: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Rom. 5:12)

Humans were created as a mediator, the ones who bring creation to its fullest glory. After the fall, they became the ones who sowed separation and discord between themselves and creation. Environmental pollution and climate change are the direct evidence of the division produced by human beings within the created world—the result of this selfishness and self-worship. Before the fall, when God gave all of creation to Adam, Adam received creation with thanksgiving. He saw God's grace in creation. He saw creation "in a eucharistic way, as a sacrament of communion with God... as a gift to be offered back in thanksgiving to the Giver."⁸⁶ After the fall, human beings began to see creation and other human beings not as a gift but as a possession presented for exploitation.

⁸⁴ Ephrem the Syrian. *Hymns on Paradise*. 5.5.

⁸⁵ Anaphora of St. Athanasius, No. 25-26 in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 138.

⁸⁶ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 77.

THE FALL, FREE WILL, AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

The temptation, which was the reason for the fall of humanity, originated from Satan. Satan, “a liar and the father of it” is the one who awakens evil from his own heart (Jn.8:44). The Holy scripture teaches that demons exist and are the source of evil and that God defeated them through the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ. The existence of demons and their evil deeds are not imaginary, which is evident in today's world of misery. Orthodox monastics and spiritual writers have written extensively about Satan and his armies' temptations, evil deeds, and the destruction they bring to humanity. For example, St. Anthony wrote extensively on their struggle with Satan. Another notable example is Evagrius the Solitary, who wrote extensively about the temptation Satan brings to our minds.

Ultimately, while the temptation was Satan's, human beings fell of their own free will. Thus, many people question why God created humanity with free will. The answer given by the Orthodox fathers is that God created humans with free will because He is the God of love. “Love implies sharing and love also implies freedom. As a Trinity of Love, God desired to share His life with created persons made in His image, who would be capable of responding to him freely and willingly in a relationship of love. Where there is no freedom, there can be no love.”⁸⁷ Therefore, because God shared his love with humans and created them not as robots but in His likeness with freedom, they sinned of their free will and free choice.

God created human beings with free will. He created them to rule over the cosmos, but after the fall, human beings subjected themselves to the mind of the creature, the serpent. Since they voluntarily surrendered their freedom to the creature, now they become a slave to the material world and its desire. They put themselves under the passion of the flesh. But this does not mean that human beings have entirely lost their free will. On the contrary, the image of God has faded, faded, but has not disappeared.

For Discussion

1. What does the Orthodox Church teach about what human dignity has to do with modern human rights thinking?
2. What has this lesson taught you about yourself?
3. In what way does this teaching prevent the division and hatred associated with race in our time? What is the message that the church should convey in this regard?

⁸⁷ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 75-76.

Session Four: Prayer and Formation of the heart (Part 1)

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)"

"Prayer is greater than all treasure... Through prayer, the heart becomes one with God. It looks like its creator. . . . The heavenly mysteries will be revealed to it." St. John Saba ⁸⁸

"Prayer is not merely a sense to be used to organize our lives in this age alone. It is implanted in our nature that, through it, we may ascend to God and achieve union with him. We may thus pass from this fleeting perishable life to an eternal life with God."⁸⁹



Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about:

- The meaning of prayer
- The role of the Holy Spirit in prayer
- The degrees of prayers

How Is Your Prayer?

St. Theophan, a saint of the Eastern Orthodox Church told us about a custom from ancient monastic fathers and mothers. "When greeting each other, they did not ask about health or anything else, but rather about prayer, saying 'How is your prayer?' The activity of prayer was considered by them to be a sign of the spiritual life, and they called it the breath of the spirit."⁹⁰ Then he said, "If the body has breath, it lives; if breathing stops, life comes to an end. So it is with the spirit. If there is

⁸⁸ John Saba, "Spiritual Elder" On Prayer fourteenth homily, with its Andmeta commentary in Geez and Amharic (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Sillasie Printing Press, 1982 E.C), 73-74.

⁸⁹ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 23.

⁹⁰ St. Theophan the Recluse, "Four Homilies on Prayer." How to pray Homily one, accessed January 4, 2023. <https://stmaximus.org/files/Documents/Theophan4HomiliesonPrayer.pdf>.

prayer, the soul lives; without prayer, there is no spiritual life."⁹¹ St. Theophan asserts the fundamental truth that prayer is the backdrop of the spiritual life. The spiritual practices in the Orthodox Church such as fasting, prostration, silence, solitude, reading scriptures, almsgiving, honoring the Sabbath, and others, are done in prayer. Thus, prayer encompasses all spiritual activities.

When the church is strong in its prayer life, it will be strong before the world. It manifests the love of God in an authentic way. To see the sad state of the church today, it is enough to take a look at its prayer life. Some people raise questions such as why the glory of God is not revealed in our time, why the church is weak, or why worldliness and spiritual weakness have entered the church. The answer is because the church is weak in its prayer practices. As John Saba says about those who are diligent in prayer, "God's treasure is opened to them through prayer." and the soul strengthened by prayer "shall see the mystery of Christ's glory, she sees all her work through His light, and rejoices there; The fire of Christ's love burns within her."⁹² St. James also said the following regarding prayer, "you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Because of the lack of prayer, we are not witnessing this divine grace in many Christians' lives.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

At this point, one might ask, what about all the prayers we do at home and church? But, as St. Theophan points out, prayer is deeper than that. Standing in front of the church for worship, prostrating before holy icons, or reciting prayer books are invitations to the deeper life. These are instruments to reach that level. "Prayer itself is the piercing of our hearts by pious feelings towards God, one after another – feelings of humility, submission, gratitude, doxology, forgiveness, heartfelt prostration, brokenness, conformity to the will of God, etc."⁹³

In other words, prayer is a way of life, "an experience of faith." Prayer becomes a reality in us "when we feel that we have become something more than ourselves." When the soul goes to God and is immersed in His light, when its past and present life melts in divine love, then prayer becomes a reality within us. For this reason, "Prayer could not have an end or an aim higher than itself. It is the highest aim of the highest work."⁹⁴

When Gregory of Nyssa spoke about the nature of prayer, he said, "prayer is a heart-to-heart talk, forever active on God's part, forever slow on ours." St. Gregory's definition reveals foundational truths about prayer which if properly understood, can change our prayer life. When we define prayer, we often say, "prayer means talking to God." While this definition is good, it seems to

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² John Saba, "Spiritual Elder" On Prayer, 74.

⁹³ St. Theophan the Recluse, "Four Homilies on Prayer."

⁹⁴ Matthew the Poor, Orthodox Prayer Life, 14-15.

suggest that the conversation has to originate from human beings. But St. Gregory's definition indicates that the first step in prayer is always from God. When Adam fell into sin and hid among the trees of Paradise, it was God who said, "Adam, where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

Prayer is where we see God's amazing love for us and His humility that surpasses understanding. The Lord of heaven and earth, the God who fills the whole world, invites us in prayer to talk with us. "Thus, prayer begins on God's part as a secret call to stand before Him. We then carry it as a free response in our yearning to speak with him. Afterward, prayer assumes its divine purpose as an act of repentance and purification. It subsequently attains its ultimate goal as a sacrifice of love and humility that prepares us for fellowship with God."⁹⁵

THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF PRAYER

Since the primary function of prayer is to glorify and magnify God, while we are in prayer, we become one with the holy angels who glorify God unceasingly. Without a doubt, supplication is also a part of prayer. We ask for earthly things for our daily living, but the idea of supplication only came about after the fall of Adam and Eve. Before that, because human beings were in constant union with God, and since they did not lack anything in their lives, they were involved in continuous thanksgiving.

After the fall, God, who knows our weakness, taught us to ask Him by saying, "Give us this day our daily bread." He promised us that He would hear us. Abba Matthew the Poor said, "Although this is alien to the original concept of prayer, God in His graciousness has come down to our level and promised to listen to our prayers when we bring Him our needs and complaints, which He knows only too well. He thus assures us that He will never abandon us for our sins and that our tribulations are a matter of concern to Him."⁹⁶

Therefore, when we grow in prayer, our hearts will be filled with the glory of God and melt with His love. We desire to honor and magnify the awesome God when we are with Him. This kind of praise is what the fathers call pure prayer. At that time, we will be like the Seraphim, worshipping Him, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy." Thus, we will receive the honor they received. The church includes the "sanctus" in her Divine Liturgy in a beautiful manner to remind us of this blessing and its glory. The Ethiopian Liturgy's Sanctus goes as such:

Priest: There stand before You a thousand of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, both the holy angels and archangels and Your honorable beasts, each with six wings:

Deacon: Look to the east.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 23.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 27.

Priest: With two of their wings they cover their faces, with two of their wings they cover their feet, and with two of their wings they fly from one end to the other end of the world.

Deacon: Let us give heed.

Priest: And they all constantly hallow and praise You, with all them that hallow and praise You. Receive also our hallowing which we utter unto You: Holy, Holy, Holy perfect Lord of hosts.

Deacon: You Answer.

People: Holy, Holy, Holy, perfect Lord of hosts,, heaven and earth are full of the holiness of Your glory.⁹⁷

As Abba Matthew the Poor pointed out, the Seraphim get their glory not from their nature but from their constant worship of God. When we worship like them, we also will be in God's glory. As the life of the great saints who reached this pure level of worship indicate, the glory of God was revealed to them both while they were in this world and after they died.⁹⁸

Our prayer must reach our inner being, the heart, to achieve this level of angelic, pure prayer. Therefore, we must enter into the inner recess of our lives. In the next reading, we will look at what the Orthodox fathers and mothers taught us about the essence of the heart, which is central to the Orthodox spiritual life, and how we can reach the level of the prayer of the heart.

PRAYER AND THE INNER KINGDOM

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ mentioned three spiritual practices in the Sermon on the Mount. These are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. When He taught us about prayer, He said: "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. " Mat. 6:5-6. Our Lord starts His teaching on prayer by discussing the purpose and the goal of prayer. However, when He mentions "corners of the streets" or "synagogue" or "secret place", the issue is not a matter of place. It does not mean forbidding praying in synagogues or public places. As the early church interpreters said: "It is not the place (τόπος) that harms, but the nature (τρόπος) and the purpose (σκοπός)."⁹⁹ God hears our prayers in any place and any situation, but the Lord Jesus wanted to show us with what kind of state of the heart we should pray.

⁹⁷ Anaphora of the Apostles, No.25-32 in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 105-106.

⁹⁸ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 27.

⁹⁹ Theophylactus, Ennaratio in Evangelium Matthaei 204(PG 123.139-92) in Luz, U. Matthew 1-7 Commentary (H.Koester Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 301-302.

St. Hilary said, "The saints' prayers were undertaken in the presence of wild animals, in prisons, in flames, from the depths of the sea and the belly of the beast. Hence we are admonished not to enter the recesses of our homes but the bedroom of our hearts. With the office of our minds closed, we pray to God not with many words but with our conscience, for every act is superior to the words of speakers."¹⁰⁰ Another church father reiterates this saying:

These things are better understood in a spiritual sense, as spoken about the soul. "Room is the heart, or the inner, that is, spiritual intellect. ... The doorway is the exterior, bodily sense through which all things, good and bad, enter upon the soul. ... Christ too knocks at the door of the Christian, entering the heart either through the divine Scriptures or good thoughts. The one who receives them opens oneself to Christ. The one who sends them away shuts the door. For this reason Jesus orders that the soul enter the inward understanding when it prays, so that it thinks of nothing except for what it prays and to whom it prays. Thus it closes the doorway of its bodily sense, so that it may shut outside all external thoughts and cares."¹⁰¹

What is the heart? To understand the heart and its nature in depth, we have to understand what the church teaches about the whole spiritual anatomy of man, especially about the inner man.

Prayer and Human Nature

HUMAN BEINGS AS BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

According to scripture, human beings are made up of two main components, a visible physical body, and a spiritual body. (Gen. 2:7) From the dirt of the earth, we have flesh. However, because God breathed the breath of life on us, we also have souls and spirits. He granted us three inseparable parts: body, soul, and spirit. He created every part of us in glory. When we talk about the human person, we cannot talk only about the body or only about the soul or spirit. The three components of human being are "compound by nature, that its essence consists of both constituents taken as a whole."¹⁰² The scriptures testify about this in several places (Thes. 5:23 Heb. 4:12).

EVIDENCE FROM THE DIVINE LITURGY

The liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church mentions in many places that a human being is composed of body, soul and spirit. For example, in the Anaphora of the Apostles' Prayer of Penitence it says: "O Lord God, the Father almighty, You are who heals the wounds of our soul,

¹⁰⁰ St. Hilary, Commentary on Matthew 5.1. In Simonetti, M. (Ed.) *Matthew 1-13* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 127-128.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰² Jean-Claude Larchet, *Theology of the Body* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 17.

body, and spirit.”¹⁰³ Again, the Anaphora of the Apostle states that the Holy Communion gives renewal to the whole person. It says, “We give You thanks, for You have granted us to partake in Your Holy mystery let it not be unto me an occasion of guilt nor of judgment, but for the renewal of my soul, body and spirit.”¹⁰⁴ The Anaphora of St. Basil also says, “And let every thought which displeases Thy goodness, Oh God, lover of human beings, be far from us. Cleanse our souls, bodies, spirits, that we may, with pure heart and enlightened soul and rejoicing lips, dare to call upon You without fear, Oh Holy Father, saying: Our Father who art in heaven...”¹⁰⁵

THE HUMAN BODY

The earthly human body is not just ordinary. When Irenaeus interprets the reading "God created man from the dirt of the earth," he says, "He fashioned man with His own Hands, taking the purest, the finest and the most delicate elements of the earth"¹⁰⁶ By creating humans from the dust of the earth, God made all the elements of which this world is made to be wrapped in the human body.¹⁰⁷ The body is created in honor and glory, it has equal honor with the soul and spirit. Just as the body cannot be perfect apart from the soul, so the soul cannot be a perfect apart from the body. St. Irenaeus also spoke on this issue: "For that flesh which has been moulded is not a perfect man in itself, but the body of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the soul itself, considered apart by itself, the man; but it is the soul of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the spirit a man, for it is called the spirit, and not a man; but the commingling and union of all these constitutes the perfect man."¹⁰⁸

As I mentioned before, the image of God is in body, soul, and spirit. We see this clearly in the teaching of Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa and the writings of the Syrian fathers. But most of the ancient fathers refrain from teaching this. According to Larchet the main reason is pedagogical. "Many of the Fathers hesitate to consider the body as also being constituted in the image of God, but this seems to be above all for pedagogical reasons: they wish to avoid our concluding that God Himself has a body or He is in some sense material. Nevertheless, some Fathers do consider that the body, too, was made in the image of God."¹⁰⁹ This doctrine of anthropomorphism, which states that God

¹⁰³ Anaphora of the Apostles no.72, in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid no. 140, in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Anaphora of St. Basil no. 111, in *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 282.

¹⁰⁶ St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 46.

¹⁰⁷ *Theology of the Body*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies (Adversus Hereses)*, 5.6.1.

¹⁰⁹ *Theology of the body*, 22.

has eyes, hands, and feet, has infiltrated the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church and caused much controversy.¹¹⁰

THE HUMAN SOUL

After God formed man from the dust of the earth, He breathed into him the breath of life. And man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). The soul is what separates man from the inanimate body and makes him a living body. Some call this part of the human being the soul proper and the spirit the highest part of the soul. According to the teachings of the church fathers, the soul has three faculties or powers. The first is a vital or vegetative power. It is present in all living things, including plants. The second power is animal power, which is common in humans and animals. It indicates the capacity of sensation and perception. This power can be divided into two sub-powers: the incisive power and the appetitive power. The incisive power is the source of all forms of aggressiveness. In the human soul it is demonstrated as “the combative aspect of the will.”¹¹¹ The appetitive power is identified as the source of emotions, desires, and affectivity. It is also linked to “the imagination in its elementary form, i.e., the reproductive imagination.”¹¹²

The third power is the rational power, “which constitutes the principal characteristic of our nature, distinguishing us from all other created beings.”¹¹³ This is a unique gift that God has granted only to human beings, and is not available to other creatures. This rational power of the soul is manifested in two ways. The first way is through “Reflexive consciousness,”¹¹⁴ which is the ability to consider and think about ourselves. The second way is manifested “in its capacity of self-determination which is the source of our freedom to which are connected free will (the faculty of choice), and the higher dimension of the will, which enables the choices made to be carried out.”¹¹⁵

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Since the spirit is invisible as is the soul, many church fathers consider it the highest level of the soul. But at the same time, they also say that it is a separate and higher independent body than the soul.

¹¹⁰ For full discussion of the controversy and its impact on the shaping of the Ethiopian Liturgy see Mebratu Kiros Gebru, “Liturgical Cosmology: The Theological and Sacramental Dimensions of Creation in the Ethiopian Liturgy” (Phd thesis, University of St. Michaels College, 2012), 40-47.

¹¹¹ *Theology of the Body*, 15.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

For this reason, the Orthodox fathers consider human beings as trichotomy (body, soul, and spirit) instead of dichotomy (body and soul).¹¹⁶

The human spirit is what enables humans to have self-control, independence, and freedom. In particular, it allows us to have direct knowledge, which is higher than rational knowledge, i.e., the knowledge obtained through the revelation of spiritual reality and intuitive knowledge. Hence, it is the contemplative faculty through which we come into contact with God. According to the Orthodox fathers, this faculty, where God resides and where we communicate with God is called the *nous*. It is also called the heart or intellect. St. Macarius of Egypt, the first exponent of the *nous*, called it the "eye of the heart." It is also how the image of God is primarily shaped and where our true selves are found. "This image may be masked or sullied by sin, but not destroyed. For it is the indelible hallmark of the deepest part of our being, of our true nature whose essential constituent principle (or logos) can not be altered."¹¹⁷

THE FALL AND THE DIVISION OF THE NOUS AND THE MIND

When human beings were created in the image of God, they were meant to have a direct relationship with God. But when they fell into sin, they became dead in spirit. This means that because they turned their face away from God and submitted themselves to their ego, their heart became darkened and sullied. They were created in the image of God to be the mediator and bring creation to its ultimate goal, yet they became the cause of division and conflict. The story of Adam and Eve became "a story of disintegration, fragmentation, and estrangement."¹¹⁸ According to Maximus the Confessor, because of the fall of humanity, five major divisions were formed. The first and primary division between humanity and God, second between humanity and creation, thirdly between heaven and earth, fourthly between man and woman, and finally between body and soul (death). The result is that every person becomes "internally fragmented and externally isolated from the outside world, right down to the ultimate depths of his or her being." This fragmentation is clearly seen in the division between the human mind and *nous* what fathers called the heart. Because of this division, fragmentation, and distortion, the mind become the source of the logismoi, "the torrent of thoughts that accompanies our daily life."¹¹⁹

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

We have seen that prayer is the pillar of all spiritual activities. It is spiritual life in itself. We also have seen that the word "spiritual" refers to a person or an action that the Holy Spirit guides and accomplishes. Therefore, prayer itself is a spiritual activity, that is guided by the Holy Spirit. As it has

¹¹⁶ Ibid. See footnote 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 15-16.

¹¹⁸ Archimandrite Meletios Webber, *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil: An Orthodox Experience of God* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2007), 11

¹¹⁹ *Earthen Vessel*, 12.

been said, we connect with God and spiritual reality only through our spirit (nous, intellect). Our spirit (nous), which was dirty and lurking due to the ancestral sin we inherited from Adam, has since been enlightened by the grace we received in baptism. Therefore, if Christians purify their hearts from their actual sins (daily sins), they can directly communicate with God.

When we pray within our spirit, then our prayer will be led by the Holy Spirit. True prayer comes from our spirit (heart) and is led by the Holy Spirit. The fathers call this the Prayer of the Heart. Evagrius, speaking on this Spirit-led prayer, says this: "The Holy Spirit, who 'bears with us in our weakness', visits us even when we are still impure. And when He finds the intellect simply praying to Him and full of love for the truth, He comes upon it and destroys the entire phalanx of thoughts or imaginations that besiege it and urges it on to an ardent longing for spiritual prayer."¹²⁰

When our prayer originates from our spirit, our prayer will be guided by the Holy Spirit, and our life will be transformed. We will become a "spiritual person." On the other hand, if we pray from our desire and will, that will not lead us to spiritual life. As St. Paul said, we will become the "natural man" who regards spiritual things as foolish.

STAGES OF PRAYER

Since prayer in itself is spiritual life, when we talk about the stages of prayer, we are talking about the stages of spiritual life. As our holy fathers and mothers taught us, the spiritual life has three stages or phases. The first phase is called the practical or active (gr. *praxis*) phase. This phase is also known as purification (gr. *katharsis*) because, in this stage, the person is free from submission to the passions and reaches love through virtues. The second stage is the contemplative (gr. *theoria*) phase. In this phase, the person free from the passions meditates about God through creation and receives knowledge of God (gr. *gnostike physike*). For this reason, this phase is also called illumination.

The third phase is mystical knowledge (gr. *gnostike theologike*). This phase is known as perfection because it leads to complete communion with God (theosis), which is the ultimate goal of Christian spirituality. These phases are also known as purity of the body, purity of the soul, and purity of the spirit or heart. In the next chapters we will discuss how the thoughts become passions, and how a person can attain to dispassion or *apatheia* through virtue and reach illumination and perfection (theosis).

For Discussion

1. In this lesson on prayer, which part gave you a new perspective on your own prayer life?
2. Among the church's saints, which one is a model for your prayer life? What is the main lesson you learned from your model saint?
3. What is the current misconception about the Holy Spirit's role in our prayer life?

¹²⁰ Ibid., 30.

Session Five: Prayer and Formation of the Heart (Part Two)

The Passions and Purification of the Heart

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. Gal.5:16-17

The passions cease to be troublesome when *apatheia* has appeared; death is undone and corruption is no more when life and incorruption reign in us unopposed. - St. Gregory of Nyssa¹²¹

Blessed is the intellect that, undistracted in its prayer, acquires an ever greater longing for God.

- Evagrius Pontus¹²²



Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about:

- Who Evagrius Pontus is and why he is important in the discussion of Orthodox spiritual formation
- About the eight passions of the soul
- How we can achieve dispassion or *apatheia*

Evagrius and the Formation of the Heart

Among fathers who wrote about Orthodox spiritual formation is Abba Evagrius (in Geez, Abba Wegrīs ውግሪስ) one of the most influential writer on spirituality in church history. He wrote extensively on prayer and spiritual formation of the mind, as well as the role of the scripture in

¹²¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Lord's Prayer; The Beatitudes*, tr. Hilda C. Graef (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 1954), 51-52.

¹²² Evagrius of Pontus, "On Prayer," in St. Nicodemus and St. Makarios, *The Philokalia : the Complete Text volume one*, trans. and ed. G.E. H Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (London : Faber and Faber, 1979), 68.

spiritual formation. Among these writings there are three notable works. The first is *Praktikos*,¹²³ which examines, in detail, how to achieve purification at the first stage of the spiritual journey, especially when struggling with the eight thoughts (passions) and their solutions. The second is *Ad Monachos*,¹²⁴ which deals extensively with prayer. Finally is the work *Talking Back* (*Antirrhethikos*),¹²⁵ which lists the biblical responses to the attack of the Eight Thoughts. His teachings were introduced and popularized in the West by John Cassian, who was his disciple. After the Sixth Ecumenical Council condemned Evagrius in the Eastern Church, his books and teachings spread under the name of Abba Nilus and St. John Chrysostom.¹²⁶ In Ethiopia, his works were translated into Geez¹²⁷, and scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church consider him as a saint.

Evagrius was a disciple of St. Gregory of Nazianzen and had a great place in the church of Constantinople, but he is remembered for his monastic life and writings in the deserts of Egypt. Some have called him the "Psychologist of the Desert Fathers"¹²⁸ because his teachings reveal the deep inner thoughts of man in such a fascinating and systematic way. The goal of Evagrius's psychology is "to make the human being capable of loving again, and thereby capable of God."¹²⁹

What opened up a great opportunity for him to understand people's inner being in a more profound way is that he was the spiritual father of many monks and nuns during his life in the Egyptian desert. These monks, especially in the tradition of that time, would come to him on weekends to tell him about their inner problems, and seek guidance from him. "Evagrius owes his unusual knowledge of the human soul to solitary introspection and to innumerable confessions of the hearts."¹³⁰

¹²³ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, Trans., intro., and notes by John Eudes Bamberger (Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 1972).

¹²⁴ Evagrius Ponticus, *Ad Monachos*, Trans. and comm. Jeremy Driscoll (New York, NY: Newman Press, 2003).

¹²⁵ Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, trans. And intro. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009).

¹²⁶ St. Nicodemus and St. Makarios, *The Philokalia : the Complete Text*, trans. and ed. G.E. H Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

¹²⁷ Evagrius Pontus, *On the Eight thoughts in Aethiopische Lesestucke* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs sche Buchhandlung, 1893), 26-33.

¹²⁸ Gerald L Sittser, "The Battle Without and Within: The Psychology of Sin and Salvation in the Desert Fathers and Mothers." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 44.

¹²⁹ Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency: The Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on Acedia* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 17.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 16.

From Thought (Logismoi) to Passions

As Evagrius tells us, when we are free from the various evil thoughts (passions) and the images they bring, we will have purification and communion with God. To do this, he tells us that we must first understand the thoughts (logismoi) that constantly originate from the mind, how these thoughts turn into evil thoughts (passions), what types of passions they are, and what the approach is to combat these passions.

The thoughts we have, come in three forms.¹³¹ The first is the thoughts that we try to think. Second, there are thoughts we do not control and come automatically regardless of the circumstance. Thirdly, some thoughts come from deep awareness, discernment, and intuition. The logismoi are the thoughts we do not control, but that come to us automatically.

THE FIVE STAGES

These thoughts come to us in association with the thoughts of "flaming arrows" thrown from Satan and his army. As long as we do not give our consent to these thoughts, they do no harm if they just pass through our minds. But, if we give our consent, "evil grows roots in us, and it becomes a 'habitus' (habit) and then a passion (pathos) of the soul."¹³² The fathers of the Church tell us that there are five stages in which thoughts turn into passions.

Assault

The first stage is the assault, when logismoi attack our minds.¹³³ This attack happens when thoughts approach us by suggestion and knock on the door of our minds. We do not have to feel guilty or ashamed when such an attack occurs. As Father Maximos of Mount Athos said, "The great saints faced legions of negative logismoi. No human being has ever lived without being assaulted by myriads of logismoi. Only the dead are free of logismoi."¹³⁴ The devil has launched this kind of attack even against the Lord. The devil showed the Lord the wealth of this world and asked Him to bow down and worship him. The Lord did not become a sinner just because the suggestion came to Him. What often causes harm to us is the question, "How did such a thought come to me?" This kind of question comes to our minds because of our ego and will cause great spiritual harm to us.

Interaction

¹³¹ Archimandrite Meletios Webber, *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil*, 12.

¹³² Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 37.

¹³³ Kyriacos C. Markides, *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality* (New York, NY: The Crown Publishing Group), 124; *Bread & Water, Wine and Oil*, 13.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

The second stage is called interaction.¹³⁵ This happens when the person entertains the suggestion from the logismoi, initiating an interaction or dialogue. For example, when the logismoi of anger comes, the person starts an argument within himself. "Do I have to be angry or not?" What will happen if I am angry? What if I'm not?" This is an internal conflict. Again, neither sin nor any other harm have been executed in this stage, because there is still an option to reject the thought that came. Even if it is not a sin, we must put off the thoughts from our minds from the beginning. Such an argument can set a person of weak temperament at risk of failure. The Lord has provided an example for this stage. When the devil showed Him the wealth of this world, the Lord Jesus said, "Away from me, Satan!" He did not say debate whether He should bow to Him or not. (Mathew 4:10).

Consent

The third is the stage of consent. This when we submit ourselves to what the logismoi suggests. For example, if you decide to steal when the thought of stealing comes, then the thought of stealing will take root in you. "That's when guilt and accountability start to emerge. It is the beginning of sin."¹³⁶ However, even if sin begins, it is still in its infancy, so the damage is limited. It is somewhat easier to stop and say no at this stage. "If a person manages to invoke the name of God and to confess, they can avoid the next stage."¹³⁷

Captivity

The fourth stage is the stage of captivity. "That's when the person can no longer retreat and proceeds along with this act which now becomes a habit that is repeated time and again."¹³⁸ This stage is hard to deal with. At this point, the person becomes a captive of the logismoi. The logismos repeatedly attacks the person, and with each attack, the logismoi gains energy and becomes more powerful. This kind of pattern is what we call addiction in the modern world.

Passion

The fifth level is passion or obsession. At this stage, "The logismoi has become an entrenched reality within the consciousness of the person, within the nous. The person becomes a captive of obsessive logismoi, leading to ongoing destructive acts to oneself and to others." As the fathers say, when a

¹³⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 129.

person is under the control of such passions, "it is like giving the key of our heart to Satan so that he can get in and out any time he wishes."¹³⁹

THE EIGHT PASSIONS

Evagrius taught that there are eight categories of thoughts that attack our souls. They are gluttony, impurity (sexual immorality), avarice (love of money), sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride.¹⁴⁰ These eight categories are the most fundamental or basic because all other passions originate from these eight. These thoughts can also be related to each other. For example, gluttony can lead to fornication, and sadness is sometimes the result of anger.¹⁴¹ Elsewhere, we find Evagrius classifying these thoughts into only three basic categories: gluttony, avarice, and vainglory.¹⁴² He modeled these on the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness. The commentators of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church reduced the eight to three, yet they put pride instead of vainglory and renamed gluttony as greed. They said greed, pride, and avarice are the three heads of sins. According to these commentators, the reason for the Lord's temptation in the wilderness was that the serpent tempted Adam and Eve with these thoughts, and won. Adam and Eve were tempted with greed when they wanted the things that were not theirs, with pride when they desired to become gods, and with avarice when they did not have contentment. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, has conquered all of these temptations.¹⁴³

What are the dangers of these eight thoughts? Are these thoughts and the discussion about them important in our time? How do we protect our minds and hearts from these thoughts? To answer these questions, we must study each passion carefully and understand what the fathers prescribe to repel these thoughts from our minds.

According to Evagrius and the church fathers, spiritual reading, vigil, and prayer give "stability to the wandering mind." To put off "the flame of desire," we have to practice fasting, toil, and solitude, and to calm our anger, we have to practice "singing of Psalms, with patience, endurance and mercy."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, 16.

¹⁴¹ Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 41.

¹⁴² Evagrius Pontus, "Texts on Discrimination in Respect of Passions and Thoughts 1," in *The Philokalia: the Complete Text Volume 1*, 38.

¹⁴³ Commentary on Matthew 5: 1-11 in *Tərguwame Wängəl [Commentary on the Holy Gospels]* (Addis Ababa: Brhanena Selam Printing Press, 1995), 90-94.

¹⁴⁴ *The Praktikos*, 15.

Gluttony¹⁴⁵

When this thought strikes their minds, the fathers in the monastery are afflicted with a desire to eat before they break their fast, or they constantly think about food and worry about the disease that may attack them due to lack of food. Unfortunately, this constant worry and preoccupation with food has also become a disease of our time. Here in America, due to lack of a healthy relationship with food, many suffer from obesity, bulimia, anorexia, and other disorders associated with this unhealthy passion. In addition, a lack of control over what we drink has led many to alcohol addiction.

We can combat this thought with fasting. As Evagrius said, fasting shields us from the arrows of passion. He said, "fasting is a covering for the soul, which conceals its passions, that is, shameful desires and irrational anger. Therefore he who does not fast exposes himself indecently."¹⁴⁶ Fasting cleanses not only our body but also our soul. Saint Yared said, "Fasting heals the wounds of the soul."¹⁴⁷ The great benefit of fasting is that it gives energy for prayer. Evagrius said, "A famished stomach enables one to watch in prayer, whereas a full stomach brings about plentiful sleep."¹⁴⁸

Impurity¹⁴⁹

This is lust for sexual gratification. According to Evagrius, this thought attacks those who practice self-control. It strikes the mind to contaminate the soul in the hope that those who practice self-control will give up their virtue. When fighting this evil thought through self-control, we must remember that we are against the thought, not against things or their representations; in this case, we are not against women or men. Maximos the Confessor says, "the mind of the one who loves God does not engage in battle against things nor against their representations, but against the passions joined to these representations. Thus it does not war against the woman nor against the one who offends him, nor against their images but against the Passions that are joined to these images."¹⁵⁰ In our current society, some men do not heed this advice. They blame the things which

¹⁴⁵ *The Praktikos*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Bunge, *Earthen Vessels*, 93.

¹⁴⁷ St. Yared, Antiphonary for the Lenten Season (Third Week Tuesday), 65.

¹⁴⁸ Evagrius, *De Octo Spiritibus Malitiae*, I, 12 (PG 79, 1145 B) quoted in Bunge, *Earthen Vessels*, 93-94.

¹⁴⁹ *The Praktikos*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Maximos the Confessor, Four Hundred chapters, 2.39. quoted in Diogenes Allen, *Spiritual Theology: the Theology of Yesterday for Spiritual Help Today*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1997), 70.

excite the lust, especially women, instead of "the person who feels lustful."¹⁵¹ In the old days and even in our days, this misguided outlook is the cause of violence and abuse against women, and it should have no place in the church.

Avarice (Love of Money)

When this thought attacks the mind, it "suggests, to the mind a lengthy old age"¹⁵² and fear of inability to work because of old age. It follows with the shame of accepting an elderly life dependent on others' support. In our society, especially those in a "midlife crisis," the biggest concern is their future and their retirement. Even among the elderly population, the depression caused by the myriad struggles one faces in their older age, has led many to suicide. This problem is on the rise, especially with the Covid pandemic crisis.¹⁵³ The other danger of this passion is that when we heed its suggestion, it fills our mind "with anxiety and insecurity," and it "keeps us from being generous."¹⁵⁴ In fact, it leads us to love or worship of money, which as the scripture says, is the root of all evil.

We can repel this thought with the most potent weapons Christians have in relation to the love of money, namely, faith and almsgiving. When we are saying faith, we mean trusting God in His providence. Through this trust, we can have the ability to be generous and share our life with the needy and the poor. In *Talking Back*, Evagrius said that when the thought comes "against the soul that because of the passion of love of money offers scarcely anything for mercy," that you must respond with divine words to the thought, saying: "Let not mercy and faith forsake you, but bind them about your neck, and you will find favor. Provide good things before the Lord and human beings (Prov 3:3-4)"¹⁵⁵

Sadness¹⁵⁶

According to Evagrius, this passion comes from the deprivation of one's desires. Sometimes, anger also accompanies this passion. When this passion attacks, it takes the soul to its past, and makes the soul desire to live that former life, but because that is impossible, it also causes the soul to

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵² *The Praktikos*, 9.

¹⁵³ Diego De Leo, "Late-Life Suicide in an Aging World." *Nature Aging* 2, no. 1 (2022): 7-12.

¹⁵⁴ Allen, *Spiritual Theology*, 72.

¹⁵⁵ Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back*, 91.

¹⁵⁶ *The Praktikos*, 10.

become sad about its present life. Sadness happens “when we compare our achievements with those of others and find we are deeply disappointed with our lives.”¹⁵⁷

If we do not repel this thought, we expose ourselves to acedia, the most potent passion of discouragement. The remedy for this kind of passion is remembering the faithfulness of God and sharing the suffering of our brothers and sisters, “knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produce character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because of God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:3-5).¹⁵⁸

When sadness happens in our life, we must look within ourselves for the root cause of this passion instead of avoiding our brothers and sisters. The fathers warn us about the danger of avoiding other people because of our sadness. Cassian said, “A man can be harmed by another only through the causes of the passions which lie within himself. It is for this reason that God, The Creator of all and the Doctor of men’s souls, Who alone has accurate knowledge of the soul’s wounds, does not tell us to forsake the company of men.”¹⁵⁹

Anger¹⁶⁰

This passion arises through remembering a wrongdoer or a presumed wrongdoer. “It constantly irritates the soul”¹⁶¹, and especially during the time of prayer it seizes the mind. Even at night, it can cause disturbances in the mind which can even lead to the debilitation of the body. Here Evagrius and the church fathers are careful to indicate that a healthy response to unfairness and injury is fine, but that we must be cautious so as not to let righteous indignation devolve passionate and sinful anger. The scripture says “Be angry, and do not sin” (Eph. 4:25). In fact, suppressed anger is not only is self destructive, but it can also block a person’s healing journey.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Allen, *Spiritual Theology*, 72.

¹⁵⁸ Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back*, 115.

¹⁵⁹ St. John Cassian, “On Dejection,” in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Vol. 1*, 87.

¹⁶⁰ *The Praktikos*, 11.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Allen, *Spiritual Theology*, 73.

Acedia (Despondency)¹⁶³

Because this attack comes at noon in the Egyptian desert, Evagrius called this passion the noonday demon¹⁶⁴ (Ps.91:6). In the list of eight thoughts, acedia sits at the center of the others due to its ability to coordinate its spiritual attacks with each of the other seven passions. To illustrate this, we can see that acedia has a close relationship with sadness. According to Evagrius, sadness is a prelude to acedia. He describes it as a "partner and schoolmate of sadness."¹⁶⁵ It also has a relationship with anger and desire. Again, he says, "acedia is a simultaneous, long-lasting movement of anger and desire, whereby the former is angry with what is at hand while the latter yearns for what is not present."¹⁶⁶ It is the "slackness of the soul"¹⁶⁷ manifesting as total boredom and the detesting of every activity. In Evagrius' description, we can see the fundamental characteristics of passion and how it is full of contradictions. "Despondency: breezy love, tramper of steps, hater of love of work, fight against solitude, thunderstorm of psalmody, aversion to prayer, slackening of asceticism, ill timed slumber, sleep, tossing and turning, burden of solitude, hatred of the cell, adversary of ascetical efforts, counter-attack against endurance, impediment to reflection, ignorance of the Scriptures, companion of sadness, daily rhythm of hunger."¹⁶⁸

Modern day psychologists say that this passion is deeply related to depression.¹⁶⁹ What is the remedy for this passion? The one thing which summarizes this passion is restlessness, and to combat this passion, we have to have patience. "Patience along with tears keeps down despondency,"¹⁷⁰ Evagrius said; "through patience, your reward may rain down upon you more abundantly, your patience must make war through all manly virtues, for with the help of each evil, despondency also fights against you and tries you, in that observes all your efforts. And the one whom it does not find nailed down through patience; it weighs down with itself and keeps him down."¹⁷¹

¹⁶³ *The Praktikos*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 53.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁶⁸ Evagrius, "On the Vices that are Opposed to the Virtues," 6. In Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 65-66.

¹⁶⁹ Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*. 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

¹⁷⁰ Evagrius Ponticus, *Ad Monachos*, I,5. In Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 90.

¹⁷¹ Evagrius, *Treatise to Eulogius the Monk*, 8.

To defeat this passion, first we have to reject the urgency to do new things or to go somewhere. As Abba Moses the Ethiopian said, “away, enter your cells and sit down, and your cells will teach you everything.” With patience and steadfastness we must focus on the tasks we start, and we must ensure that we finish what we have started. Again Evagrius said, “steadfastness, and that one does everything with great care, fear of God and perseverance [these heal despondency]. Set for yourself a goal in every task and do not rise from it until you have finished it. And pray unceasingly, and express yourself concisely, and the spirit of despondence will flee from you.”¹⁷²

Vainglory¹⁷³

Evagrius said “the spirit of Vainglory is most subtle and it readily grows up in the souls of those who practice virtue.”¹⁷⁴ As Cassian said, because of its multi-form appearance, “not readily perceived even by the person whom it tempts”¹⁷⁵ and because of the subtlety of its nature, it is very difficult to fight against it. Without the person’s awareness, the passion, “leads them to desire to make their struggles known publicly, to hunt after the praise of men.”¹⁷⁶ When a person falls to this passion it will lead them to lust or pride¹⁷⁷.

To defeat this passion, we have to seek above all, the reward from God not from people. Nowadays this passion has become a common problem because of social media. Everybody wants to be liked and to be heard. Celebrity church leaders have become very influential in today’s church’s life. Seeking fame and praise has become the source of many hurts and disappointments, and many leaders, together with their followers have experienced a public fall from grace. St. Cassian told us that we should always keep in our mind the words of the Psalm. “The Lord has scattered the bones of those who please men.” (Ps.53:5 LXX)

¹⁷² Evagrius of Pontus, *On the Eight Spirits of Evil*, 6,17-18. In Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency*, 97.

¹⁷³ *The Praktikos*, 13.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Cassian, “On the Eight Vice, On Self Esteem,” in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Vol. 1*, 91.

¹⁷⁶ *The Praktikos*, 13.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Pride¹⁷⁸

Pride is the logical step of vainglory. Vainglory raises the person up with empty hopes and dreams, and hands the person over to the demon of pride and sadness.¹⁷⁹ According to the fathers, pride is the source of all evil thoughts, and was the cause of the downfall of Satan. It urges the person not to acknowledge God's help, and to think they are responsible for their own success.

Pride is not similar with self worth, and the church does not teach self rejection. In fact, "our inherent self worth and our desire for self realization are God Given. The capacity to respond to God's intentions, actively seeking to realize the potential God has bestowed on us, gives us dignity."¹⁸⁰ But when we are trying to find our self-worth or self realization through our social standing, then we become instruments for oppression and inequality. "If our self understanding and self evaluation arise wholly from our social pattern, then we cannot receive them from God. Whether we have a high or low self evaluation, we cannot perceive the potential God has in store for us."¹⁸¹ For this reason to defeat the passion of pride, we have to find our identity and our value from our creator.

From Passion to Dispassion (Apatheia)

As we said in the previous chapter, spiritual life has three phases: the first phase is called the practical or active (praxis) phase (purification), the contemplative (Theoria) phase (illumination), and mystical knowledge (Theosis or perfection). These phases are also known as purity of the body, purity of the soul, and purity of the spirit or heart. In the process of the formation of the heart, the journey from passion to dispassion or apatheia is the most important one.

What is Apatheia?

Apatheia is a Greek term popularized by ancient Stoics "to describe a state of mind where one is not disturbed by the passions."¹⁸² Some Christian writers use this Stoics' understanding of apatheia and translate it as 'apathy,' 'indifference,' or 'insensibility.' In Orthodox spiritual writings, apatheia means "freedom from passion through being filled with the Holy Spirit of God as a fruit of divine love."¹⁸³ When we achieve apatheia, we are not without passion. Instead, our passion will be sanctified,

¹⁷⁸ *The Praktikos*, 14.

¹⁷⁹ *The Praktikos*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Allen, *Spiritual Theology*, 77.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

¹⁸² "On Apatheia," <https://orthodoxapatheia.com/2020/02/26/on-apatheia/>.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

and our souls will have “burning love for God and human beings.”¹⁸⁴ This means that the carnal passions and demonic evil thoughts have no place in our souls. As discussed in previous chapters, the consequence of sin is fragmentation, disharmony, and division of the inner being. It is the sickness of the soul. Apatheia, in contrast, is the “health of the soul.”¹⁸⁵

How Can We Achieve Apatheia?

We can conquer our passions by practicing virtues. Evagrius gives us a list of virtues that lead us to apatheia. Faith, Fear of God, continence (self-control), patience, hope. Then these virtues give birth to apatheia, and then apatheia brings love. Through love, we enter into knowledge of nature which leads to theology.¹⁸⁶

The later spiritual writers expanded the Evagrian list. For example, Fr. Dimitru Staniloae listed fourteen virtues that lead us to apatheia through love and contemplation of knowledge of nature and God. He uses the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Isaac the Syrian, and St. John Climacus:¹⁸⁷

- For Purification: Faith, Fear of God, Repentance, Self-Control, Guarding of the mind, Patience, Hope, Humility, Dispassion
- For Illumination: Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Contemplation, Spiritual Understanding of Scripture, Apophatic Knowledge of God, Pure prayer, Mental Rest
- For Perfection: Love

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church monastic spirituality, in each of these levels, there are spiritual steps or degrees of virtues (In Geez መደረጋት ranks). In general, we have ten virtues:

- For purification: Quietness, Understanding, the joy of Psalmody
- For illumination: Tears, Judgment, Love, and extra sensory perception
- For perfection (Theosis): Communion with the angels, Ecstasy, becoming all flame.¹⁸⁸

For Discussion

1. What is your reaction to the list of eight passions? Do you have an additional list?

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *The Praktikos*, 56

¹⁸⁶ *The Praktikos*, prol 8

¹⁸⁷ Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, Chap.8 Kindle

¹⁸⁸ EOTC Holy Sinod, *The History of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church From the Birth of Christ until 2000 E.C.* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: 2000 E.C), 251.

2. On the list, Evagrius and the fathers put gluttony first and pride last. Why do they put these passions first and last on the list?
3. “Evagrius said, “Love is the door to knowledge of nature (phisike) which leads to knowledge of God (theologike)” What kind of role does love have in your spiritual life?

Session Six: Spiritual Formation and Liturgical Spirituality

Liturgy and Spiritual Formation in EOTC

Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isa. 6:2-3)



“The Church’s stance before God is always one of joyous-sadness, watchfulness, and expectation. The liturgy is the very expression of the Church’s life and at the same time a manifestation of the ages to come.”¹⁸⁹

“Oh test and see that the Lord is Good. How can those who have never tested it know how honey is sweet? Taste and see. Experience makes meaning clear.” St. Basil the Great.¹⁹⁰

Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about:

- The meaning of Liturgy
- The Liturgy of the EOTC and its liturgical calendar
- Liturgy and Spiritual formation

What Is Liturgy?

The word “liturgy” comes from ancient Greek public life. It’s Greek counterpart *Elitorgia*, comes from *leitōs*, meaning “related to the people”, and *ergon*, meaning “work”. In ancient Greek, the word indicates voluntary service to the community or government in times of war. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the word liturgy to describe the worship of Yahweh by the assembly of Israelites (Ex 28:43, 2 Ch.13:10). The New Testament authors also used it as a word for the temple and religious service. For example, when Luke speaks of Zacharias’ service at the temple, he uses the word liturgy (Luke 1:23).

¹⁸⁹ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*, 54.

¹⁹⁰ St. Basil the Great, *On Fasting and Feasts*, trans. Intro. Susan R. Holman and Mark DelCogliano (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2013), 43.

The authors of the New Testament also used this word to describe the Christian worship in general and the Eucharistic thanksgiving in particular. Liturgical prayer is the center of the spiritual life of the church. The New Testament church continues the Jewish liturgical tradition and the temple service, especially the passover meal liturgy in the Christian context. The Synoptic gospels clearly relate to this when they narrate the institution of the Eucharist or Holy communion during the Passover meal, when Jesus Christ sat with His disciples for the Last Supper. One of the main segments of the Eucharistic prayer (the anaphora) is the narration of the Last Supper and how Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Holy communion, and for this reason that segment of the liturgical prayer is named the Institution.¹⁹¹

Paul also calls himself "liturgist (minister) of Christ Jesus of the Gentiles" (Rom 15:16). He also uses the word when he talks about the collection for the poor and the support he received from the believers (2 Cor 9:12, Phil 2:30).¹⁹² The author of Hebrews also uses the word liturgy to describe the priestly work of Jesus Christ. He said, "We have such a high priest . . . a minister (leitourgos, liturgist) of Holies ... But now He has obtained a superior ministry (leitourgias, liturgy)...."(Heb.8:1-6).¹⁹³ In the apostolic writings, for example, in Didache¹⁹⁴ and Clement of Rome¹⁹⁵ the word liturgy indicates any of the communal religious or spiritual activities.¹⁹⁶ In the latter patristic period, the word liturgy is closely associated with the Eucharistic celebration. The Apostolic Constitution of Hippolytus, the Liturgy of St. Basil, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom of the 4th century indicate this trend.¹⁹⁷

The most common definition of liturgy is the public worship of the church. This definition primarily depends on the the Greek root word, and it indicates its communal activity. The writer Donald Thorson defines liturgy as "the order of rites and rituals performed during regular Christian gatherings and on Holy days."¹⁹⁸ Here also, the emphasis is more on rituals, order and regulations

¹⁹¹ Ernest Hammerschmidt, for example, listed the twenty Ethiopic Anaphoras' institution narratives. Ernest Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras* (Wiesbaden, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag 1987), 112-127.

¹⁹² John H Miller, "The Nature and Definition of the Liturgy," *Theological Studies* 18, no. 3 (1957): 126.

¹⁹³ Miller, "The Nature and Definition of the Liturgy," 327.

¹⁹⁴ Didache 15,1 in *The Didache and other works*, Trans. And Annotated, James A Kleist (New York: The Newman Press, 1948), 24.

¹⁹⁵ Clement of Rome, *Epistle to Corinthians* 40, 2-5.

¹⁹⁶ Miller, "The Nature and Definition of the Liturgy," 327.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ "Liturgy." In Donald A. Thorsen, *The IVP Pocket Reference Series: Pocket Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 74.

of the rituals. It doesn't describe the nature or the content of liturgy. Alikiviadis C. Calivas' definition is: "the liturgy in all of its expressions is a festival of faith, a celebration of the gift of Knowledge of the Holy Trinity, a reaffirmation of the new life that comes from the Triune God."¹⁹⁹ Calivas' definition explains three things. First, Liturgy is a celebration, a public celebration of the faithful. Second, the liturgical celebration comes from participation in the communion with the Holy Trinity. Third, it is also the reaffirmation of new life.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the liturgical prayers, especially the Eucharistic prayer (called Qäddase)²⁰⁰, play an important role in the development and growth of the spiritual life. In the next two sections, we will explore the history of liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and how these prayers enrich the spiritual life of the faithful.

THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH.

As the first bishop of Ethiopia, St. Frumentius brought from Alexandria ecclesiastical rules and orders along with ancient Eucharistic prayers (anaphoras). In his seminal study on Ethiopic Anaphoras, Ernest Hammerschmidt assumed that after he visited St. Athanasius of Alexandria, Frumentius took with him the Hippolytus church order (because of its origin, it is called the Egyptian church order), the Anaphora of the Apostles, and the Anaphora of our Lord. "The church order (of Egypt) was made the basis for the service by Frumentius in the Diocese which was bestowed on him."²⁰¹

In his short essays on the Rite of the Ethiopian (Ge'ez) church, the late Ethiopian Catholic archbishop Pawlos Tzadua also points out the Alexandrian Rites' influence, "A comparison between the Ethiopian liturgy and the ancient Alexandrian one confirms the dependence of the Ethiopian Rite on that of Alexandria. There is a similarity between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian Coptic Rites, which stems from their common origin. This can be seen not only in their structure but also, in some instances, textually."²⁰²

Although the Ethiopian liturgy is heavily influenced by the Alexandrian liturgy, at the same time it also has its own gradual development. As Paulos Tzadua points out, the Ethiopic Liturgy "has undergone such an evolution that the actual form of the liturgy, so very distant from the original, seems on the point of assuming the dignity of an independent rite. Language, customs, and songs contributed largely to this evolution, giving the Ethiopian rite its own characteristic features."²⁰³ The

¹⁹⁹ Alkiviadis C. Calivas: *Essays in Theology Liturgy*, 2.

²⁰⁰ ቀደስ qəddäsä to praise ቅዱስ qäddase praise, thanksgiving.

²⁰¹ Ernest Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*, 42.

²⁰² Paulos Tzadua, "The Divine Liturgy According to the Rite of the Ethiopian Church," accessed December 20, 2022. <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/church/divineliturgydoc.html>.

²⁰³ Ibid.

influence of the Alexandrian church is not limited to the structure and content of the liturgical order, but it also influenced the framework of the liturgical year. The Ethiopian Orthodox church uses the Alexandrian calendar to count months, years, and eras,²⁰⁴ and like the liturgical prayers we can see also a similar development in the liturgical cycle.²⁰⁵

When we are studying the development of the Ethiopian liturgy we must consider the following books which govern the liturgical life of the church:

1. The book of Sinodos, a collection of the ancient canons of the church,²⁰⁶
2. Metshafe Kidan or the book of the Covenant which is the Ethiopian version of the Testamentum Domini, a document of Syrian origin (5th century),
3. The Book of Didaskalia known as Didascalia Apostolorum
4. Fetha Negest (Law of the Kings), a collection of civic and ecclesiastical laws probably written by Assafi Ibin al Assal around the mid 13th century.

The translation of these books along with the major liturgical reformation of the golden era of Geez literature (15th century) gave a unique and independent nature to the Ethiopian liturgy.

Traditionally the Ethiopian liturgy is divided into three major sections. The first section is the preparatory prayer (known as Səre'atä Gəbts or the Order of the Egyptians), the second section is the ordinary of the mass (known as Səre'atä Qədasse, also known as the Liturgy of the Word or Liturgy of the Catechumen), and the last section is the Anaphora or the Eucharistic thanksgiving (known as Fəre Qədasse or Akotetä Qurban, also known as the Liturgy of the Faithful).²⁰⁷

Besides the Syrian rite, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has the largest collection of anaphoras. It has 20 anaphoras and 14 of them are official liturgies which the church uses throughout the liturgical year. Traditionally these anaphoras are attributed to the apostles and patristic church

²⁰⁴ The Alexandrian calendar is a mix of the ancient Egyptian solar calendar with the Julian calendar. "The Alexandrian year retains the ancient Egyptian division of the year into twelve months of thirty days each, plus five more days called epagomenal, at its end, as well as the extra day who's intercalation is at the end of every fourth year." Fr. Emmanuel Fritsch, *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church*, Ethiopian Review Cultures Special Issue 9-10 (2001): 21.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 27.

²⁰⁶ Some of the canons are attributed to the Apostles, Clement bishop of Rome and Hippolytus of Rome. It also contains the canons of the Synods of Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, and the canons of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

²⁰⁷ Hammarschidmit put the first two section together as one major section and called them simply as pre-anaphora and divided them as, preparatory prayer, Prothesis (placing the host on the table), the Enarxis (the great entrance) Liturgy of the Catechumens. See. Ernest Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*, 50.

fathers of the 3rd and 4th century, but most scholars consider the majority of these anaphoras as indigenous works and the attributions as pseudonym.

These anaphoras are: the Anaphora of the Apostles, the Anaphora of Our Lord, the Anaphora of St. John the Evangelist, the Anaphora of the 318 Orthodox Fathers (of the Council of Nicaea), the Anaphora of Our Lady (I) (which is said to have been composed by Kyriakos of Behnsa), the Anaphora of St. Athanasius, the Anaphora of St. Basil²⁰⁸, the Anaphora of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the Anaphora of St. Epiphanius, the Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, the Anaphora of St. Cyril(I), the Anaphora of St. James of Sarug, the Anaphora of St. Gregory, the Anaphora of St. Dioscorus, the Anaphora of Our Lady (II) by Giyorgis of Gasəčča²⁰⁹, the Anaphora of St. Mark, the Anaphora of St. James Brother of the Lord, the Anaphora of Our Lady (III) by Gregory, the Anaphora of Our Lady (IV) by Gregory, and the Anaphora of St. Cyril (II).

LITURGICAL CALENDAR OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH²¹⁰

The Ethiopian church, because of its historical relationship with the Coptic Church, uses the Alexandrian year.²¹¹ The Alexandrian year was used in ancient Egypt since 30 B.C. It uses the ancient Egyptian division of the year into twelve months of thirty days with an addition of five days (epagomenai). It also uses the four year cycle, with each year named after one of the four evangelists. The new year start on Meskerem 1 (September 11) . The year of Luke is a leap year, which has an additional one day for epagomenai, making it an addition of 6 days. For example at the publication of this dissertation (the 2022/23 academic year) we would be in the Ethiopian calendar year of 2015, the year of St. Luke the evangelist, which is a leap year.²¹²

The Liturgical year of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has two major parts: the Temporal and the Sanctoral.²¹³ Under the temporal we have: The liturgical seasons, the Sundays of the year, and the feasts and fasts of the church. Most of these feasts and fasts are moveable following the Easter cycle. Under the Sanctoral, we have the commemoration of the feast of St. Mary the Mother of God, and

²⁰⁸ This anaphora is the translation of the Coptic anaphora of St. Basil. See Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*, 27.

²⁰⁹ Sometimes known as Giyorgis of Säglä, he is a prolific writer and liturgical reformer of 15th century Ethiopia. He is responsible for the revision of the liturgical books *Dəggwa* and *Book of Hours*. Gerard Colin, Giyorgis of Säglä. In Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 2: D-Ha. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2005), 812.

²¹⁰ Image credit: E.S "Rituals, Festivals and Liturgical Calendar"
<https://orthodoxyinethiopia.weebly.com/rituals-festivals--liturgical-calendar.html>.

²¹¹ Fr. Emmanuel Fritsch, *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church*, 21.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

other saints. These feasts have fixed days of the months. The date of the Commemoration of the saint is based on the Synaxarium and the hagiography of the saint of that day.²¹⁴



Liturgical Cycle

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has nine major feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are:

1. The Feast of the Incarnation
2. The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
3. The Feast of Epiphany (the baptism of our Lord)
4. The Feast of Palm Sunday
5. The Feast of the Crucifixion of our Lord (Good Friday)
6. The Feast of Easter
7. The Feast of the Ascension
8. The Feast of Pentecost
9. The Feast of Transfiguration (Mount Tabor)

²¹⁴ Ibid., 56-57.

There are also nine minor feasts of our Lord which are: the feast of the exaltation of the Cross, the three Sundays before Christmas,²¹⁵ the feast the Circumcision of our Lord, the feast of the Presentation of our Lord to the Temple²¹⁶, the feast of the miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, the feast of Mount Olive²¹⁷, and the feast of the finding of the true Cross.

LITURGICAL PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Sanctified Time

In liturgy through the "presence and the action of Christ, time is sanctified."²¹⁸ The liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church starts with the proclamation of these words. "How awesome is this day and how marvelous this hour wherein the Holy Spirit will descend from heaven and overshadow and hallow this sacrifice."²¹⁹ "In the liturgy, the Son and the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is present with His people, fulfilling His promise to be in their midst, when they gather together in his Name (Mat. 18:20)"²²⁰ In the liturgy, as Olivier Clement said, " the eternal God, the unfathomed deep beyond all, takes us to himself as a father his child. He admits us to an area of non death... His sweetness invades our heart, we thirst for Him, we long for all humankind to share this Joy of ours, we pray that all may be saved."²²¹

Liturgy is the mystery of the Incarnation in action. The Son of God "broke into cosmic time and human history"²²² through His incarnation. As Paul said, "when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Gal. 4:4-5.) " In the person of Jesus Christ, God lived and accomplished human salvation in time and space."²²³ Therefore, in the liturgy we participate in this great mystery. We break into the eternal time and are present at Calvary to see the redemptive

²¹⁵ The feast of Sibket (Lt. Preaching. The Commemoration of the announcement of the prophets about the coming of Jesus, the feast of Birhan (lit. light. The commemoration of Jesus the Light of the world) and Nolawi (lit. Shepherd. The commemoration of Jesus the good Shepherd).

²¹⁶ The feast of the Presentation is named "the Rebirth of Simeon the Elder" in the lectionary of feasts for the year.

²¹⁷ This feast is the commemoration of the Second Coming of our Lord on the Judgement Day.

²¹⁸ Thomas Merton, "Time and Liturgy," *Worship* 31, no. 1 (Dec. 1969): 2.

²¹⁹ Marcos Daoud. *Liturgy Ethiopian Church* (New York, NY: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 18.

²²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²²¹ Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 199.

²²² Anscar J Chupungco, ed. *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Volume V : Liturgical Time and Space. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), xx.

²²³ Ibid.

work of Jesus Christ. For that reason, "liturgical time is... the time of Christ which extends itself into the time of the church." The past and the present unify and become "today."²²⁴

Sanctified Community

In the west, the greater emphasis is given to "individual relationship," sometimes at the expense of communal or corporal worship. However, without communal worship, there is no individual devotion or spiritual formation. As early church fathers say repeatedly, personal spiritual growth comes in the context of communal spiritual life. Professor Florovsky wrote that "Personal devotion and community worship belong intimately together, and each of them is genuine and authentic, and truly Christian, only through the other."²²⁵ He argued that "common prayer presupposes and requires personal training. Yet, personal prayer itself is possible only in the context of the community, since no person is Christian except as a member of the body. Even in the solitude 'in the chamber' a Christian prays as a member of the redeemed community, the Church."²²⁶ As St. Cyprian said in his famous dictum "outside the church [the worshiping community or the mystical body of Christ] there is no salvation."²²⁷

Liturgical prayers invite us into this community. As we saw in our biblical and theological discussion, these prayers lead us into the divine life. They are "our window to the spiritual world, our participation in the life of Christ, our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and the foretaste of the things to come."²²⁸ The time of liturgy is the time of formation, restoration and transformation.²²⁹ Susan Wood in her essay describes this 'formative environment' as follows:

Within the liturgy we come to know ourselves and God because the liturgy orders our relationships: my relationship to others within the body of Christ sacramentally constituted within the Eucharist, my relationship to God as a recipient of God's graciousness, my relationship to the world by being not only sent, but missioned and commissioned to live ethically within history what has been experienced in the metahistorical time and space of the liturgy.²³⁰

²²⁴ Ibid., 77.

²²⁵ George Florovsky, "Worship and Every day Life: An Eastern Orthodox View" in *Studia Liturgical* 2, no. 4 (1963): 272.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ "CHURCH FATHERS: Epistle 74 (Cyprian of Carthage)". www.newadvent.org.

²²⁸ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*, 11.

²²⁹ Ibid., 10.

²³⁰ Susan K. Wood, "Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy" *Studia Liturgica*, 29, (1999): 30. Quoted in Calivas, *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*, 10.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

According to the teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the liturgy is a response to God's Word, and a response to the mystery revealed in the scripture. This is very clear in the structure and content of the liturgy. In the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy, one of the three major sections of the liturgy is called the Liturgy of the Word.²³¹ It consists of a reading from the Pauline epistles, the general epistles, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and the chanting of the book of Psalms, culminating with the procession and reading of the Gospel. The content of the liturgical prayers is also heavily influenced by scriptural words and phrases. Sometimes these prayers are strings of biblical passages from scripture.²³² The dominant theme of the liturgy is the salvation history of God's people. It retells the salvation story in a poetic and hymnal language. The composers of the liturgical prayers understood that without divine revelation, there is no access to divine knowledge, and that there is no communion with God.

Conclusion

Because the mystery of our liturgy is profound, a lifelong spiritual journey awaits us to discover its spiritual benefits. Especially these days, following the Covid crisis, we have seen a decline in Divine Liturgy attendance. We need to know the danger of this behavior in the believers' spiritual life. We cannot participate in the liturgy while sitting on our couch. It is a mystery we experience with our whole being: body, soul, and spirit. We prostrate with our knees, we respond to the thanksgiving of the liturgy with our tongues, we smell the incense, we hear and kiss the word of gospel, we greet each other with a sacred greeting, and above all, we receive the Holy Mystery, which is the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

This spiritual experience cannot be transmitted over the Internet. Yes, in the height of the Covid pandemic, we did this to protect our congregation. Sometimes it can be helpful for those who are in the hospital, and at home due to illness, but it is not the norm for Orthodox spirituality. The West's individualistic view of spirituality is not biblical or spiritual. To justify our actions, sometimes we say, "even if I pray at home, God hears me." Yes, He will hear our cries, but His ultimate blessing is to give us life in His community, the church. Christ saved us so that we can participate in the divine life through His body, the church, which is spirituality's real meaning.

²³¹ It is also known as Ordinary of the mass (ሥርዓተ ቅዳሴ) See. *Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 35-101.

²³² Like rabbinical prayers or preaching called charaz (literally it means stringing pearls). Paul also follows this kind of method in his epistles. See Rom. 3:9-18 in William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64.

Session Seven: St. Yared Liturgical Hymn and Spiritual Formation

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (Col.3:15-16).

Glory be to You, Christ my Lord and my God, at all times. Sing aloud unto God our strength Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbre, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.²³³

Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about:

- The contribution of St. Yared in the liturgy of the church
- The five works of St. Yared and their places in the liturgical prayer of the church
- Some themes from the Lenten antiphony of St. Yared



Although Frumentius was crucial in laying the ground work for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, St Yared is the principal figure in the Ethiopian Orthodox church's liturgical history. St. Yared was born in Axum at the early stages of the introduction of institutionalized Christianity. The date of his birth is disputed, but some scholars for example, Merigeta Lisane Worq, in his seminal study of St. Yared and his liturgical chants, puts the date on the 5th of Miyaziya 493 A.D.²³⁴ According to tradition, St. Yared is the first child of his parents. His brothers Abyud and Christian were born after him. His parents named him Yared following instructions from an angel. The angel told them:

He will be the one who will ascend to heaven to bring the holy angels' hymn. Like the bee gathering nectar from trees, flowers, and grasses and making sweet honey for the people, he will gather beautiful words from Old and New Testaments, from scholars' homilies and mix it with a beautiful melody and give it to those who learn. He will transform the temple of Ethiopia into the temple of heaven, the priests into

192 ²³³ Hymn before the reading of the Holy Gospel, see Ethiopian Liturgy, Preparatory service no.

²³⁴ Lisane Worq Gebre Giyorgis, *Təntawi Sərə'ätä Mahəlet Zä-Abunä Yared Liq [Ancient Order of the Liturgical chant of our Father and teacher Yared]*, (Addis Ababa: Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes & Institut tigre des Langues, 1997), 15.

the priests (elders) of heaven, to praise their creator God in a beautiful hymn. For this reason, his name will be Yared.²³⁵

According to the tradition, St. Yared is the first composer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's liturgical chant. Before Yared, the church used non-melodic worship. His work laid the ground for liturgical chants and spiritual poetry, scriptural interpretation, and theological discussion. His influence on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's life is beyond measure. As its first composer, St. Yared gave the church lyrics, melody, and a system of musical notation. According to the late archbishop Melke Tsedeq, the ancient musical notations of St. Yared are eight in number, which correspond with western musical notation.²³⁶ In his introductory essay, Hailu Habtu observed that the musical composition of Yared "involves sound, movement, dance, and some percussion. Its sound is soothing, its movement a gentle swaying of the body sideways and to and fro, its dance a softly rhythmic and undulating march backward, forward and sideways, its percussion minimalistic, and, some say, subtly imitative of the human heartbeat." ²³⁷

Yared gave the church three melodic modes by which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church sings all of its liturgical chants. These three musical modes are Ge'ez, IZl, and Araray. St Yared's hagiography attributed three mystical birds as the source of these melodies. Based on the story, God sent these birds to St. Yared, and they revealed the melodies to him. These modes of melodies symbolize the three persons of the Trinity. The Geez mode symbolizes the Father. Its "hard, stern, stark and dry" tune can be described as "commanding, imposing, proclamatory."²³⁸ The IZl mode symbolizes the Son. The mode's soft and gentle way signifies His divine love. The third mode Araray is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This mode is plaintive, melancholic, and sung on somber occasions or seasons.²³⁹

Beside his musical compositions, St Yared is also a lyricist and considered the first poet in the history of Ethiopian orthodox church. Spiritual poetry, also called Qene²⁴⁰, is part of the liturgical chant, and a new composition of poetry is recited in the middle of every chant. As Habtu states in his

²³⁵ Ibid., 15.

²³⁶ Habte Maryam Worqneh, *Təntawi Yä-Etiopia Səṗ'ätä Təmhəṣət* [Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum] (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1963) 75.

²³⁷ Hailu Habtu, introduction in *Lisane Worq Gebre Giyorgis, Təntawi Səṗ'ätä Mahəṣət Zä-Abunä Yared Liq* [Ancient Order of the Liturgical chant of our Father and teacher Yared], (Addis Ababa: Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes & Institut tigréen des Langues, 1997), xx.

²³⁸ Ibid., xvii.

²³⁹ Ibid., xvii.

²⁴⁰ The exact meaning of the word is disputed. Some say it means submission (to God). Others say it means spiritual poem. Habte Maryam Worqneh, *Təntawi Yä-Etiopia Səṗ'ätä Təmhəṣət* [Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum], 172.

introductory essays, Qene is “a very high, elaborate, strict, and multi-layered form of Geez that is cryptic, complex, profound, and rich in allusions to religion, legend, history, law, social customs, etc, and generally to the human condition.”²⁴¹ The lyrics of St. Yared’s hymns are deeply scriptural, theological, and are a great source for scholars to study the methodology of scriptural interpretation of the ancient church of Ethiopia. His use of patristic literature also requires further study. His arrangement of the hymns of the church follows salvation history and because of this, Yared’s work dictates the lectionary cycle of the church. To understand the scope of his influence in the liturgical life of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, we must delve into his works.

Dəggwa²⁴² (Antiphony for the Liturgical Year)

Dəggwa²⁴³ is the major work of St. Yared and his disciples. Some medieval church scholars, for example, St. George of Gasæcca, also expanded on the work of St. Yared. It is divided into four sections following the four seasons of the liturgical cycle of the church.

The first section of the hymn is called Yohannēs (John the Baptist). As the bridge between Old and New Testament and as the last prophet of the Old Testament and first apostle of the New Testament, John the Baptist’s feast day is the first day of the New Year in the Ethiopian liturgical calendar.²⁴⁴ This section is the most expansive section of the Dəggwa²⁴⁵ and it covers the first three months, including the flower season.²⁴⁶ The second section of the hymn is called Astäməhəro (instruction or supplication). This section covers the advent, Christmas, the Baptism of Christ, and Epiphany season [ዘመነ አስተርእዮ] or Christmastide until the arrival of the Lenten season. This section also appears again during the *Kiremt* or summer season between the Paschal season and the New Year. The third section is the Tsome Dəggwa, and it covers the Lenten season. Some scholars, including the late archbishop Melke Tsedek and his team, considered Tsome Dəggwa as a separate work.²⁴⁷ Habte Michael Kidane argued that the separation was a recent development (18th C.) which

²⁴¹ Hailu Habtu, introduction, xxi.

²⁴² Habte Maryam Worqneh, *The Five part of chants*, 249-398.

²⁴³ Habte Maryam Worqneh, (Archbishop Melke Tsedek) suggested that the meaning of the word Dəggwa means small hand writing or collection., Habte Maryam Worqneh, *Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum*, 75.

²⁴⁴ The Ethiopian New Year started in Meskerem 1st (September 11).

²⁴⁵ Habte Maryam Worqneh,, *Ancient Ethiopian Curriculum*, 80.

²⁴⁶ The flower season (ዘመነ ጽጌ) starts on Meskerem (September) 26 and ends on Hedar 6 and in this season the church remembers the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt.

²⁴⁷ Habte Maryam Workneh *The Five part of chants*, 1-101.

happened for a “practical reason”.²⁴⁸ The last section of Dəggwa is called Fasika and covers the whole of eastertide.

2Zəmmare²⁴⁹ (Eucharistic Antiphony)

Tradition ascribes this work to St. Yared, and according to Ethiopian scholars, Yared composed this Zəmmare in the Zur Amba monastery in Northern Ethiopia.²⁵⁰ Zəmmare is usually chanted during and after the distribution of Holy Communion. The content of the chant is directed towards the Eucharist, and we can see this by examining the titles of the five sections of Zəmmare, which are: Həbəṣət (ኅብስት) which means prosphora, Səwa’ə (ጽዋዕ), the chalice, Mänəfäs (ሙንፈስ) the Holy Spirit, Äkotet (አኩቴት) eucharistic praise, and Məstir (ምሥጢር), mystery [of the communion].²⁵¹

Mäwasə’ət²⁵²

Mäwasə’ət²⁵³ is also attributed to the work of St. Yared. This antiphon is chanted with hymns inserted between psalms and biblical canticles verses. The chant is used on feast days of the saints of the church and other church feasts. It is also part of the funeral liturgical prayer and for this reason it is called Säwasəw näfs (Ladder of the soul) or mārḥ lemängəstā sämayat (Guide to the Kingdom of heaven.)²⁵⁴

Mə’əraf²⁵⁵

According to Ethiopian scholars, Mə’əraf is the last work of St Yared. He composed this chant at Semen mountain in northern Ethiopia. Like the Me’wase’et chant, Me’əraf is also performed with the recitation of the Psalms. The word Mə’əraf indicates that the antiphon has to be performed after reading or chanting the book of Psalms verses, used as a resting place for the reading of the Psalm.

²⁴⁸ Habtemichael Kidane, “Dəggwa,” in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 2, ed. Siegbert Uhlig, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 123-124.

²⁴⁹ Habte Maryam Workneh, *The Five part of chants*, 401-527.

²⁵⁰ Habte Maryam Workneh, *Ancient Ethiopian*, 102.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 202-204.

²⁵² Habte Maryam Workneh, and others, *The Five part of chants*, 529-604.

²⁵³ Some scholars said Mewase’et derived from the geez verb Awsə’a meaning “respond” to indicate that this antiphon is performed between the left and right side of the chorus. See Habte Michael Kidane, “Mäwasə’ət” in Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 3: He-N. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 877.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 877.

²⁵⁵ Habte Maryam Workneh, *The Five part of chants*, 103-246.

²⁵⁶ Mə'əraf also contains other works by St. Yared, such as a hymn to Mary called Anqetse Birhan or the Gate of Light, and a Litanical prayer called Zäyənägəs (God enthroned). Mə'əraf uses the whole book of Psalms and other works like Mystagogia and the Prayer of the Covenant known as Testamentum Domini.²⁵⁷

St. Yared and Spiritual Formation

The main message of the hymns of St. Yared is the mystery of our salvation. For example, in his Antiphonary for the Lenten season, he discusses in great detail what spiritual disciplines we should practice to prepare our body and soul for participation in this great mystery. He talks extensively about fasting, Sabbath, prostration, almsgiving, love, silence, and reading the scriptures.

ON FASTING

One of the themes in St. Yared's Lenten Antiphon is fasting. To him, fasting is an instrument to cure the illness of the soul. He said, "fasting heals the wounds of the soul."²⁵⁸ As we said in the previous chapter, the body and soul are not separate when discussing purification. Each can be a source of weakness or strength for the other. When the body is tired from fasting, the influence of the soul from the body ceases, and its spiritual faculty becomes strong. As a result fasting "shines the light of God's glory on us."²⁵⁹ That's why St. Yared said that fasting saves us from death.²⁶⁰ Fasting makes us think of the spiritual reality above the earthly things. "It takes us to heaven." So, the person who dedicates his time to fasting is wise.²⁶¹ The wisdom here is the discovery of the main secret of life, the decision to control the desire to chase the temporal and earthly things and start looking for heavenly treasures. However, to have the full blessing of fasting, we must imitate "Christ, who fasted for us, to give us the pattern," and the saints who fasted and received blessing sfrom God.²⁶² We must fast with love and generosity,²⁶³ just as the Lord and the saints of the Old and New Testament did. As St. Yared said:

Let's fast the fasting,
Let's love our neighbor,

²⁵⁶ Getachew Haile, "Mə'əraf", in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 3, 910.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 910-911.

²⁵⁸ St. Yared, Antiphonary for Lent, ed. Mengistu Gebre Ab, (Addis Ababa: no printing press, 2015), 65.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 43.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

²⁶² Ibid., 46.

²⁶³ Ibid., 1.

Let's overcome our flesh,
Let's celebrate the Sabbath of our God.²⁶⁴

PRAYER

In the teaching of St. Yared, fasting goes hand in hand with prayer. He repeatedly said that we should offer God fasting, prayer, supplication, and prostration. We have to offer this prayer with firm faith. He says:

Let's come to him in faith,
Let's praise him with a hymn,
Let's come to him in faith.
Let's beseech the Almighty with fasting and prayer,
Let's come to him in faith,
Every time and every hour,
Let's come to him in faith,
Let's come to him in faith.²⁶⁵

We find in many places in the Holy Bible that prayer with firm faith has incredible grace and power. St. Yared reminds us of this truth. He encourages us to approach God in prayer with faith. While in this world, there are many ups and downs and sorrows, and to tackle this sorrow, he advises us to bring our sorrow in prayer. He says:

Do not be saddened by the sorrows of this world.
Let your sorrow be fasting and prayer.
God is pleased with it.²⁶⁶

St. Yared emphasizes on how we should personally approach God in prayer, but he also gives a prominent place for communal prayer. He says that God's house is a house of prayer and that we should all come to God's house to pray. He also reminds us that we should remember each other in prayer. He says:

My beloved brothers and sisters,
Peace be with you,
Always remember me in your prayers
The prayer of the righteous
And the petition of the righteous helps a lot.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 44.

ALMSGIVING

As the Lord Jesus Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount, Saint Yared repeatedly speaks of the role of almsgiving in the spiritual life. First, he says that pride makes us hurry to collect wealth instead of almsgiving. He reminds us that where there is pride, there is suffering, and the remedy for this is always almsgiving:

Do not exalt yourself in pride;
For where there is pride, there is suffering;
It will prevent you from entering the kingdom.
Go to all the wise men and search;
Almsgiving is better than hoarding gold.²⁶⁷

As we have seen in previous chapters, gluttony and avarice are the passions of the soul that drive people to death. On the other hand, fasting, almsgiving, and prayer save a person from death and bring him to heaven:

Through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving,
They will be saved from death,
Fasting will bring you to heaven.
Hallelujah to the Father.
Hallelujah to the Son,
Hallelujah to the Holy Spirit,
We will sing and give thanks,
To the one who gave us fasting for repentance.²⁶⁸

For St. Yared, almsgiving is the path to wisdom. Accumulating wealth in this world is futile and leads nowhere. But on the other hand, giving alms, as St. John Chrysostom said, is lending money to God. St. Yared shows us this eternal truth:

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God,
True faith is good advice.
Nothing compares to wisdom,
Wisdom is better than many treasures,
Gold does not buy it,
And silver does not exchange it.
Precious pearls are her foundation,
A wall surrounds her,
Wisdom is better than many treasures.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 32.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 41-42.

Think, you who are honored on earth,
 How to approach God,
 Wisdom is greater than many treasures
 And almsgiving from acquiring gold.²⁶⁹

ON SABBATH

In the hymns of St. Yared, honoring the Sabbath is one of the continuous themes. According to St. Yared, God made the Sabbath because He loves humankind. On the purpose of the Sabbath, he said, "God gave us the Sabbath, to rest and to send praise for His glorious name and offer pure prayer on this day." When St. Yared speaks of the Sabbath, he speaks of Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, and the first Sabbath, Saturday. For example, he quotes from the Torah: "He sent down the Torah to the children of Israel. . . Moses commanded them to keep the Sabbath. And he said to them, Do your work six days. But on the seventh day, you should rest (Ex. 34:21) He sings:

Hallelujah
 He did not think of our transgression,
 He never left us to perish,
 The God who is good.
 Moses commanded the people,
 To observe the Sabbath righteously.²⁷⁰

Speaking of the benefit of honoring the Sabbath, he said, "He who observes the Sabbath will find rest, life everlasting." Then he said, " God made the Sabbath rest for the people to take away sorrow and an evil thought from us and that He may fill our mind with grace He made the Sabbath rest for the people, And He rested from all his work."²⁷¹ For St. Yared, observance of the Sabbath is not an empty religious ritual. Since this kind of view leads many to a miserable life, he points out how we can avoid that pitfall. He sang in many places that we should honor the Sabbath in righteousness, truth, and purity of heart.:

Be like a wise person,
 The one who fasts and prays,
 The one who asks for forgiveness of sin.
 Walk in righteousness, and you might find goodness.
 Honor the Sabbath; learn to do right;

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 44.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 39.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 4-6.

Go in righteousness, and you might find goodness.
 Go in righteousness, and you might find goodness.²⁷²

ON LOVE

For St. Yared, love is not an abstract thing. It must be demonstrated in our attitude toward our fellow human beings. He urges us repeatedly to "love each other" or "let us love our neighbor."²⁷³ For St. Yared, this love originates from the divine love which was manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ:

See how He loves us,
 He chose us and loved us first.
 For the Salvation of the whole world,
 Christ was crucified on a wooden cross.
 The church praises him,
 Saying this Your word is sweet,
 You who was crucified for sinners,
 Shine a light on the Gentiles.²⁷⁴

According to St. Yared, to acquire this divine love we must "follow love" and "love righteousness." In his hymn he gives us words of advice on how to maintain a life full of love.

Now is the time to submit to God,
 To worship and learn before God.
 My brothers and sisters,
 Let us avoid evil and encourage goodness,
 Make your enemy happy,
 Strengthen love.
 And when we were all together with him
 Let's come to Christ's throne
 But do good and uphold righteousness
 You all love each other
 You are one member
 That we may praise him
 With good virtue and righteousness²⁷⁵

²⁷² Ibid., 1.

²⁷³ Ibid., 1, 2, 44.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 40-41.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 44.

For Discussion

1. Although St. Yared is popular in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, his work is unknown to the laity. What do you suggest be done to introduce the works of the saint to the congregation?
2. From Saint Yared's Lenten Antiphony, which theme is related to your spiritual situation?
3. Are you practicing almsgiving? In what way?

Session Eight: The Monastic Spirituality of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

2 Tim 2:7-8

Love is the daughter of dispassion while dispassion is the flower of the praktike. Praktike, in turn, is based upon keeping the commandments. Their guardian, though, is the fear of God, which is an offshoot of right faith. Faith, now, is an immanent good, which is naturally found even in those who do not yet believe in God.

Evagrius of Pontus

Learning Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, we will know about

- The biblical foundation for monastic spirituality
- The definition and characteristics of monasticism
- The history of monasticism in Ethiopia and the key figures of the movement

To prevent the worldliness that entered the church following the adoption of Christianity by the Roman kings, one of the movements that God the Holy Spirit raised was the movement of the monastic life. Although the monastic life took shape in the deserts of Egypt during the third and fourth centuries, it also has a biblical basis. In the Old Testament, the prophets who lived in solitude, such as the prophet Elijah, as well as some of the saints in the New Testament like St. John the Baptist and Saint Paul, are examples of the monastic life.

Until the third century, monasticism was the solitary life of the few. But ever since St. Athanasius wrote the biography of the great monastic father, St. Anthony, monasticism spread throughout the Roman Empire. Those who wanted to live an ascetic life dedicated to prayer and fasting began to live together. To shape this monastic life of unity, St. Basil the Great, St. Pachomius of Egypt, and later St. Benedict issued laws or rules for monasticism.



Egypt, Syria, and Palestine were well-known monastic centers in the third and fourth centuries. These monastic centers significantly influenced Christian theology and spiritual life. The great church fathers in that period, referred to it as a patristic golden age. Many respected saints of the church such as Saint Basil, Saint Chrysostom, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and others, took on this monastic life.

When we study the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's spiritual life, we can see the influence of the monastic movement in the life of the church. The spread of monastic life in Ethiopia contributed significantly to the expansion of Christianity in the country. The monasteries were centers of evangelization and apostolic mission. The monks who received the task from the great monasteries went to remote places and established monasteries, teaching and baptizing the people around them.

Ascetic Life in the Bible

According to the teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Enoch, the seventh generation of Adam, was the first person to start the life of solitude, which is the order of angels. Melchizedek and Elias also practiced this ascetic life.²⁷⁶ The Bible tells us that Melchizedek had no father or mother, and his genealogy is unknown (Heb. 7:3). For this reason, the fathers who wrote about the monastic life refer to Melchizedek as an example of an ascetic life. Elijah is looked to as a model of monasticism because lived in a cave during Israel's famine (1King 17:3-7). He then went to the mountain in the desert and stayed there for forty days and forty nights. Because his life was solitary and mentioned in the New Testament in connection with John the Baptist, he is considered the forerunner of the New Testament ascetic life.

In the New Testament, the monastic life is not directly mentioned by name. Yet, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, John the Baptist, and Saint Paul taught the life of living as a virgin and in solitude. For example, in Matthew 19:27-29, Saint Peter said to the Lord, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; And what will we get?" Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said, "Whoever has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life." Also, in the same chapter, a person asks, "What good thing must I do to obtain eternal life?" Our Lord Jesus Christ replied to him, by saying, "If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor; and come follow Me and you shall have treasure in heaven. (Matthew 19:21).

This passage is the starting point of the monastic movement. St. Athanasius told us, St. Anthony entered the monastic life when he heard this word of the Lord while attending the liturgy. According to his hagiography, when he heard this word of the gospel, he immediately decided to put it into practice. It says:

²⁷⁶ *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church from the birth of Christ until 2000 E.C*, 229-230.

As though God had inspired his thought of the saints and the passage had been read aloud on his account, Anthony left the church at once and gave to the villagers the property he had received from his parents. There were three hundred acres, fertile and very beautiful---so that he and his sister might not be in any way encumbered by it. He sold all their other worldly possessions and collected a large amount of money, which he gave to the poor, keeping a little for his sister's sake.²⁷⁷

According to the gospels, Saint John the Baptist also lived in the wilderness. His way of life (living a life of celibacy), his attire, and his diet, is a model for all the church's anchorites or hermits. Most hermits in Ethiopia, following St. John the Baptist as a model, do not cut their hair and usually wear leather. The hermits in Ethiopia were also inspired by John the Baptist's way of preaching and martyrdom, occasionally leaving their monasteries and reprimanding religious and civil leaders. An example of this is when Abune Philipos, the abbot of Debre Libanos came out of his monastery and reprimanded the king of Ethiopia. The controversy started when "Emperor Amde Sion was holding his father's wife (stepmother) as his concubine. When he heard this, Abune Philipos took his student Abune Anorewos of Tsgaja to the palace and reprimanded the king and said to him; 'you should not keep your father's wife,' They rebuked him as John rebuked Herod by saying that he should not inherit his brother's wife. And the king got angry and flogged them."²⁷⁸

Saint Paul also taught about living an ascetic life in his epistles. He himself lived as a celibate. Speaking of the ascetic life, he says:

But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction. (1 Cor. 7:32-35).

Monastic Spirituality

The word monk is derived from the Greek word Monakos meaning "single" or "solitary". Ethiopian scholars have described a monk as "a man who lives alone, separated from the world, relatives,

²⁷⁷ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, 2. In Athanasius, et al. *Early Christian Biographies*, (Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 135-136.

²⁷⁸ Gorgorios (Archbishop), *History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahədo Church*] (Addis Ababa: Bərhanəna Sälam Printing Press, 1993), 4.

people, and wealth, one who does not know a woman and dwells in the monastery. A monk also makes a vow, saying, 'I have given myself to God,' wears a monastic habit and is solitary."²⁷⁹ Abune Philipos, who was the archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Jerusalem, interpreted monasticism like this. "Monasticism means separation from this world's lust, physical pride, and wealth while thinking of the Creator Lord in His nature, away from friends and relatives. It also means fleeing from the lust that arises from seeing and hearing . . . living in solitude inside the cell, isolated from the world and living in fasting, prayer, prostration."²⁸⁰

Fəṯha Nəgäst, the Ethiopian Church's book of rules, calls monasticism "the wisdom of the Christian law."²⁸¹ Regarding monks, it says, "earthly angels or heavenly men, followers of Christ as much as it is humanly possible, and emulating His Apostles in every deed, by giving up worldly goods, by giving up pleasure, and by despising everything, themselves included, to obey Him and love Him."²⁸²

The Ethiopian Fathers teach that monasticism has four monastic vows. These are chastity (purity and holiness), obedience, poverty (abandoning personal wealth), and vigilance for fasting. Vigilance for fasting includes prostration, prayer, and virtue.²⁸³ Based on these vows, Fitha Negest says that a monk must fulfill six requirements of the monastic life: Living in chastity, abandoning wealth and earthly pleasure, living in a monastery, abstaining from eating meat; living with his brothers (monks) as one soul²⁸⁴, and devotion to the life of fasting and prayer.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁹ Kahsay G/Egziabher, *Monasticism in Ethiopia Yesterday and Today* (Addis Ababa: unknown publisher, 2000 E.C), 7. See also Kidane äwäləd Kəfle, *Mäshafä Säwasəw Wä-Gəs Wä-Mäzəgäbä Qalatə Häddis* [The Book of Grammar and Verbs and New Dictionary] (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1950), 599.

²⁸⁰ Archbishop Philipos, *Monstic Rule and its Definition* (Addis Ababa, 1961E.C), 19.

²⁸¹ Paulos Tzadua, (tra) *Fetha Negest: The Law of the Kings* (Addis Ababa: Faculty of Law, Haile Sellassie I University, 1968), 65.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ In most monastic traditions, only the first three vows are mentioned: chastity, obedience, and poverty. However, St. Benedict incorporated obedience with stability and fidelity to monastic life (*Conversatio Morum*) as the three Benedictine Vows. See Georg Holzherr, *The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 373.

²⁸⁴ "The monastic community is not a collection of individuals but rather "one heart and one soul." Georg Holzherr, *The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life*, 74.

²⁸⁵ Fetha Negest, *The Law of the King*, 66.

The Two Ways of the Monastic Life

The monastic life takes place in two ways. The first is to strive in prayer and fasting in solitude, away from the reach of people. Monks who live in this way are known as anchorites. The word “anchorite” came from two Greek words, “anachoreo,” “living apart,” and “eremos,” “solitary.”²⁸⁶ Abba Paul of Thebes²⁸⁷ and Abba Anthony, known as the founders of the monastic movement of the third century, began their spiritual life in the deserts of Egypt as anchorites. However, as the monastic fathers of the past warn us, this life of solitude does not exclude life in the community.

The other way of monastic life is the communal monastic life. The life of a monk is a solitary life but is built upon a life of fellowship. The saying attributed to Evagrius of Pontus correctly indicates this truth. “A monk is someone who lives separated from everything but is also in harmony with everything.”²⁸⁸ According to St. Benedict, those worthy of the anchoritic life have gone through the communal monastic life. It is a life for those God has raised with His grace through their participation in the community. These monks “built up their strength and went from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handedly with the vices of body and mind.”²⁸⁹ In other words, this hermetic life is not for beginners. A monk who is not guided by fathers or mothers experienced in the monastic way of life, will fall into many demonic temptations, going his own way. The “feel-good way” of spirituality and the “nomadic way” of spirituality are created from this temptation.²⁹⁰

Monasticism in Ethiopia

The nine saints who came to Ethiopia in the fifth century are the reason for the expansion of the monastic life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. As Sergewe Hable Selassie mentioned in his book on ancient and medieval history, before the nine saints, different monks came to Ethiopia from time to time.²⁹¹ For example, there were monks who were known as Tsadkan (Righteous Men) who came to Ethiopia and served in southern Eritrea. Abune Libanos, famous

²⁸⁶ David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010), xiii.

²⁸⁷ Shorter for Paul of Thebes. According to the church tradition, Paul of Thebes (3rd.c.) was the first anchorite or head of the hermits. As Jerome wrote, quoting Macarius the Great, who was Anthony's disciple, Anthony himself considered Paul as his teacher. See. Athanasius, et al.. *Early Christian Biographies*. (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 222.

²⁸⁸ Quoted in Georg Holzherr, *The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life*, 74.

²⁸⁹ David Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, xiv.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

²⁹¹ Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa, United Printers, 1972), 115.

among these saints, was considered the patron saint of Ethiopian kings until the thirteenth century. But no one has had such a significant influence as the Nine Saints in the spiritual life of the Church.

A historian said this about their contribution: "Among the people of Ethiopia, some believed in Christ. Others worshiped the serpent. Some of them made divination with birds, and others practiced magic by fire. After these [Nine] saints came, they established the faith. The land was enlightened by their faith and sanctified by the paths of their feet."²⁹² The nine saints who came to Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Al Ameda II (along with their commemorative dates) are as follows.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ZeMikael or Aregawi (14 Tiqimt) | 6. Alef (11 Megabit) |
| 2. Pentelewon (6 Tiqimt) | 7. Yim'ata (28 Tiqmit) |
| 3. Isaac or Gerima (17 Sene) | 8. Liqanos (28 Hidar) |
| 4. Afse (29 Ginbot) | 9. Sihma (16 Tir) |
| 5. Guba (29 Ginbot) | |

According to the Synaxarium and hagiographies of the Saints, the Nine saints came from different parts of the Roman Empire. Hable Sillassie, based on the name of the saints, indicated that they came from Greece, Syria, and Armenia.²⁹³ The Nine Saints came to Axum probably because of the persecution they faced after the Council of Chalcedon. After these saints stayed in the city of Aksum for twelve years, most left Aksum and went to different places, where they established their monasteries.²⁹⁴

In addition to spreading the gospel throughout Ethiopia, the saints translated the Bible from Greek and Syriac into Geez. For example, scholars have speculated that the recently discovered ancient manuscript of Abba Gerima's monastery, the Gerima Gospel,²⁹⁵ is probably the world's oldest copy of the illuminated Gospel. In addition, the Nine Saints also translated monastic and theological books, such as Pachomius' monastic Rule, the Life of St. Antony, and the theological treaties of St. Cyril of Alexandria.

The most famous among these saints is Zemikael or Abune Argawi, the founder of Debre Damo monastery. On his way to Ethiopia, He visited the Egyptian monastic leaders, and he learned the monastic rule from St. Pachomius the Great, the founder of cenobitic (communal) monasticism. In

²⁹² Ibid., 115.

²⁹³ Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*, 116.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 117-119.

²⁹⁵ Judith McKenzie, et el. *The Garima Gospels: Early Illuminated Gospel Books from Ethiopia*. (Oxford: Manar al-Athar, University of Oxford, 2016).

Ethiopia, he established the communal monastic life as he had learned from the great desert father. For that reason, he is called the father of all Ethiopian monks, and to honor his legacy, until the sixteenth century, every person who wanted to become a monk was required to go Debre Damo to receive his monastic habit. At that time, a person who wanted to enter the monastic life, after careful examination by the fathers of the other monasteries, was sent to Debre Damo to receive monastic habit.²⁹⁶ The monastic leaders, who have a great place in Ethiopian church history, got their monastic habit from Zemikael's monastery in Debre Damo. Among these, Abba Eyesus Moa of Hayiq monastery and Abune Tekle Haymanot of Debre Libanos (Shewa), who contributed significantly to the spiritual awakening of the 12th century, can be mentioned. Debre Damo, the first monastery in Ethiopia, allowed only men can enter. According to tradition, St. Edna came to Debre Damo following her son Zemikael and entered the ascetic life. She founded the first women's monastery in Ethiopia at the foot of the mountain where Debre Damo is located.

The Influence of Egyptian and Syrian Fathers in the Ethiopian Monastic Spiritual Life

We have already seen that the first monastic fathers in Ethiopia mostly came from Syria and Asia Minor. The monastic spiritual life brought by these fathers has had a significant influence on the spiritual life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. It is known that the Ethiopian church had a close relationship with Alexandria since St. Athanasius ordained Frumentius as bishop of Ethiopia. Since then, for one thousand six hundred years, the bishops of Ethiopia came from Egypt. Because of this close relationship and because the Egyptian monasteries, the center of Christian monastic spiritual life, were geographically close to Ethiopia, the Egyptian church and its monastic leaders greatly influenced the spiritual life of the Ethiopian church.

Abba Anthony, Abba Macarius the Great and Abba Pachomius the Great are among the Egyptian fathers who are greatly revered in the Ethiopian Church's monastic life. As the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's monastic genealogy puts it, "Anthony begot Macarius, Macarius begot Pacumius, Pacumius begot to Palamon, Palamon begot Tedros, and Tedros begot Arägawi the Roman."²⁹⁷ Anthony and Macarius the Great are considered the fathers of all monks worldwide. For this reason, when the priest blesses the monks, he says, "May the blessing of Antony and Makars²⁹⁸ be upon you."²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Lule Melaku, *History of Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa: Tinsael Zegubahe Press, 1997 E.C), 32.

²⁹⁷ The book of Monks second book *Filksəyus* (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Sillassie Printer, 1982 E.C), 8.

²⁹⁸ The shortest form for Macarius the Great.

²⁹⁹ "በረከተ እንጦንስ ወመቃርስ ይህድር በላዕሌክሙ።"

When we study the monastic spiritual life of the Ethiopian Church, we cannot ignore the contribution of the monastic fathers of the Syrian Church. We find Ephraim the Syrian, Jacob of Serug, Philxious of Mabug, Mar Isaac, and John Saba among them. The spiritual life of the monastic fathers of Ethiopia is based on the books obtained from these fathers. There are three main books that the Ethiopian Church calls explicitly the books of monasticism: Mar Yishaq, Philxeus, and Arägawi Mänfäsawi (the Spiritual Elder).

MAR YƏSHAQ (MAR ISAAC THE SYRIAN)

Mar³⁰⁰ Yəshaq is one of the books that greatly impacted the Ethiopian Church's monastic life. It got its name from the author, Mar Isaac, or Isaac of Ninevah. Mar Isaac was born in Qatar (Bet Qatarye). He was appointed Archbishop of Nineveh by George I, the Catholicos of the Church of the East. After a while, he left his diocese and lived in the Persian desert as a hermit monk. He wrote his essays, which focused on the monastic and spiritual life and deeply analyzed God's love while residing in the Raban Shabor Monastery.³⁰¹

Since the text does not touch the Christological controversy of the time and is focused on the spiritual life, it has been accepted by the churches of the entire Eastern Christian world. Like the other books of the monks, Mar Isaac was originally written in Syriac but translated from Arabic to Geez. The Ethiopian translation contains thirty-four homilies. These homilies are about various spiritual practices, mainly about loving God, almsgiving, reading the scriptures, the monks' life and struggle, repentance, and so on.

FILIKƏSYUS

Filikəsyus derives its name from Philoxenus of Mabbogh, the Syrian bishop³⁰² who is traditionally believed to be the book's author.³⁰³ The full title of the book: "Questions about the Stories of our Fathers the Egyptian Monks as Holy Filkésyus the Syrian, bishop of Mänbäg wrote it." ³⁰⁴It is also known as the Book of Paradise. As we can see from the book's full title, this book is written with questions and answers. Among the issues raised are the value of cenobitism and anchoritism,

³⁰⁰ Mar is the Syriac way to say "Lord" is a title given to bishops.

³⁰¹ Stefan Weninger, "Isaac of Nineveh" in *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol. 3 ed., Siegbert Uhlig, (Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2007), 193.

³⁰² Philoxenus of Mabbogh lived from 450-523 and was a well-known miaphysite leader. His chief work is his version of the Syriac Bible, known as the Philoxenian version. He wrote numerous theological treatises against the Council of Chalcedon.

³⁰³ Scholars are divided about the authorship of Filikəsyus. Some scholars hold to the traditional version and say that this work is from the time of Filikəsyus. In contrast, others say that the author is Dadisho of Qatar. See *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol 2, 541

³⁰⁴ The book of Monks second book: *Filksəyus* (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Sillassie Printer, 1982 E.C).

drunkenness, the Lenten fast, and the history of monks in the Egyptian desert. The author also wrote homilies about prayer, vigil, discipline, repentance, and working miracles.

ARÄGAWI MÄNFÄSAWI

Arägawi Mämfäsawi (the Spiritual Elder), the third foundational book for monastic spirituality, and gets its title from the Arabic translation. The author is John Saba³⁰⁵ or John of Daliata,³⁰⁶ who lived in eastern Syria in the eighth century. Although the Geez version was translated from the Arabic translation, John Saba originally wrote it in Syriac. The book contains 46 homilies written by John Saba on various spiritual topics and 48 letters that he sent to monks. His homilies discuss the heart, spiritual vision, demonic warfare, prayer, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and other spiritual practices.

Learning these three books of monks constitutes one of the four educational departments in the traditional school of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.³⁰⁷ Ethiopian scholars say that these three books of monks show different aspects of the monastic life. They say, "Aregawi Menfesawi speaks of their taste of grace. Mar Yishaq speaks of their struggle and deeds, and Filiksyus speaks about their history."³⁰⁸

Conclusion

Although these are the main monastic books which are studied in traditional academic settings, they are not the only books that have influenced the Ethiopian Church's spiritual and monastic life. The hagiographies of the monastic leaders, the sayings of the fathers, and the monastic rules of different desert fathers have had significant contributions.³⁰⁹ Among the hagiographies, those translated from Greek by the Nine Saints during the Axumite Empire period, the life of St. Anthony, St. Paul of Thebes, and St. Gebre Christos (St. Alexie) are the prominent ones. There are also hagiographies of Egyptian saints written by Ethiopian scholars. Some of these hagiographies include the life of Gebre Menfes Qidus, the life of Yohannes Misrakawi, and the life of Tadewos Zedebre Bartarwa. Among the Ethiopian monastic leaders, the life of Abune Tekle Haymanot,

³⁰⁵ In Syriac "Saba" means "elder" or "ancient". See. Enzo Luchesi, "Aregawi Menfesawi," Siegbert Uhlig, ed., *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1 (Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2005), 309.

³⁰⁶ The Geez tradition makes the Elder (Aregawi) and John two different people. According to this tradition, the Elder is John's brother, and it is John who wrote the book. See the third section of the Book of Monks: Arägawi Mämfäsawi (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Sillassie Printer, 1982 E.C), 3-5.

³⁰⁷ The four department (Mesahift bet) of the traditional school of EOTC are: Old testament books (መጻሕፍተ ብሉይት), New testament books (መጻሕፍተ ሐዲሳት), Patristic books (መጻሕፍተ ሊቃውንት (mainly Haymanotä Abäw (The Faith of the Fathers) which is the compendium of patristic theological treatises and letters) and Cyril of Alexandria's christological treatises and letters), The book of monks. መጻሕፍተ መነኮሳት.

³⁰⁸ Filikēsyus Introduction, 8.

³⁰⁹ Alessandro Bausi, "Monastic literature," in *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol. 2, 993.

Abune Eyesus Moa, Abune Samuel of Waldəba, and others greatly influenced the monastic spiritual life in Ethiopia. Women monastic leaders also played great roles in the spiritual life of the church. For example, St. Kirstos Semra and St. Wolete Petros, St. Fikrte Kirstos, St. Welete Pawlos, St. Meskel Kebra, St. Ehite Kristos, St. Ehite Petros, St. Zena Mariam have their own hagiographies, and among these, St. Kirstos Semra and St. Welete Petros are the popular woman monastic leaders in EOTC history.³¹⁰

In addition to the hagiographies of these monastic fathers and mothers, various books containing the sayings and chronicles of the monastic fathers and mothers have been translated from Arabic, Syriac, and Greek. The books that explain the monastic rules have also made a great contribution. Among them are the Rules of Pachomius, which is translated from the original Greek in the Axumite period (5th-8th c.), the Rules of Anthony, and the Rules of Stephen of Thebais. Among all of the monastic rules, the rule attributed to the Nicean Fathers is the most popular one in Ethiopia. It is called "Discourse of the 318 Holy Fathers which is an Edifice to the Monks" in short, "Edifice to the Monk."

For Discussion

1. Have you ever visited monasteries? What was your experience when you visited?
2. In what way can monastic life contribute to the life of the church today?
3. This week, read the life story of a monastic father or mother and submit what you learn in a one-page essay.

³¹⁰ Selamawit Mecca, "Hagiographies of Ethiopian Female Saints: With Special Reference to Gädlä Krestos Sämra and Gädlä Feqertä Krestos." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2006): 153-167.

Part Two: A Selection of Lenten Meditations with St Yared the Ethiopian

Introduction

Fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines we find in both in the Old and New Testaments. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord Jesus Christ taught us about the true spiritual life, mentioning fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Following the teachings of the Lord, the ancient church used fasting as the pillar of its spiritual life. According to the scripture and church tradition, there are two types of fasting. The first is private or voluntary fasting, where believers submit themselves to God through their own fasting and prayer. For example, Moses, David, Daniel, and others fasted for their own benefit. The second type is the canonical fasting season, which the church community as a whole observes. For example, the church in Antioch fasted before it sent Saul and Barnabas on their mission. In line with this practice, the Orthodox Church uses the ancient liturgical fasting seasons it inherited from the early church fathers and mothers.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has seven canonical fasting seasons. These are:

1. 1.The Fast of Salvation (fast of Wednesday and Friday),
2. The Fast of the Apostles,
3. The Fast of the Assumption of our Lady Mary,
4. The Fast of the Prophets (Advent),
5. The Fast of Revelation (Eve of Christmas and Eve of Epiphany),
6. The Fast of Nineveh
7. The Fast of Our Lord (the Great Lenten Fast).

When we look at these fasting seasons, something unites them all; these are fasting seasons which are observed before the great feasts. In other words, these fasting seasons prepare us for the feasts the church celebrates with great joy. For example, the Fast of the Prophets ends with the Feast of the Nativity. The Fast of our Lord (the Great Fast) with Easter, the Fast of the Apostles with the Feast of the Apostles, and the Fast of the Assumption ends with the Feast of the assumption of St. Mary. For this reason Alexander Schmamman calls the Lenten fast "a journey to Easter." He said, " Lent is

a spiritual journey and its destination is Easter, 'the Feast of Feasts.' It is the preparation for the fulfillment of Pascha, the true Revelation."³¹¹

Among these fasts, the Lenten fast is the most ancient and the most well-known throughout the Christian world. Because Jesus fasted this fast, the church named it the Great Fast. In this great fasting season, there is spiritual warfare with great spiritual blessing:

The brothers asked, 'Why does Satan battle against Christians, the hermits, and others, unlike other seasons, during Lent.' the interpreter said that it is for three things. First, our Savior fought Satan through this example of fasting, and has granted us the glory He brought after defeating the devil. Second, in this fast, Christians strive to fight against the temptations of the flesh and demons, and the devils will strengthen their fight. Third, in this annual fasting season, God gives grace and help to those who combine fasting with virtues, and the more help they get, the more their fight will increase. This is their custom.³¹²

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the great Lent consists of eight weeks or 55 days. The reason for this is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church observes three consecutive fasting seasons within one Great Lent season. They are:

1. The pre-Lenten fast in preparation for Great Lent
2. The Great Lent (forty day fast of Jesus)
3. The Paschal fast during Holy Week, which immediately follows the forty days.

Some interpreters say that these fifteen days were added to replace the Saturdays and Sundays of the forty days because there is no fasting entirely from food like the other days. However, although the Eucharistic liturgy is not performed in the afternoon like other days, there is no teaching of the church that weekends are outside of Lent.

In the following pages, we will see various selections of meditations for the fasting season based on the antiphonal hymns of St. Yared the Ethiopian. I have chosen the Sunday hymns of St. Yared to showcase how we can use his hymnodies for our spiritual development. This is an opportunity to use the liturgical resources of the church to sanctify our day to day individual lives.

³¹¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Great Lent*, (St. Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1981), 11.

³¹² *Mäṣḥafä Mänäkosat, Filəksəyus* [Book of Monks, Second Book Filəksəyus] (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Silassie Printing Press, 1982 E.C), 97.

First Week of Lent (The Preparatory or Pre Lenten fasting)

Remember

Lent is a time to experience great spiritual discipline. Throughout the church's history, many great fathers and mothers have benefited from this fast. If we follow their pattern, we will also benefit greatly from it. In this fast of the Lord, St. Yared invites us to step out of our superficial life and enter into the most profound and soul-satisfying spiritual experience. He also urges us to apply spiritual practices that may seem simple but will change our lives in profound ways.

Before You Start

1. Thank God for bringing you to this Great Fast.
2. Dedicate yourself to God so that you can grow spiritually in this fasting season.
3. Ask God's grace for this fasting season.
4. Pray the 'Our Father' prayer

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹³¹³

Be like a wise person,
The one who fasts and prays,
The one who asks for the forgiveness of his sins.
Walk in righteousness, that you might find goodness.
Honor the Sabbath; learn to do right;
Go in righteousness, that you might find goodness.
Go in righteousness, that you might find goodness.

²³¹⁴

Let us fast the fasting,
Let us love our neighbor,
Let us overcome our flesh,
Let us celebrate the Sabbath of our God.

1.

³¹³ St. Yared, *St. Yared. Antiphony for Lent*, ed. By Mengistu Gebre Ab. (Addis Ababa 2015),

³¹⁴ St. Yared. *Antiphony for Lent Fast*, 1.

3³¹⁵

Who brought righteousness?
 Let's live in love and peace,
 Who brought righteousness?
 When he calls, you follow behind his feet,
 He calls out for peace.
 I am the first and the last, says the Lord.
 I established the Sabbath for rest.
 I am the way of life.

Reflection Questions

1. St. Yared said "a person who fasts and prays and asks for forgiveness of sins " is a wise person. Why did St. Yared say this?
2. Is your measuring standard of wisdom the same as that of St. Yared's?
3. What is the connection between fasting, prayer, and asking for forgiveness of sins? Compare St. Yared's hymn with our Lord's teaching on Matthew 17:21 and James 5:16.

Spiritual Practice: The Prepared Life

The Israelites were instructed to prepare themselves before crossing the Jordan River and enter into the Promised Land that God had given to them. Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." (Joshua 5:3). Likewise, in the New Testament we see the five wise virgins in the gospel parable being praised for having a life of preparation (Matthew 25:1-13). In the Christian spiritual life, especially in communal worship, the Vespers service on the eves of feasts and on Sundays have great spiritual importance. Moreover, this practice has biblical basis. For example, according to the Hebrew tradition, the observance of the Sabbath starts not after midnight, but Friday, after sunset. The historical churches, especially the Orthodox Church, keep this ancient tradition and celebrate its feasts and Sundays starting from the eve of the feast day.

Events full of haste, harried, and without proper deliberation are putting our world into crisis. The reason for this situation is the absence of mature discussions from the political and social arenas. Unfortunately, this obsession with haste has eroded the church and made our lives full of chaos. The solution for this problem is to instill or practice a life of preparation and to make it a routine part of our spirituality to approach God calmly and preparedly, but not suddenly.

³¹⁵ St. Yared. *Antiphony for Lent Fast*, 1.

Sunday of the First Week Lent

REMEMBER

St. Yared calls Sunday a Christian Sabbath. For example, in his Easter Sunday Mäzmur³¹⁶, he said, "Today, on the Christian Sabbath, there is joy."³¹⁷ On this Sunday St. Yared reminds us about serving God. Serving God is the source of all happiness. If there was a great secret that St. David understood in his life, it was this concept of happiness. When he could beg God for many things and ask for different earthly things, he wished and prayed "to be thrown in God's house." Although many things demand our attention, St. Yared reminds us to remember the main priority, which is God. Fasting is a great spiritual tool that helps us look into ourselves and submit to God's will. On this Sunday of the first week of Great Lent, St. Yared, like St. David, urges us to obey and serve God.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Give thanks to God for this day.
2. Think of how the holy apostles and the first Christians felt when they met regularly on the first day of the week after the Lord's resurrection: Be in that spirit as well.
3. Pray the "Our Father." Prayer

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

¹³¹⁸

Serve God with fear, rejoice Him with trembling.
His mercy endures forever,
and His righteousness endures to all generations.
We are His people.
Enter before Him with thanksgiving,
and into his gate, with praise.
Trust in Him,
For His mercy endures forever,
and His righteousness endures to all generations.
We are His people.
Let us fast, and let us love our neighbor, and let us love one another,
For His mercy endures forever,
and his righteousness endures to all generations.
We are his people.

³¹⁶ In St. Yared's works, the word Mäzmur refers to one of the most important hymns sung before the Eucharistic liturgy. St. Yared composed a hymn for each of the Sundays of the year.

³¹⁷ Habte Maryam Werkneh, *The Five Parts of Chants*, 328.

³¹⁸ Mezmur for Preparatory Week for Sunday, St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 2.

Honor the Sabbath and do righteousness.
 for the Sabbath was made for man,
 His mercy endures forever,
 and his righteousness endures to all generations.
 We are his people.
 I will sing to you of mercy and justice;
 I will sing and understand the pure path,
 His mercy endures forever,
 and His righteousness endures to all generations.
 We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

2³¹⁹

Let us observe the fast,
 Let us love our neighbor,
 That He might shine the light of his glory on us.
 For Elijah ascended to heaven by fasting,
 And Daniel was saved from the mouth of the lions.
 Let us fast and love our neighbor.

3³²⁰

God loves a clean path,
 And a good conscience,
 God's thoughts are greater than humans.
 O people of God,
 Run away from iniquity,
 Follow righteousness.
 Understand that the thinking of the wise is futile,
 Observe the Sabbath with righteousness,
 You will live,
 For the Sabbath was created for man.

³¹⁹ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 3.

³²⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

4³²¹

Walk in righteousness,
 Follow the love,
 Silence keeps the faith.
 Seek the glory of the kingdom of heaven,
 Observe the Sabbath righteously,
 Silence keeps the faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the obstacles to serving God and pleasing Him? Have these things happened in your life? What did you do to avoid it?
2. St. Yared's hymns are based entirely on the Bible, especially the Psalms. For example, today's Mezmur is composed of Ps. 2:11; Ps.99(100): 4-5) and from (Ps.100 (101). Do you read your Bible daily? What role does God's Word play in your daily life?
3. Is Sabbath observance a part of your spiritual life? If not, why?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: OBSERVING THE SABBATH

St. Yared underscores the significance of the Sabbath, primarily of Sunday, the Sabbath of Christians, and on a secondary degree, Saturday the first Sabbath. God instituted the Sabbath as an expression of divine love for humankind, providing a dedicated time for rest, praise, and spiritual renewal. The Sabbath is a gift from God, intended to offer rest and an opportunity to praise His glorious name through pure prayer. St. Yared asserts that observing the Sabbath can lead to rest, life everlasting, and the removal of sorrow and evil thoughts. By setting aside time for Sabbath observance, individuals can experience spiritual renewal and the replenishment of divine grace.

St. Yared recognized that empty religious rituals can lead to a miserable life and emphasizes the importance of honoring the Sabbath with sincerity and devotion. To avoid falling into the trap of superficial observance, he encourages us to approach the Sabbath with righteousness, truth, and purity of heart. This intentional approach ensures that the Sabbath remains a meaningful and spiritually nourishing experience. St. Yared's hymns highlight the dual purpose of the Sabbath as a time for both physical rest and spiritual growth. By ceasing work on the Sabbath, believers can focus on their relationship with God and engage in prayer, reflection, and worship. The Sabbath serves as a reminder of the divine presence in everyday life and provides an opportunity to reconnect with the sacred.

³²¹ Ibid., 5.

Monday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

Wherever the gospel of Christ is preached, there is an opportunity for repentance. Although Sunday is the first day of the week, it is also the first day of Lent. According to the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, it is called the entrance to fasting. A special lectionary reading is composed especially for this day.³²² On this day, St. Yared reminds us to think about our own spiritual life. By showing that God is the One who restores His children through repentance and makes them new, he advises us to walk in a life of repentance.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Come to God in thanksgiving on this first day of fasting.
2. Sit before God in silence for three minutes
3. During this fasting season, Ask for help from God for struggles within your life. Ask for his grace.
4. Pray the 'Our Father' prayer

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

1³²³

Let us come to him with faith,
And praise him with a hymn,
Let us come to him with faith.
Let us beseech the Almighty with fasting and prayer,
Let us come to him with faith,
Every time and Every hour,
Let us come to him in faith,
Let us come to him in faith.

2³²⁴

God said to the children of Israel,
What do I want from you?
Except that you worship me and keep my commands.

³²² Liqe Liqawnt Abba Teume Lisan, *Book of Lectionary with Melody from Debre Abay* (Addis Ababa, 2013), 169.

³²³ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 9.

³²⁴ Ibid., 11.

Now then all of you, my brothers and sisters,
 Let us approach the Almighty God,
 With many tears and sympathy for the poor.
 Let us approach the Almighty God,
 With Fasting, prayer, supplication, and prostration,
 Let us approach the Almighty God,
 As David said,
 Draw near to Him, and He will shine before you.

3³²⁵

Return me, O God, from my error to knowledge of you,
 That I may live and keep your word,
 Enlighten me that I might learn your commandments.
 Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

Just as you restored Paul when he was a persecutor,
 and the robber whom you chose within a second,
 Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

As you turned the tax collector into the evangelist,
 To have a rank of power,
 Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

You restored your people Israel,
 Restore me, too, your servant.
 Restore me, O Lord, in your kindness,
 Give me joy and your salvation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In the third hymn, St. Yared mentions four examples of spiritual restoration. Which example relates to your life story?
2. This chant show how Yared's relationship with God is intimate. What is the secret of this spiritual intimacy? Do you have this kind of close relationship with God?
3. What is the relationship between joy and salvation? Do you have joy in your life?

³²⁵ Ibid., 16-17.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: REPENTANCE AS DAILY RESTORATION

Repentance is the foundation of the spiritual life. The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Without repentance there is no spirituality. St. Peter preached the gospel to those gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and when they asked him what to do, he said, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven." (Acts 2:38). Thus, the first step in Christianity is repentance.

Repentance makes people put off their old lifestyle and become anew. For this reason, repentance is more than making changes in external deeds. The Greek word "metanoia" refers to a change of mind. When God gives us a heart of repentance, our will, our feelings, and our thoughts change. The prodigal son "returned to his heart" and longed for his father's home, which he had fled and abandoned. His change of heart enabled him to say, "My father." The apostle St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, referring to the restoration of power of repentance, said "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind," (Romans 12:1-2).

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

What is the Lord to you? We pay a great price to make what we value ours. If we give the things of this world a high place in our hearts, we will not have room for the things of God in our spiritual life. How much are we willing to sacrifice to walk with God? If we place a higher value on the things of this world, it will inevitably bring sorrow to our hearts, for those things are temporary and changeable.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Praise God for all the good that He has done for you. Then, tell God the obstacles you are struggling with and the things you have not been able to trust God with.
2. Be in silence in God's presence for 3 minutes.
3. Pray the 'Our Father' prayer.

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

1³²⁶

They built the church,
And established it by the Holy Spirit,
It was built by the hands of the priests,
Consecrated by the tongue of the bishops.
She was sealed and baptized by the water,
Which flowed from his side during His passion.
He created heaven first,
And He pitched his tent on the earth,
The Father sanctified and made her His abode.

2³²⁷

My beloved brothers and sisters,
What profit do we gain from the wealth of this world?
Have you not heard of the corruption of the world?
That everyone dies.
He who is steadfast in soul,
And trusts in God will be saved.

³²⁶ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 21.

³²⁷ Ibid., 20.

3³²⁸

The sun which never sets,
 The lamp inextinguishable,
 The wealth which cannot be borrowed,
 The adornment of the apostles,
 The wealth of the poor,
 The refuge of the oppressed,
 O merciful king who does not forsake his handiwork
 We always praise you.

4³²⁹

Follow the path of peace,
 And walk on it,
 Walking with good works,
 For the world is passing away,
 Its passion is also passing away,
 Everything will grow old like a garment.
 Seek Christ's kingdom and his righteousness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these chants speak to you directly? Why?
2. What are some of the obstacles to walking in peace?
3. St. Yared calls God the lamp inextinguishable, the sun which never sets. What is God to you?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: DETACHMENT

When our hearts are filled with the thought of earthly treasure, anxiety will dominate our minds. We will be far from God's peace. But on the other hand, when we trust in God, God's joy and peace become the center of our daily life. To live with joy and peace from God, we must distance ourselves from the things of this world (2 Timothy 2:4).

³²⁸ Ibid., 21.

³²⁹ Ibid., 21.

St. John Climacus enumerated several steps we should take to grow into godliness. Among these steps, the second one is detachment: Leaving this world's hopes and dreams and relying on God. He said:

If you truly love God and long to reach the kingdom that is to come, if you are truly pained by your failings and are mindful of punishment and of the eternal judgment, if you are truly afraid to die, then it will not be possible to have an attachment, or anxiety, or concern for money, for possessions, for family relationships, for worldly glory, for love and brotherhood, indeed for anything of earth. All worry about one's condition, even for one's body, will be pushed aside as hateful. Stripped of all thought of these, caring nothing about them, one will turn freely to Christ.³³⁰

This advice of St. Climacus is based on Christ's instruction to His disciples to leave everything behind, including their families. This detachment is not rejecting or hating the family; it is finding freedom from earthly things and from relying on people. It helps us to rely solely on God and to rest in His arms.

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

On this day's hymn, St. Yared says God helps the oppressed and the downcasts. He reminds us that we should pursue peace and at the same time, since the time of the Lord's return is unknown, he advises us to strive in prayer so that we do not enter into temptation. Finally, he urges us to fast, which is ornamented with love for our brothers and sisters.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Be in silence in God's presence for 3 minutes.
2. Thank God for His fatherhood and His providence
3. Remember the circumstances in which God's fatherhood was felt for you, and thank God for that.
4. Pray for God's help for those who are suffering.
5. Pray saying Our Father...

³³⁰ John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York: Pauline Press, 1982), 81.

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS1³³¹

The helper of the persecuted,
 The easer of those in suffering,
 Rememberer of the hungry,
 and Avenger of the oppressed.
 You are the friend of the faithful,
 The speaker of the righteous,
 Abode of the innocent,
 You hear those who call upon you in righteousness.

2³³²

Hallelujah, I cross my face, and I get up.
 In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 Calling upon these names I gain fortitude;
 If I fall, I will get up.
 If I walk in darkness, God will give me light;
 For I trust in God.

3³³³

Who combined darkness with light?
 Who mixed sin with righteousness?
 But you, Christians³³⁴, have fled from sin.
 You have submitted yourselves to righteousness.
 You have borne the fruit of holiness whose end is eternal life.

³³¹ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 22.

³³² Ibid., 23.

³³³ Ibid., 24.

³³⁴ lit. Brothers.

4³³⁵

There Christians, persevere.
 Beseech and pray that you will not enter into temptation,
 For the spirit is strengthening, the flesh is weakening, therefore pray and beseech.
 For you do not know when the owner of the house will come.
 Be prepared in good works so that you may inherit a blessing.

5³³⁶

The Shepherd of the day,
 The watchman of the night.
 The power of the stars.
 Our God is a God of salvation.
 Everything is possible for Him.
 There is nothing He cannot do,
 He is omnipotent by His Word.
 He is able to do all things for those who ask.
 He sends His mercy whenever He wishes.
 For Mercy is in His hand.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does prayer prevent temptation? Have you experienced this benefit of prayer in your life?
2. God stands behind those who are oppressed and cares for those who are hungry. Do you believe standing for justice and caring for the hungry is part of your spiritual practice? What keeps so many from thinking of spirituality in this manner?
3. In view of the injustice in our world today, what does St. Yared teach us about God's character?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: JUSTICE

One of the characteristics of the early church fathers was their emphasis on justice, especially for the poor. This concern for the poor happened because they based their spirituality on the Word of God and not on the culture of their time. At the time of the early church, the world of Rome and Greece had a culture that trampled on human beings. The slave trade, the exploitation of women, and the treatment of children are examples of unjust practices in the ancient world. In this cultural

³³⁵ Ibid., 24.

³³⁶ Ibid., 25.

and political atmosphere, the church taught its followers how to care for the widows, the orphans, and the poor. In both the Old and New Testaments, God's Word teaches that caring for the poor, the orphans, and the widows is essential to spirituality.

St. James says this is the core of Christian worship. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

Because of this, the ancient church speaks of justice with firm conviction. Saint Basil, known for establishing the first hospital, nursing home, and orphanage in the ancient world, says this. "When a man strips another off his clothes, he is called a thief. Should not a man who has the power to clothe the naked but does not do so be called the same? The bread in your larder belongs to the hungry. The cloak in your wardrobe belongs to the naked. The shoes you allow to rot belong to the barefoot. The money in your vaults belongs to the destitute. You do injustice to every man whom you could help but do not."³³⁷

Thursday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

Our God is an omniscient, all-knowing God. Nothing is hidden from Him, and everything is exposed before Him. As the apostle said, everything is naked before Him (Hebrews 4:12). When we stand before Him in prayer, no matter how heavy a burden we come with, we must not forget that God looks at us from above. This is what St. Yared is telling us today. Because God is omniscient, we should give thanks to Him, because only what He says will be done.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Praise God, for He is all-knowing (omniscient) and all-present (omnipresent).
2. Tell God the burdens that weigh you down at this time.
3. Be in silence before God for three minutes;
4. Our Father...

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

¹³³⁸

O Lord, maker of all,
We stretch out our soul to you,
And we offer the morning praise to you, O Lord.

³³⁷ St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, trans. C. Paul Schroeder, Popular Patristics (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 69-71.

³³⁸ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 26.

We praise you from the unceasing glories,
You are worthy of glory.

2³³⁹

This is the cross that raises all the dead.
It comforts all who mourn.
It will lighten all that is hard for them.
The cross means light
It is the pillar and foundation of the Holy church.

3³⁴⁰

You who knows from afar what is about to happen.
You already know what happened.
A hidden treasure is for you,
Heaven and earth are in your hand.
You are their light to those in darkness
I give thanks for your name,
Praise you in your goodness forever,
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.

4³⁴¹

When you are evil,
If you know how to give a good gift to your children,
How much more will the Father give to those who ask?
Beseech, and He will give to you.
Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and He will open the door for you,
As you would have people do unto you, do unto them;
In love and fear of God.
Giving is better than receiving.

³³⁹ Ibid., 26.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 27.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. The Word of God and the teachings of the church fathers explain that it is a great blessing to come before God in prayer in the morning. The fathers also teach that Christians should perform morning and evening prayers at the church. Do you start the day with prayer? What is the benefit of starting the day with prayer?
2. St. Yared says that God is a God who knows what will happen beforehand. What does this truth teach you about prayer?
3. Referring to what our Lord Jesus Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount, St. Yared says that God is a Father who gives good things to his children. Why should we always remember God's fatherhood in our prayers? What difference will this truth make in our prayers?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: PRAYER

According to the late Abba Matthew the Poor, the abbot of the Great St. Macarius Monastery, "Prayer does not reach its power and efficacy as an actual communion with God until man is fully aware that his soul is created in God's image."³⁴² The source of this self-realization and knowledge is God himself. When the soul understands that it is created in the image of God, then "the soul realizes, sees, and touches God's self."³⁴³ The knowledge of God and the knowledge of self intertwine according to St. Anthony the Great. "He who knows himself has known God ...As for the heretic Arius, he has been stricken with an incurable plague. Had he truly known himself, he would never have uttered anything contrary to the truth. It is clear that he has not known himself, and for this reason he presumed against the mystery of the Only Son"³⁴⁴

St. Yared, inspired by the words of the Psalmist St. David, interprets prayer as "raising the soul to God." Prayer is where we offer all of our body, soul, and spirit to God. We put our emotions, will, and mind before God through prayer. Samuel's mother, Hannah, said to Eli, the priest, "But I have poured out my soul before God" (1 Sam 1:15).

When we realize this, we will understand that prayer is an integral part to our identity.³⁴⁵ If we are not connected to God, we will not be able to understand who we really are. Because of this, we must understand that prayer is not just an instrument to reach or accomplish another goal. Instead,

³⁴² Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 21.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Chitty, *Letters of St Antony the Great*, 4, quoted in Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 21.

³⁴⁵ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 22.

it is a goal in itself. As Richard Foster stated, "Prayer is life-creating and life-changing,"³⁴⁶ so it is transformative in itself. It brings us to thinking about what God thinks, desire what He wants, love what He loves, and allow what He allows.

Friday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

God is the Shepherd of our souls. If we follow him, we will overcome the dangers we encounter in the course of life. The God who said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you," will be with us. He leads us to the harbor of rest and comfort. But to follow the path that the pilot of our soul leads us to, we must submit ourselves to Him and raise our hearts to Him.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Be in silence in God's presence for 3 minutes.
2. Thank God for His guidance.
3. Pray for the things you are struggling with at the moment.
4. Pray saying Our Father...

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

1³⁴⁷

Lift up your eyes, Zion.
 Look at your courtyards.
 For God has increased His mercy unto you.
 Your enemies will be ashamed,
 They will not come near you.
 Stand in righteousness and flee from rebellion.
 And He will not give your glory to a stranger.

2³⁴⁸

Hallelujah,
 The pilot of our soul, the father of our spirit;
 Help us, our God.
 You know what is hidden in our hearts.

³⁴⁶ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

³⁴⁷ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 30.

³⁴⁸ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 30.

You send light to the earth;
 Help us save us.
 Turn away your anger from us.
 Quickly hear our plea to you.

3³⁴⁹

Who is forgiving like you?
 You bring the morning, and bring out the sun.
 Forgive us our sins and do not remember our transgressions,
 You commanded the moon and the stars to shine at night,
 Forgive us our sins and do not remember our transgressions,
 You commanded the sun to shine by day,
 Forgive us our sins, and think not of our transgressions,
 At your command, the dawn rises,
 Forgive us our sins and do not remember our transgressions.

4³⁵⁰

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
 Know, my child, the God of our fathers;
 Do not exalt yourself in pride;
 For where there is pride, there is suffering;
 It will prevent you from entering the kingdom.
 Go to all the wise men and search;
 Almsgiving is better than hoarding gold.
 The kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom,
 He kills, He saves;
 He brings down to Sheol and brings out.
 From the heavenly king from God,
 There is no one escaping from his hand.

³⁴⁹ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 31.

³⁵⁰ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 32.

5³⁵¹

Be steadfast in the hope of God.
 Be wise in all things;
 Make your heart wise;
 Return your mind to Him.
 That you may learn the will of the Most High

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the forgiveness of God important in our prayer life?
2. St. Yared said “where there is pride, there is suffering”. What steps can you take in your life to avoid this outcome.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: REMEMBERING GOD

Different thoughts come to mind. Some are evil thoughts. Just because these thoughts come to our minds, it does not mean that we are impure or have done something sinful. We cannot remove evil thoughts from our minds by fighting them off. As our fathers and mothers who pleased God with their spiritual lives taught us, we do not have to fight against these evil thoughts but to run away from them.

To set our minds on good things and avoid all evil thoughts, we must focus on God, who is the source of all good things. “Believe in the Highest God and listen to His commands. Do not stop thinking about God and remember the holy name of the Holy Trinity, so that evil thoughts will stay away from you.”³⁵² While Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he remembered God and his prayer changed from bitterness to praise. While in the grave of the sea, he offered his song to God.

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

REMEMBER

The Cross is the heart of the Gospel. Through the message of the Cross, God revealed His love to humanity and defeated sin and death, the great enemy. On this day, St. Yared sings mainly about the Cross. He encourages us to think of the blessings and grace found at the Cross of Christ.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Be in silence in God's presence for 3 minutes.
2. Reflect on what the cross means in your life.

³⁵¹ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 32-33.

³⁵² Evagrius, *Mäṣḥafä Wəgrīs*, [*Book of Evagrius in Geez and Amharic*] ed. Rə’əsä Liqawənt Abba Gebre Kidan (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2014), 32.

3. Reflect about your important life events and be thankful.
4. Bring your burden to the cross of Jesus Christ. What is your burden at this moment?
5. Pray saying Our Father...

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

1³⁵³

The cross has been my hope since my childhood,
And a staff for my old age.
O Lord, You are a guide for the blind,
A crutch for the lame,
I believe in your cross, and I lean on it;
The nations will give thanks to your name.

2³⁵⁴

He descended from the cross to hades.
He freed the prisoners,
And He preached freedom to them.

3³⁵⁵

Cleanse me, your servant, from my sins,
Guide me in your righteousness,
Grant us to enter into this dwelling,
By the power of your cross in peace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. St. Yared recalling his childhood life, says, "You are my hope from my childhood." When you look back at your childhood, what stands out to you? Is it a happy or a sad memory?
2. Has the cross of Christ ever been your source of comfort and strength?

³⁵³ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 33.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

In the hymns sung on this day, St. Yared talks about the blessings we have received from the cross of Christ. Because of the centrality of the cross of Christ in the spiritual life of Christianity, not only St. Yared but also the church fathers before him (for example, St. Basil, St. Ephraim, and St. John Chrysostom), as well as the fathers who arose after him, often spoke about the cross of Christ. These fathers not only taught about the cross of Christ but also integrated it in their prayer life and the church's worship life.

One of the traditions that remind us of the mystery of the Cross that we regularly use in our prayers is making the sign of the Cross at the beginning and end of our prayers. As the great Saint Basil, the archbishop of Caesarea, tells us, making the sign of the Cross is part of the tradition the church received from the apostles:

Of the dogmas and kerygmas [preaching or proclaiming the Good News] preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the Apostles [2 Thes 2: 15; 2 Tim 2: 2; 1 Jn 2: 24] handed on to us in mystery... For instance, to take the first and most general example, who taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East in prayer?³⁵⁶

In his famous book on the mystery of incarnation, St. Athanasius says the following when he talks about the blessing of making the sign of the cross. He said, "by the sign of the cross magic ceases, all witchcraft is brought to naught, all idols are deserted and abandoned, all irrational desire ceases, yet everyone is looking up from earth to heaven"³⁵⁷

Eve of Second Week Sunday

REMEMBER

There is not much debate about the importance of preparing the heart (spiritual preparation) to meet God. However, we often need to remember the importance of physical preparation. The heart can be prepared when the body is prepared through rest and meditation. To worship with God's people on Sunday morning, we must prepare our bodies on the eve. We must stay away from the hustle and bustle of the nightlife on the eve of our worship day.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Be in silence before God for 3 minute.
2. Praise God for your community of faith and the clergy.
3. Reflect on your worship experience in the past and praise God for that experience.

³⁵⁶ St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.

³⁵⁷ St. Athanasius, *On Incarnation*, 31.

4. Ask God to give you the grace to participate in the church worship with Spirit and Truth.

FROM ST. YARED'S HYMNS

1³⁵⁸

Follow love,
Celebrate the Sabbath,
Do righteousness,
Store treasure for yourselves in heaven,
Which the moth cannot corrupt nor the worm can eat,
which is not destroyed and does not corrupt.

2³⁵⁹

Let us love righteousness,
Let us keep the commandments of God,
Let us take hold of eternal life,
Let us celebrate the Sabbath which Christ sanctified,
Let send up glory to God with much peace,
Let us learn to keep the law of the Most High.

3³⁶⁰

Glory to God in heaven,
And peace on earth,
Who brought us to this hour,
Glory to the one who sanctified the Sabbath.

³⁵⁸ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 34.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

4³⁶¹

God says be holy for I am holy,
 Celebrate the Sabbath with righteousness,
 Give glory to God,
 The one who sanctified and honored the Sabbath,
 He will give you peace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which Hymn speaks to you? Why?
2. St. Yared said that, to live in holiness we must follow love and do righteousness. In what way are you following and doing love and righteousness?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: LOVE

In St. Yared's hymn for the Eve of Holiness Sunday, love is presented as a guiding principle for believers in their pursuit of holiness. Love, in this context, goes beyond mere affection and encompasses a commitment to living a life of righteousness, obeying God's commandments, and celebrating the sanctity of the Sabbath. By following love, believers can experience a deep connection to the divine and store up treasures in heaven that are imperishable and eternally significant. Love, together with holiness, transforms the way we live, and places spiritual well-being and eternal life at the forefront of our priorities.

St. Yared further emphasizes the role of love in fostering a harmonious and peaceful relationship with God and fellow believers. By sending up glory to God with much peace, the faithful demonstrate their commitment to living a life of love and holiness. This commitment not only strengthens their relationship with God but also unifies the community of believers as they collectively strive to uphold the law of the Most High. In this sense, love serves as the foundation for spiritual growth and the pursuit of holiness, enabling individuals to come together in a shared devotion to God's commandments and the sanctity of the Sabbath.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

Second Week of Lent: Holiness Sunday

Remember

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition, the second Sunday of Lent is called Holiness Sunday. One of the blessings of fasting is that it leads us to a life of holiness. God has called us to holiness. He directs our lives according to His will so that we may partake of His holiness. We can live this life of holiness when we exalt God in our lives. St. Yared's hymn invites us to this life on this day.

Before You Start

1. Be in silence before God for 3 minutes.
2. Reflect in the holiness of God and what it means for you.
3. Reflect about your life in relation to God's holiness and your way of life.
4. Pray saying "Our Father..."

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹³⁶²

Praise God and call His Name,
And tell His work to the nations,
Give glory to his Name,
Observe the Sabbath and do righteousness,
Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven,
Which moth does not destroy,
Which the thief can not find,
Be ready,
Set your heart on high,
Where Christ is.

²³⁶³

My brothers and sisters, remember the day of your death,
Think about when it will come,
For the day of Christ is near,
His vast kingdom is drawing near,
Honor and wealth will pass,

³⁶² Ibid., 35-36.

³⁶³ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 38.

Moth will destroy thin luxury clothes,
 Give your possessions,
 Store up a record for you in heaven

3³⁶⁴

Hallelujah,
 He did not think of our transgression,
 He never left us to perish,
 The God who is good.
 Moses commanded the people,
 To observe the Sabbath righteously.

4³⁶⁵

Glory is due to Christ,
 Who brought us to this hour,
 Lord of the Sabbath,
 Kindness is His habit,
 To the one who sanctified the Sabbath,
 Glory is due to Him.

Reflection Questions

1. Like St. Yared, other spiritual writers also advise us to remember the day of our death (memento mori). What is the spiritual benefit of this exercise?
2. Are you observing the Sabbath righteously? If so in what way? And if not, why not?

Spiritual Exercise: Living in God's Holiness

Holiness is the manifestation of God's character. When we say that God is holy, we mean that He is perfect, complete, without imperfection. This holy God has called us to holiness, to the life full of satisfaction. He said to us, "you shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev 11:14). Why? Because without holiness, we cannot have fellowship with God (Hebrews 12:14). When we are in our own world, we picture God in our imagination. But on the other hand, if we imitate Him in His holiness, we can see His true self at that time. Abba Matthew the Poor says:

³⁶⁴ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 39.

³⁶⁵ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 39.

So long as man is not perfect in holiness, he shall never see God as he is. He who is not perfect in his chastity, love, and humility will remain unable to see God in his perfect simplicity. He will see God sometimes cruel, at other times merciful. He will sometimes confide in God's extreme love, but at other times remain in fear of his justice. He will sometimes realize the depth of God's wisdom and his transcendent care for his creation, but at other times he will suspect God's care or condemn it. Man will thus remain, in his relationship with God, unable to form a perfect vision of him as he is. This will go on until he reaches the holiness that qualifies him for perfect vision.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁶ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 83

Third Week of Lent: The Synagogue Sunday

Remember

For many Christians, the cause of their spiritual failure is ignoring what displeases God. God grieves when we push aside His children, especially when we do it so that they don't have a place in His house. St. Yared tells us that during this week, Jesus prepared a whip and drove out the merchants who were in the temple. What angered the Lord was that the place of prayer for the Gentiles was turned into a marketplace by "religious" people.

Before You Start

1. Let's praise God, understanding that He is a God who stands up for those pushed aside.
2. Ask God to give you the strength to stand up for those with no place or voice.
3. Pray "Our Father..."

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹³⁶⁷

Hallelujah
 Jesus entered the synagogue,
 He taught them the words of the faith.
 He said to them:
 I desire almsgiving more than sacrifice,
 I am the Lord of the Sabbath,
 And the Father of Mercy,
 The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath.
 Do not make my Father's house a house of trade.
 My house is called a house of prayer.
 He entered their synagogue,
 And rebuked them to keep quiet.
 They were amazed by his teaching,
 The grace of His word,
 And the eloquence of His speech.

³⁶⁷ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 56.

2³⁶⁸

The Angels celebrate the Sabbath in heaven,
 And the righteous observe the Sabbath in Paradise,
 the sea observes it,
 And all creation, fish, and animals,
 Those in judgment rest on the Sabbath,
 Because God rested on it from all his work

3³⁶⁹

King of kings, Lord of lords,
 The indestructible and the immutable king,
 He got into a boat and rebuked the sea,
 The indestructible and the immutable king,
 The angels observe the Sabbath,
 The indestructible and the immutable king,
 It is the Sabbath for the Christian people,
 The indestructible and the immutable king,
 King of kings, Lord of lords,
 The indestructible and the immutable king,
 The indestructible and the immutable king.

4³⁷⁰

Observe the Sabbath and do good deeds,
 Love your neighbor,
 Do mercy for the poor and needy.
 In order for you to believe,
 Jesus entered the synagogue,
 He taught them the word of the faith,
 He said to them,
 Observe the Sabbath,
 He spoke to them in peace,
 And they glorified their creator.

³⁶⁸ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 59.

³⁶⁹ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 60.

³⁷⁰ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent Fast*, 60-61.

Reflection Questions

1. What would you do if you were with the Lord in the temple?
2. What would make the Lord angry if He came to the church today?

Spiritual Exercise: See God's Image in Every Person

The great secret in the spiritual life is to see God's image in every person's life, whether man or woman. We see some using their "spirituality" to see women as inferior. This is a foreign teaching to the church. The church fathers did not teach us this. Gregory, the theologian, said, "I do not accept the law, nor do I endorse the custom. The legislators were men, which is why the law opposes women." St. John Chrysostom also said that those who say that women are inferior, based on twisted interpretations of St. Paul's epistles, do not understand St. Paul. He said, "For had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as you say, he would not have brought up the example of a wife, but rather of a slave and master... The wife is free and equal in honor."³⁷¹

St. Basil the Great also testified that in their lives of holiness, women were equally steadfast in the ascetic struggle as men, and in fact, he testified that some reached a higher rank. "The female gender is also conscripted in the army of ascetics... and many women have proven themselves no less than the men. Indeed, there are some who have even succeeded more than the male ascetics."³⁷²

³⁷¹ Homily on Corinthians, 26, 2. PG61:214-215, quoted in *The Way of the Fathers*, 48

³⁷² Basil the Great, *Ascetic Treaties* 3 PG 31:642-5, quoted in John Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind* (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1998), 49.

Fourth Week of the Great Lent: Paralytic Sunday

Remember

"Do you want to be saved?" This is the question that the Lord Jesus repeatedly asked the people He healed. "Do you want to be saved?" God's grace is manifested in our lives when we are willing, and ready to embrace God's healing. Then God will change our lives and we will be the embodiment of His glory. When we are open to salvation, even if we are confined to a bed for thirty-eight years, the moment we hear the divine command, "Take up your bed and go," we will find the strength to accept and obey Him.

Before You Start

1. Pray for God to heal those who are in pain and suffering.
2. Offer God the part of your life (physical, mental, and spiritual) that needs healing.
3. Be in silence for 3 minutes before God.
4. Pray saying Our Father...

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹373

The God of Adam,
 Made a Sabbath for rest,
 And the Jews said to him,
 By what authority do you do this?
 And Jesus said to them,
 I will work, and you believe in my work,
 And He said,
 I am the Lord of the Sabbath,
 The Son who became human is the Lord of the Sabbath,
 He said,
 Forgiveness of sins is given to me,
 To preach freedom,
 To Open the eyes of the blind my Father sent me.

³⁷³ St. Yared, *Antiphony for Lent*, 80.

2³⁷⁴

And I said:

God have mercy on me,

Heal my soul because I have sinned against you,

Heal me just as you untied and healed the paralytic on the Sabbath.

Lord, you are praised in the hall of holy praise,

Heal me just as you untied and healed the paralytic on the Sabbath,

You are blessed, o Lord, we bless you,

Heal me just as you untied and healed the paralytic on the Sabbath,

You made the Sabbath a holiday out of love for humankind,

Heal me just as you untied and healed the paralytic on the Sabbath,

I found out that you love me today.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the importance of the story of the paralytic healing is for your life?
2. When St. Yared prayed, "Heal my soul," why is the healing of the soul necessary?

Spiritual Exercise: Suffering and Spiritual Formation

The main reason why many in this day and age have entered into great suffering is because they attempt to avoid their pain. They forget the God who said, "I am the Lord your God, the God who heals," and they try to take many shortcuts to be free of pain instead of addressing the root cause. They turn to alcohol or drugs to forget heartbreak or physical injury. This is the secret behind why painkillers are such a common source of pain and addiction.

Some try to preach Christianity without the cross, saying that suffering has come to you because you have no faith. This teaching is deception, not based on reality. The more we try to run away from our sufferings, the further away we stay from reality.

The suffering and pain we experience in our lives is not something we have come to seek. But we must be aware that it does not come without God's knowledge. For that reason, it comes into our lives along with a blessing. "Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for after he has been tempted, he will receive the crown of life which He has given to those who love Him" (Jam.1:12). We do not ask God to put us to the test. In fact, we were commanded to pray that we may not enter

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 83-84.

into temptation. But if the test comes and we persevere with God as our refuge, we will find a wonderful blessing.

When we study the history of God's people, God came close to many of them during their trials and tribulations. They grew in faith through adversity. "By the experience of many interventions of divine assistance in temptations, a man also acquires firm faith. Thenceforward he has no fear, and he gains stout-heartedness in temptations from the training he acquired. Temptation is profitable for every one."³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World Of Isaac The Syrian*: (Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 122-123.

Fifth Week of the Great Lent: The Debre Zeit Sunday

Remember

“Maranatha Lord come.” Since the time of the apostles, the church has made this a main part of its prayer because the Second Coming of our Lord is its greatest hope. These days, people expect and long for many things. The hope of Christians is the revelation of Christ in His glory. As St. Paul said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Phil. 3:20-21

Before You Start

1. Praise God for the great hope, which is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
2. Put your worries and anxiety before God, and meditate on the future ‘transformative’ life.
3. Pray for those without this great hope.

From St. Yared’s Hymns

¹³⁷⁶

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.
 When our Lord was at Mount Olive,
 He said to his disciples.
 Be careful, do not be deceived.
 Live with readiness.
 Many will come in my name,
 Saying that "I am Christ."
 He who perseveres to the end will be saved.
 When the Son of Man comes,
 All the powers of heaven and earth will shake.
 At that time, the sinners of the earth will cry.
 Our Lord will descend from heaven to earth,
 By his command and his word,
 With the multitude of angels,
 The blowing of a trumpet from God.
 At that time, May the Father save us from the death of sin,
 For He is the Lord of the Sabbath, maker of life.

³⁷⁶ St. Yared. *Antiphony for Lent*, 102.

2³⁷⁷

On that day of judgment, on the day of punishment,
 On that day of God,
 What will we say to our soul?

When a mother does not save her daughter,
 When the earth returns what was with it,
 What will we say to our soul?

When the Father wears the garment of judgment,
 When He wears the mantle of revenge
 What will we say to our soul?

When He rebukes us at that dreadful court,
 All our work will be revealed and open,
 All we have done will be read,
 What will we say to our soul?

When our Lord was at Mount Zeit,
 All his disciples approached him on the Sabbath,
 What will we say to our soul?

Reflection Questions

1. What is the main message for your life from Our Lord's teaching at Mount Olive?
2. St. Yared asked, "What do we say to our soul?" Do you make time to converse with your soul?

Spiritual Exercise: Living in the Great Hope

God has called us to a wonderful union through His Son, Jesus Christ. This union will be fully realized when our bodies are resurrected when the Lord comes to judge the living and the dead. Because of this, even though we live in a world full of suffering, Christians are hopeful of an eternal life. But our times are filled with hopelessness. The saddest thing is that the primary victims of this hopelessness include us Christians.

³⁷⁷ St. Yared. *Antiphonary for Lent*, 104.

As the Orthodox fathers taught us, three main reasons lead to this hopelessness.³⁷⁸ One is an insatiable desire. According to Evagrius, the end of a worldly lover is a life filled with sorrow.³⁷⁹ If we ask why worldly desires do not lead to satisfaction, we are created to be satisfied only with our fellowship with our creator. The second reason is anger, which takes the joy out of our lives and fills our hearts with sadness. Social media these days contains text and images that fill people with anger and frustration. As a result, they have become tools to take away our hope and plunge us into sorrow.

A third source of hopelessness is the wiles of the devil. St. John Chrysostom says: "The devil surrounds your mind with these dark sorrows as with deep obscurity and strives to rob you of any thought that might reassure you. Finding your soul isolated, he overwhelms it with blows and wounds."³⁸⁰ To defeat this hopelessness, we have to be hopeful in the Lord. The hopeful man defeats sadness and extreme anxiety. His trust in the Lord will give him victory over the passions.

³⁷⁸ Jean Claude Larchet, *Mental Disorders & Spiritual Healing: Teachings from the Early Christian East*, Trans. Rama P. Coomaraswamy, G. John Champoux (San Rafael, CA: Angelico Press, 2005), 93-125.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 93.

³⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, *Consolation to Stagirius*, I,1;II,2, quoted in Larchet, *Mental Disorders*, 97.

Sixth Week of the Great Lent: The Good Servant Sunday

Remember

Many people think of ministry as something outside of the spiritual life. They come to this way of thinking because they believe that spirituality is a private phenomenon. Service means giving oneself to others. We do this in different ways and situations. When the Lord Jesus spoke about the purpose of His coming to this world, He said this: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This week, we think about the faithful and good servants who traded their talent and earned it and about whom the Lord, "You good and faithful servant, because you have trusted with a few, I will appoint you with many."

Before You Start

1. Praise God, who has called you to serve Him. Ask Him to give you the grace you need for your ministry.
2. Because the harvest is abundant, ask God to raise many servants in this age.
3. Reflect on the trials you have faced in your ministry and the grace of God that has been given to you.
4. Pray saying Our Father

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹381

Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah,
 Who is the good and faithful servant?
 He is found by the Master to be doing good deeds.
 He appoints him over His money.
 God said again,
 You are a good and faithful servant.
 You have been faithful over a few things.
 I will appoint you over many;
 Enter into the joy of your Master.

³⁸¹ St. Yared, *Antiphony for Lent*, 143.

2³⁸²

He raised his eyes and said to them,
 Blessed are our fathers,
 For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed is he who is wise for his soul;
 Blessed is he who humbles himself in his conduct.
 Blessed is he who does not turn his face to sin.
 Blessed is he whose heart is a chariot for prayer.
 Blessed is he whose penitence ascends to heaven.
 Blessed is he who has overcome sin.
 Blessed is he who lays down his life for hope.
 Blessed is the one whose eyes have not seen and whose ears have not heard [of his
 hope.
 Blessed is the good servant.
 Blessed is the master who does this.

3³⁸³

Submit to God as a good servant,
 At all days and at all times.
 Submit to God as a good servant,
 All day and all night.
 Submit to God as a good servant.
 Pray and fast with a pure heart,
 And keep the Sabbath righteously.
 Submit to God as a good servant.
 Think good for your neighbor,
 For the Father cares for you.
 Submit to God as a good servant
 Free your soul from sin.

³⁸² St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 143-144.

³⁸³ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 147.

Reflection Questions

1. Do any of these hymns speak to you? If so which hymns? Why?
2. Are you serving the church? If so, are you serving based on the talent you received? If not, why?

Spiritual Exercise: Seeking God

The prophet Isaiah said, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Isa 55:6-7.

As the scripture tells us, God is eternal. That is, He is a God on whom time has no effect. He is also omnipresent. Not only does He fill the world, but He contains the world. The world has life because of God. So why did the prophet say to seek God if God is omniscient and omnipresent, which means He is beyond time and space? Isaiah's word refers to the time that God has given us, the time that God has come close to us. In the history of God's people, when God came to them with help, many did not know the suitable time and put aside the eternal for the sake of the temporal, and they paid the price for it. Esau, Saul, Judas, and Demas are a few examples amongst many.

For this reason, the prophet told us to seek God. David said, "Let the heart that seeks God rejoice" (Psalm 14:3). Why does the heart that seeks God rejoice? Because God's eyes are on him. David says, "God looked down on the sons of men from heaven to see that there is one who understands and seeks God." (Psalm 13:2).

Prayer is not a reminder or a warning to God, or a way of telling God what He does not know. He is one who knows our heart, our deeply hidden secrets. He can search the chambers of our hearts. As the apostle John said, God is closer to us than our own hearts. Prayer is not about twisting God's hand and forcing God to do what we want. Instead, prayer is where we commune with God and are filled with the knowledge of God. When He is with us, and we are in His peace, we find rest. That's why we need Him. That is why we are called to seek Him.

We will find what we are looking for. He does not turn away from us; He will not leave us. For His eyes are on those who seek him. The same God said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, ye shall find; Knock on the door, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who seeks finds, and the door will be opened to him who knocks." (Matthew 7:7-8).

Seventh Week of Great Lent: Nicodemus Sunday

Remember

Last week was about serving God with our talent. This week, we will consider Nicodemus, who served his God in the New Testament. He is a Jewish teacher and member of the Sanhedrin, who knew the value of wisdom and truth, and he made it his life's pursuit to seek wisdom and humbled himself to find it. He received the teaching of the mystery of rebirth through baptism and was at the side of our Lord at the time of His death. The Ethiopian poet said, "The teacher bowed to the teacher at midnight; For some fingers are greater than the other fingers."³⁸⁴

Before You Start

1. Be present at the foot of Jesus to learn from Him.
2. Ask Him to reveal his wisdom and truth.
3. Ask Him for the strength to humble yourself in the pursuit of wisdom and truth.
4. Pray saying Our Father...

From St. Yared's Hymns

¹³⁸⁵

The chief of the Jews,
Whose name was Nicodemus,
Went to him first in the night,
Rabbi, we believe in you.

As you came from the Father
Rabbi, we believe in you.

That you might be a teacher,
Rabbi, we believe in you.

No one can do miracles,
And the wonders that you do.
Rabbi, we believe in you.

Love righteousness and hate injustice,
You made a Sabbath for rest.

³⁸⁴ A popular poetry (*Qine*) attributed to Melake Birhan Admassu Jembere.

³⁸⁵ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 167.

Rabbi, we believe in you.

For life and salvation,
 Rabbi, we believe in you.
 He said, Rabbi, we believe in you.

2³⁸⁶

Nicodemus said,
 I realized that Jesus Christ was sent,
 From the Father for us.
 He was told of in the Law,
 Preached by the prophets,
 For our salvation,
 He descended from heaven to earth.

3³⁸⁷

Hallelujah
 A certain man of the Pharisees,
 Whose name is Nicodemus,
 Went to Jesus first in the night.
 Master, we believe that you came from the Father,
 Because no one can do what you can do.

And the Jews said:
 He does not walk according to our law,
 Nicodemus said to them:
 Does your law without judge a person,
 Without examining the person's work?

And he said to Jesus,
 You sleep like a lion,
 You sleep, You sleep
 Rise up in your resurrection.
 Help us save us,
 By Your Name that which is appointed over us.

³⁸⁶ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 167.

³⁸⁷ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 168-169.

Reflection Questions

1. Which one of these hymns spoke to you? Why?
2. Do you find Nicodemus to be your spiritual model? In what way?

Spiritual Exercise: Stillness

Stillness means listening to God with external and internal silence. By silencing our tongue, we find inner silence. Inner silence is highly blessed and exalted. This does not mean that verbal silence is useless. In fact, since we cannot reach the silence of the heart without verbal silence, it is of great benefit to silence our tongue first.³⁸⁸ In stillness, our inner ears are opened to hear what God is saying within us. As verbal and internal noises cease, our ability to listen is heightened. We begin to observe ourselves in ways we have never imagined before. At that time, we begin to humble ourselves before God. The spiritual elder (Arägawi Mämfäsawi) says: "The wealth of a humble person is in his mind, and his wealth is God. He who guards his tongue, there will be no one who takes away his treasure from him. He who keeps his mouth upright speaks the mysteries of God. But he who is in a hurry to speak is far from the Creator."³⁸⁹ We can understand how we spent the days and hours that God gave us when we have time to self reflect.

St. Isaac the Syrian also said, "Love silence above all things, because it brings you close to fruit that the tongue cannot express. Let us force ourselves to be silent and then, from out of this silence is born something that leads to silence itself [i.e. inner silence]. God grant you may perceive some part of that which is born of silence! If you begin with this discipline, I know not how much light will dawn on you from it."³⁹⁰ Speaking on the blessing of silence he said, "If you guard your tongue, my brother, God will give you the gift of compunction of heart so that you may see your soul, and thereby you will enter into spiritual joy. But if your tongue defeats you,... you will never be able to escape from darkness. If you do not have a pure heart, at least have a pure mouth"³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World Of Isaac The Syrian Liturgical Press* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 102.

³⁸⁹ Arägawi Mämfäsawi, 5.

³⁹⁰ Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World Of Isaac The Syrian Liturgical Press*, 101.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 103.

Eighth Week of the Great Lent: Palm Sunday

Remember

Hosanna in the highest; Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. The people of Jerusalem welcomed the Lord who came to die on the cross, saying Hosanna in the highest. The following days after Hosanna Sunday are the most sacred in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. This week is called Sämunä Hemamat (The Passion Week). This week we remember the Lord's passion and death.

Before You Start

1. In this Holy Week ask God to reveal the mystery of the Cross to you.
2. Attend the daily church services and participate in the reading of the scripture and the church fathers.
3. Prostration is one the spiritual disciplines of the church fathers. During this week, pray with prostrations.

From St. Yared's Hymns

Hymn to Palm Sunday³⁹²

On Passover week,
 The disciples of God of the righteousness,
 Approached the city of God,
 To the slope of the Mount of Olives.
 A large crowd received them.
 The elderly and children,
 Holding palm leaves in their hands
 Said Hosanna in the highest.
 Mounted on a colt, He entered Jerusalem,
 With joy and happiness,
 To give them power and authority.

³⁹² St. Yared *Antiphonary for Lent*, 190-191.

Hymns to Palm Sunday Procession³⁹³

1³⁹⁴

Hallelujah
 Show us the way.
 Let us go to the house.
 From Zion, the Law will come out,
 The word of God from Jerusalem.
 Let us greet our salvation with joy.
 Receive the ark.
 She is a bright light.

2³⁹⁵

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Abraham called this day the feast day of God.
 Blow the horn on the first day,
 On the chosen day of our holiday,
 When we remember Zion.

3³⁹⁶

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Zion said, open the door for me.
 Let the multitude enter.
 Let them move the stone out of the way,
 For the King, the son of David.
 He is the King of Israel.
 Let them say Hosanna in the highest.

³⁹³ On Hosanna Sunday, a procession is made inside the church to commemorate the Lord's entry into Jerusalem on the donkey and the colt.

³⁹⁴ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 199.

³⁹⁵ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 199-200.

³⁹⁶ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 200.

4³⁹⁷

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah
 Jacob blessed his son Judah and said to him,
 A king will come out from you.
 He washed his clothes in wine,
 And His mantle with the blood of the vine.
 He is the king of Israel.
 Let them say Hosanna in the highest.

5³⁹⁸

Hallelujah
 Enter the city
 When you enter, you will find a colt tied.
 Untie it and bring it to me.

6³⁹⁹

Hallelujah
 When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem
 He saw the city and said,
 O Zion, if you know that behold your king has arrived,
 That your light arrived,
 Today is your Peace.
 Rejoice in your people.
 Today is your Peace.
 Let your enemies be afraid.
 Today is your Peace.
 Your Peace Your Peace,
 Today is your Peace.

³⁹⁷ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 200.

³⁹⁸ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 201.

³⁹⁹ St. Yared, *Antiphonary for Lent*, 201.

The Easter Pascha Sunday

1⁴⁰⁰

Hallelujah
 Today on Christian Sabbath, joy happened,
 Because Christ has risen from the dead.
 He honored the day, sanctified and exalted than the other days,
 Truly, Christ has risen from the dead.

2⁴⁰¹

Hallelujah! Let the heaven rejoice and the earth be joyful,
 Let the depth of the foundation [of the earth] blow the horn.
 Let the the mountains and the hills shout,
 And all the trees of the forest.
 Today is great joy in heaven
 Let the earth make passover,
 It is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the significance of the feast of Hosanna (Palm Sunday) to the church?
2. St. Yared said, "Let the earth observe the Passover; the blood of Christ has washed it." What does this hymn mean to you and to our world?

Spiritual Formation: In the Shadow of the Cross.

When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave Himself up for us on the cross, the world was in a very sad state. One word describes the situation at that time – Disharmony.

Firstly, it was a time when humanity was separated from God. When God created humans in His own image and likeness, it was for humans to be a partaker of His glory. But instead of God's invitation of eternal love, humans deviated from God's path by listening to Satan's words and fell into sin. Second, it was a time when humanity were separated from their conscience, and as a result, became a slaves to their own desires. Third, it was a time when human beings became enemies of each other.

⁴⁰⁰ Habte Maryam Werkneh, *The Five Part of Chants*, 328.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 387.

Disharmony was rampant, sowing seeds of discord between heaven and earth, men and women, brother and brother, the material and the spirit. The cruelty of humanity started at the gates of paradise by Cain, the son of Adam. At the time of Jesus, the Roman Empire, which was the world's superpower at the time, refined the method of such cruelty. To oppress the enslaved people and the poor, the Romans imported the crucifixion, the most excruciating method of execution. Death on the cross was the manifestation of human horror. In death on the cross, humanity revealed its final cruelty and beastliness. Since death on the cross was the most horrible death, Rome forbade it to be carried out on her own citizens. (This is why Paul was killed by the sword, not on the cross.)

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ announced His amazing mercy through His death on the cross. God showed His love on the cross, the instrument where the human being revealed his most evil deed. What happened on the cross? What made the Son of God die on the cross? What is the meaning of Christ's death on the cross for us? Why is the cross a symbol of victory for us, a symbol of honor and freedom? How did we come to this understanding? We can answer this when we understand what the Son of God accomplished on the cross. On the Cross, He reconciled God and the whole cosmos. He gave us harmony, unity, and fellowship with Him :

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. (Eph 2:14-10).

Project Assessment

Becoming All Flame (BAF), an eight-session Orthodox Spiritual Formation program, will launch in the first week of Lent, starting Feb 20, 2023, according to the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgical calendar.

Lent is the holiest season in the Orthodox liturgical calendar. Like the BAF program, the Ethiopian lenten season covers eight weeks, which includes the pre-lenten fast and the paschal fast (holy week) at the end. Therefore, launching Becoming All Flame (BAF), during Lent is the most appropriate timing. In addition to the eight-week course, the participants will be asked to read and reflect daily on meditations based on the hymns of St. Yared. Participants in this first program will be members of the Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Cathedral of Los Angeles. The number of participants will be limited to 10 to 15. As it is the first program, it is important to examine its weak and strong points in a small setting. It is also easy to manage the discussion and the daily spiritual activity of the participants individually and in groups and explore their spiritual life in intimate ways.

70% of the participants finish the eight-week session and receive a certificate of completion. 80% of participants participate in the survey and feedback forms to evaluate the curriculum.

Since this is a spiritual formation program, the emphasis is primarily on spiritual practice. It is about putting what is learned in the classroom into practice. Each session has discussion questions to help the participants apply what they learn. These questions are not only to assess their knowledge of the subject matter, but also to give an opportunity to the participant to reflect on their spiritual life. This encourages participants to look deeply within themselves. 80% of the participants in this program are encouraged to answer the discussion questions individually in each session before discussing them together. There will be a discussion question before each session and at the end of the class.

Aside from the discussion question, students will share their experiences related to their involvement in church life. Participants are expected to attend church festivals and celebrations, participate in the weekly liturgy, and receive Holy Communion. This teaching is intended to bring those who are unable to approach Holy Communion closer to the Eucharistic life.

Additionally, upon completion of the program, 80% of participants will be asked to complete an exit survey and provide feedback. As I stated in my launch plan, I piloted this program on a limited scale at two churches in two states within the U.S. The feedback was very encouraging and points to the need for studies on the implication of spiritual formation in the spiritual and socio-political life of the congregation. After participating in the sessions and reflecting on the discussion questions, the participants deeply reflected on their inner life and the current situation of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Following the project launch, within the next six month we will have two workshops to introduce the curriculum to clergies and the congregation within the Southern California EOTC Diocese.

This project's primary goal is to reintroduce the congregation to the liturgical and monastic spirituality that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has developed through its long history. This spiritual practice transforms the followers' spiritual, social, and moral lives. The active participation of the student who want to attend the eight session class is crucial in order to accomplish this transformation. Therefore, two workshops will be held for priests and youth ministers within six months of the project's launch to introduce the goal and mode of instruction to others. During the workshop, priests and youth ministers will learn how to use the BAF curriculum. In addition, the workshop participant will become familiar with the course material and understand how to motivate people who attend the eight class sessions to apply it in their daily life.

Following the project launch, within the next six months, three parishes in the Southern California Diocese will start the spiritual formation program based on the curriculum.

The Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, where I serve, is under the Diocese of Southern California. The clergies in this diocese, starting from the archbishop, are all intimately familiar with the project. Therefore, at the leadership level, there is a desire to implement the project in the diocese's churches. Thus, we will start this spiritual formation program in three churches in the next six months. The feedback we had from the participants of the limited class indicates that this series of lessons is essential for the church at this time to address the root cause of the crisis the church faces.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned, the Ethiopian Orthodox church is currently under severe pressure. Even now, as I am preparing to implement this project, the ethnic and tribal conflict in Ethiopia is putting the church in a challenging test of division that we have never seen in its history. Political ideas and ideologies cannot provide any solution for this. The church can get out of this situation only by examining itself deeply, and this requires spiritual practice. Therefore, the success of this project is measured when the participants of this program actively participate in the effort to save the country and the church by becoming instruments of peace and love. Therefore, this spiritual formation program is not only limited to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo churches in America. Our hope and plan is to start this program in Ethiopia so that the churches there can implement it in their context. One of the plans is to hold a workshop about this program in Ethiopia within the following year.

Project Launch Plan

Doctoral Project Description

The Orthodox spiritual tradition, with its emphasis on the monastic life and the liturgical life of the church, offers a rich heritage of spiritual formation and guidance. Monasteries, as centers of spirituality, and the church's liturgical practices, including fasting and feasts, provide opportunities for the faithful to experience spiritual growth and transformation. However, there is an apparent disconnect between these invaluable resources and the everyday lives of the faithful, leading to a superficial experience of the Orthodox faith as more of a cultural practice than a meaningful spiritual journey. To bridge this gap, the Need/Problem/Opportunity (NPO) is the underutilization of the monastic tradition and liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in addressing the need for spiritual formation and direction ministry.

In response to this need, the proposed project, *Becoming All Flame: Orthodox Spiritual Formation (BAF)*, aims to develop an eight-week spiritual formation class based on monastic and liturgical writings, including a selection of Lenten meditations that draw from St. Yared's Lenten Antiphony. This initiative seeks to delve into the rich liturgical and monastic traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and connect believers with the ministry of spiritual discipline and direction. The project will produce a published curriculum on spiritual discipline, accompanied by a training manual for priests and Sunday school teachers to facilitate the integration of these practices into the lives of the faithful. Additionally, the project will include the translation of selected liturgical texts from St. Yared's Lenten Antiphony from Ge'ez, the church's liturgical language, into English, accompanied by guided meditations for each day of the Lent season. This initiative strives to rekindle the spiritual depth and impact of the Orthodox faith in the lives of its followers, ensuring a more meaningful and transformative experience.

Audience

The project's audience is the congregations, clergies, and youth ministers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in America. For the last 20 years, I have been a priest in the Los Angeles Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox church. For this reason, the church and the diocese which I serve will be the primary focus of my project launch. Although the primary focus is the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Los Angeles and the Diocese of Southern California, my plan also includes the project's expansion to Ethiopia.

Development Plan

September - January 2023:

- Devoting four hours every day except Sunday to writing the curriculum and doing research related to it
- Finishing writing the Orthodox Spiritual Formation curriculum and Lenten meditation based on St. Yared's Lenten Antiphony.

- Sending the curriculum and meditation final draft for review to the expert advisors I have consulted with in the past.

February 20-April 16, 2023:

- Launching Becoming All Flame (BAF) during the Great Lent season is most fitting. The 2023 Ethiopian Lent fast is set to commence on February 20, 2023.
- 70% of the participants finish the eight weeks sessions and receive a certificate of completion.
- 80% of participants participate in the survey and feedback forms to evaluate the curriculum.

July 2023 - August 2023:

- We will have two workshops introducing the curriculum to clergies and the congregation within the Southern California EOTC Diocese.
- Three church congregations will start the spiritual formation program based on the curriculum for the first six months.

Beyond:

- We will publish a containing the eight-week course for the program participants to use as a textbook. We will also prepare posters and flyers to promote the program.
- 75% of the churches within the diocese will start the Becoming All Flame (BAF) program within the next two years.
- Within two years, we will have one workshop in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, to introduce BAF.

Development Process

I conducted a pilot program in two churches across different states in the U.S. The feedback I received from the participants was exceedingly positive. Following their involvement in the session and subsequent discussions, many of them experienced a profound introspection, reflecting on their inner lives and the world around them. After conversing with the participants, both individually and in groups, I concluded that the project has the potential to make significant contributions to the church in three distinct areas:

1. It can have a substantial contribution to eliminating racial hatred in society. To tackle the ills of racial hatred, we must study the Imago Dei, "the birthplace of Spiritual Formation", in the context of African culture and tradition and its potential to prevent racism and xenophobia.
2. It can help young people become participants in the church's life and protect them from bad habits and addictions.
3. It can become a major source of ecumenical dialogue and unity among Christian churches.

My initial project plan was to launch the program in my church before my graduation, publish the book, and launch the project at the diocese level after graduation. However, the inconsistency of the congregation's attendance following the Covid pandemic did not enable me to launch the program. It is well known that writing a book, editing it, and finding a publishing company takes time. With this in mind, it is planned to publish the book within one year of the program's launch. I hope to include the participants' input in the book as it will be launched at the local church level during the 2023 Lent fast. However, the program's first participants will be given a copy of the material. When the book is published, I will send it to them so they can use it in their future ministry.

Appendix A— Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

PERSONAL RESEARCH MANIFESTO

My approach to researching the NPO is to listen to my community, respect the tradition it holds dear, follow the truth without fear, and remember my limitations and avoid playing God.

NPO STATEMENT

The monastic tradition and liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is underutilized to address the need for spiritual direction ministry.

NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

The project's main objective is to study the liturgical and monastic tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, relating to the ministry of spiritual discipline and direction. At the end of the study, we will have a published curriculum on spiritual discipline with a training manual for priests and Sunday school teachers. The curriculum and the manual are based on the liturgical and monastic traditions. The study requires translation of selected liturgical texts from Ethiopic, the church's classical language, into English and Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia.) It also requires visiting some monasteries here in the US and Ethiopia.

NPO CONTEXT

My NPO ministry context includes the Ethiopian Orthodox church, their priests, and Sunday school teachers in America. For the last 20 years, I have been a priest in the Los Angeles Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox church. For this very reason, the church I am serving will be the primary focus of my project. Although the primary focus is the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Los Angeles, the project also includes the wider faith community.

ROOT CAUSES

My NPO's root cause is the urgent need for spiritual renewal in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, especially among young people, and the opportunity to use the church's rich liturgical and monastic tradition. As one of the ancient churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox church has ancient liturgical chants and monastic writings, but most of these materials are hidden from the public. Very few members of the clergy are knowledgeable enough to understand the content of these works of literature. Still, if we put aside the language barrier, we can find ancient wisdom for our time's challenges, and the spiritual hunger we are witnessing in our young people's lives will be satisfied with this wisdom.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders in my discovery session included a clergyman, musician /community activist, a high school teacher, retired business leader, charity worker, youth ministers and Sunday school teachers.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

My one-on-one interviewees included a retired seminary professor/researcher on Ethiopic manuscripts, associate professor of liturgical theology/priest/ and church leader and scholar on traditional education of Ethiopian church.

3-5 KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

Biblically, I will explore worship and spirituality, the biblical concept of Sabbath, fasting, prayer, silence, and almsgiving.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Leading voices within my field of research include Gettachew Haile, Ralph Lee, B Velat scholars of Ethiopian liturgy studies; A. Schmemmann, a theologian from eastern orthodox tradition and pioneer of the field of liturgical theology in the 20th century; D.W. Fagerberg and Aidan Kavanagh, leading liturgists from Roman Catholic tradition; Robert F. Taft, theologian and expert on oriental liturgy. Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Gerald May, and Diogenes Allen, also leading voices in spiritual formation and direction; from the ancient church writers and hymnologists, Evagrius of Pontus and Saint Yared the Ethiopian and their literature will be the primary sources for the ancient liturgical monastic literature. Other areas of studies related to the project include spiritual formation, spiritual direction.

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APPENDIX 1

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, we conducted the discovery workshop in a virtual setting using Zoom video conferencing and Google documents for the workshop and its activity. The workshop participants were selected from Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the church I serve as a priest. In the selection process of the participants, we tried to include every part of the congregation: women and men, young and old, laypersons and clergy, musicians, school teachers, community leaders. These diverse voices helped us to explore the NPO thoroughly.

The workshop's first act was to ask the participants whether their participation in the workshop was on their own accord and if they did not object to video recording the meeting. I also explained the privacy rights of the workshop participants, as stated clearly in the consent letter signed by the participants. Once the participants willingly gave their consent, I explained why the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with its rich monastic and liturgical tradition, uses its literature for spiritual formation in limited ways.

Following the discovery workshop guide, the participants had four activities. The first activity focused on the NPO's definition and scope and if it is worthy of investigating. In the second activity, we tried to understand the primary target audience using the four quadrants' empathy map. In the third activity, we tried to understand the root problem /need/ opportunity of the NPO. In the last activity, We created the Discovery statement, which the participants agreed on.

DISCOVERY STATEMENT

Considering the value of the Ethiopian Church and the cultural and social challenges it faces in 21st century we have discovered that many people of all age but especially those under 40 are underutilizing the monastic and liturgical tradition of the Ethiopian Church which is caused by many factors including cultural and social factors as well as competing world views and ideologies. If solved it would mean increases in church attendance and participation as well as the growth of an authentic community of faith where everyone feels valued and engaged and has a sense of ownership and leadership within the Church.

CRITICAL INSIGHTS FROM DISCOVERY WORKSHOP

The workshop participants discussed the root cause of underutilizing the church's liturgical and monastic tradition for spiritual formation and identified two major problems. First, the liturgical literature is in Ge'ez, an ancient Ethiopian language, and most congregations don't speak Ge'ez. In addition to the language barrier, the liturgical service's length also repels most of the congregants, especially the young generation. Second, the church ignored the need to address the spiritual need of the young people. Some of the young people want to be part of church life, but they see it doesn't have space for them.

The discussions, especially the concern from young people, change the focus of the NPO. Now the NPO's goal is to use the liturgical literature to the congregation's spiritual needs, emphasizing the urgent need of young people and engaging them to be part of the church life.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW DISCOVERIES

I interviewed three scholars who have deep knowledge about the Ethiopian church and its liturgical literature. They affirm the NPO statement of the workshop, but their feedback helped me to broaden my exploration of the project

The first scholar on traditional church education advised me to explore the existing ecclesiastical liturgical cycle, how the church uses those liturgical cycles and how we can integrate those liturgical cycles with the liturgy and lectionary reading with the congregations' day-to-day activities and challenges. According to this scholar, this kind of approach will allow me to deepen my studies without antagonizing the tradition.

The second scholar is a former dean of the orthodox theological college and liturgist. His advice focused on how liturgical theology's current scholarship can help the NPO. He explained the trends in liturgical theology, especially concerning the liturgical tradition of the Ethiopian church.

The third scholar is an emeritus professor with in-depth knowledge of Ethiopic manuscripts. He explores with me how my study is unique and how the study of St. Yared and his liturgical chant contribute to the field of theology and spirituality and manuscript study.

SYNTHESIS

As I said in the explanation of the discovery workshop process, the issues raised in the workshop focused on the current challenges of the Ethiopian church. For some of the participants, the word liturgy is a daunting word; it recalls the outdated thinking that pushed young people outside the church. These voices came from deep distrust about tradition. They saw so many abuses and neglects in the name of tradition, but as the other participants point out, tradition by itself is not bad; actually, we can use it for a positive outcome.

The workshop's outcome and the one-on-one interview recognized the concern of those who have difficulties accepting tradition as positive forces. Simultaneously, it also acknowledged the Ethiopian Orthodox church's liturgical tradition's potential to address the problem raised in the workshop.

The one-on-one interview outcome also helped me with the NPO's academic aspect and added a broader view of the discussions than the workshop. For example, when we are trying to address young people's concerns, we have to explore how other churches and traditions tackled these concerns, and at the same time, how they use their liturgical traditions for helping to bring more people to the church.

NEXT STEPS

Areas for further research include the relationship between liturgy and spiritual discipline in the ancient church and how the life and worship of the church fathers and mothers help us to address spiritual, social, and environmental challenges in our time.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION

On OC.24, 2020, I met with seven individuals. We met on Zoom because of the restriction of the COVID-19. We had an in-depth discussion on the following questions:

Why is the liturgical tradition of the Ethiopian church worthy to explore? How will it be useful for our spiritual growth?

I put this question to the participants to explore if the initial NPO is relevant in their view. To understand the NPO in depth we examine the audience, the social and cultural factors in relation to the NPO.

The NPO **audience** are Younger people (15-35) who have been raised in this community but possibly still do not understand the Liturgy itself or feel welcomed within the liturgical frameworks. It means bringing in target young people into Liturgical life to use the NPO to build up the community.

There is a substantial **socio-cultural barrier** that many young adults encounter when being part of the Orthodox Church community. They either aren't fully welcomed in ways that they are accustomed to as Ethiopian-Americans (younger people), or feeling disrespected and alienated. Further there is an almost rigid social hierarchy that is a layover from Ethiopian polity that dominates and dictates the social frameworks of the Ethiopian community. This social dynamic is a major factor in why so many people feel less and less welcome in the church.

How will the audience be impacted if this opportunity is addressed?

<p>Think</p> <p>Now we see they do care about us</p> <p>They think no one judge them</p> <p>They hear us now</p> <p>People will think more about the value of the monastic and liturgical traditions.</p>	<p>Say</p> <p>We feel we have a place in the church</p> <p>They think now people understand our need</p> <p>Thank you for working with us</p> <p>People will say more about what they need from the Church traditions and communities.</p>
<p>Feel</p> <p>Connected to the church (universal)</p> <p>Supported and connected</p> <p>Come to church</p> <p>People will feel more welcomed and embraced by the Church community.</p>	<p>Do</p> <p>Become more faithful</p> <p>Activate more people to come and be a part</p> <p>They participated more in church.</p> <p>People will become more engaged and involved in the monastic and liturgical traditions (e.g. they will attend church events and activities).</p>

Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

Introduction

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, 'Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?' Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, 'If you will, you can become all flame.'⁴⁰²

Salvation is the central message of the Christian faith,⁴⁰³ and the great ascetic Abba Joseph tells us beautifully what salvation is in the Orthodox church: becoming all flame or becoming partakers of the divine nature.⁴⁰⁴ Throughout church history, the liturgical prayers helped Christians to lead the all flamed and transfigured life. They invite the faithful to participate in the divine life. As one of the ancient churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the treasure of these ancient liturgical prayers. The anaphoras of the Ethiopian Liturgy, the chants of Saint Yared and Aba Giorgis are few examples of these unique liturgical literature. In this paper, I will explore the biblical and theological foundations for Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo liturgical worship and how we can use these liturgies for spiritual formation and direction in the context of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

SECTION 1; BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church teaching, the liturgy is a response to God's word, a response to the mystery revealed in the scripture. This is very clear in the structure and content of the liturgy. In the Ethiopian liturgy, one of the three major parts of the liturgy is called Liturgy of the Word.⁴⁰⁵ It is the reading from the Pauline epistles, the general epistles, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the chanting of the book of Psalms, culminating with the procession and reading of the Gospel. The content of the liturgical prayers is also heavily influenced by scriptural words and

⁴⁰² Benedicta Ward, Tr. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers. (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publication), 103

⁴⁰³ This is not unique to the christian faith. Colin E. Gunton argued that 'most religions are religions of salvation because they are based on beliefs that something is wrong with human life – and indeed the whole world- in its present condition , something which the religion proposes to mitigate or heal.'. Colin E Gunton, *The Christian Faith. An introduction to Christian Doctrine.*(Malden, MA:Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 59

⁴⁰⁴ Because of the influence of the Augustinian interpretation of sin in western theology, salvation is understood mainly in relation to sin. This kind of understanding of salvation, salvation as 'sin management' has a great consequence on how we understand scripture, the Christian message. For the criticism from western scholarship please see Scot McKnight's, *The King Jesus Gospel: The original Good News Revisited.* Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2011.

⁴⁰⁵ It is also known as Ordinary of the mass (ሥርዓተ ቅዳሴ) The other main parts of the liturgy are preparatory prayers of the liturgy (ሥርዓተ ግብፅ), or Liturgy of the Word, and the Anaphora (ፍሬ ቅዳሴ) See. Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

phrases. Sometimes these prayers are strings of biblical passages from scriptures.⁴⁰⁶ The dominant theme of the liturgy is the salvation history of God's people. It is retelling the salvation story in poetic and hymnal language. The composers of the liturgical prayers understood that without divine revelation, there is no access to divine knowledge, there is no communion with God. For this reason, they put the Holy scripture at the center of the Liturgy. In the following key biblical passages, we will explore how God invited his people to his Trinitarian community of love and how the liturgical prayers became an instrument for this divine invitation and the transformation of the people of God.

Genesis 1:26-28 -Invitation to the community of love

The practice to link this text with liturgical prayers goes back to the apostolic times. As Joseph Blenkinsopp indicates, the famous Eucharistic hymn in Colossians (Col.1:15-17) is based on the church's understanding and interpretation of Gen. 1:26.⁴⁰⁷ On the sixth day of creation, God created humankind. "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image according to Our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26). This narration of the priestly writers of the Old Testament is "audacious and ambiguous."⁴⁰⁸ Its ambiguity led so many scholars to produce many articles and monographs.⁴⁰⁹ Its audacity also became the source of spiritual contemplation. In the book of the Hours (መጽሐፈ ሰዓታት) for example, there is a praise to God for creating Adam in His image and Likeness. It says,

Holy, Holy, Holy God,
The one who created Adam in His Image and Likeness⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁶ Like rabbinical prayers or preaching called charaz (literally it means stringing pearls). Paul also follows this kind of method in his epistles. See Rom. 3:9-18 in William Barclay, the New Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville Kentucky 2002. p. 64.

⁴⁰⁷ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, un-Creation, Re-creation : A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2011. P.52

⁴⁰⁸ W. Sibley. Towner, "Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the image of God in the Hebrew Bible." *Interpretation* 59, no. 4 (2005): 341+. Gale Academic OneFile (accessed February 18, 2021).
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A138003402/AONE?u=newb64238&sid=AONE&xid=7e5b919e>.

⁴⁰⁹ The plural use and meaning of the phrase "image and likeness of God" is the source of many discussions since the patristic period See Victor P. Hamilton, *The book of Genesis (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament)*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1990), 131-132

⁴¹⁰ ቅዱስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ቅዱስ ጳጳሳታታታ፡ ዘገብሮ ለአዳም በዘዚአሁ አርአያ ወአምሳል።

Mekkonen Solomon and Bisrat Mengesha, Ed. *Book of Horologium (መጽሐፈ ሰዓታት)*(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1953), 11

The early church fathers attributed the plurality in Gen 1:1 and Gen.1:26 to the Holy Trinity.⁴¹¹ The Father with His two hands, the Son and the Holy Spirit, created and beatified the world as St. Irenaeus said in his *Against Heresies*.⁴¹² The Holy Trinity also created and invited humanity in to the community of love, and the fathers argue that , the image and likeness of God is mainly about the relational or communal aspect of humanity.⁴¹³ As Metropolitan Kallistos points out, although the church fathers were hesitant to describe how the image and likeness of God applied in humanity they agreed that the Image and Likeness indicate relationship, self awareness, freedom within humanity.⁴¹⁴ This relationship or awareness is beyond physical and human rationality and is spiritual by nature. Some have misunderstood the concept of the image of God and have tried to exclude people with disabilities. Adolf Hitler, for example, tried to use this misunderstanding as a justification for the killing of people with disabilities in the Third Reich.⁴¹⁵ God created humans in His image and likeness to communicate his creation through them, and by creating them in His image and likeness, He invited them and through them the whole creation to His circle of love. God created humans in His image and likeness and made them a mediator between Him and creation. As image-bearers, humans are responsible for "bringing all that is created to the uncreated God and unite them in a permanent relationship."⁴¹⁶ This relationship between God and humankind is not additional to human existence. "Humans are created in such a way that their very existence is intended to be their relationship."⁴¹⁷ As Metropolitan Zizioulas articulated in his very influential book " Being as Communion", the personhood of humanity is defined in its relationship with God, creation and itself.⁴¹⁸ Without this relationship or communion " we cease to be authentically human." We lose our "true self"⁴¹⁹

⁴¹¹ Modern commentators consider the trinitarian interpretation as " dogmatic interpretation." See Susan Ann Brayford, *Genesis*. Septuagint Commentary Series. Leiden: Brill, 2007), 220

⁴¹² 4 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4:20.1.

⁴¹³ For detail discussion about the invitation of humanity in to the "divine dance" Please see Charles Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood : God, Christ, and Salvation in John of Damascus*, Eugene, Oregon : Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015

⁴¹⁴ Metropolitan Kallistos - Part 2: 'What does it mean to be a person' Accessed Feb. 20, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPKW6qwPO5A>.

⁴¹⁵ <https://biologos.org/articles/more-than-skin-deep-the-image-of-god-in-people-with-disabilities/>?

⁴¹⁶ John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (New York, NY: T&T Clark,2008),90

⁴¹⁷ quoted in Brayford, *Genesis*, 221.

⁴¹⁸ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*. (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997)

⁴¹⁹ Metropolitan Kallistos - Part 2: 'What does it mean to be a person' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPKW6qwPO5A>. Accessed Feb. 20, 2021.

Exodus 3 The people of God (ekklesia)as community of worship

When Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, God appeared to him through the burning bush, the bush which is " blazing yet it was not consumed." In this appearance God called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. This is one of the stories of how God called shepherds to shepherd his people.⁴²⁰ As Philo said in his famous work *Life of Moses*, "only perfect king ... is one who is skilled in the knowledge of Shepherding."⁴²¹ God called Moses out of the burning bush. Hamilton argued that the burning bush is the anticipation of the burning mountain.⁴²² both places enveloped with fire and both of them are " holy grounds." God transformed the wilderness into holy ground and the life of Moses into one of the great leaders of his people.

As we can see the story of the burning bush is how God called his people to worship.⁴²³ Actually through Moses God called his people to worship Him in the wilderness. The patristic commentators saw this and interpreted it through the lens of the Christian faith. For example, St. Ambrose of Millan connected the burning bush with the work of the Holy Spirit which would illuminate " the thorns of our body." ⁴²⁴ For St. John Chrysostom the burning bush indicates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Gregory of Nyssa on the other hand the burning bush is the typology of the Virgin Mary.⁴²⁵ For this very reason, the burning bush story in Exodus is one of the favorite texts in the liturgical writings of the Orthodox church. One of the great Ethiopian saints and hymnographer Saint Yared in his hymns interpreted this text in the context of the incarnation and said:

Hallelujah, Moses saw Mary the burning bush,
The divine fire did not consume her,
Moses saw and could not comprehend her.
The one who has the power of God upon Him,
The one who sanctifies the priesthood of Aaron,

⁴²⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus : An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 68

⁴²¹ Scott M. Langston, *Exodus through the Centuries*. Blackwell Bible Commentaries. Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006),43

⁴²² In Hebrew bush (seneh) and Sinai (sinay) have similar sounds. See Hamilton. Exodus, 70

⁴²³The first command to Moses was to remove his sandal before he came to the burning bush. The clergy and the laities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church remove their shoes when they enter the church based on this biblical passage. We can see this kind of command again in the story of Joshua and the Angel of God. Hamilton, Exodus. p. 72-73

⁴²⁴ Langston, *Exodus through the Centuries*. P. 45-46

⁴²⁵ Ibid.,46

Descended and came for salvation.⁴²⁶

Again one the the great hymnologist of the church, St Ephrem of Syrian interpreted this passage in christological context. He says in his Praise of Mary for Thursday (ውዳሴ ማርያም ዘሐሙስ):

The bush which Moses saw in the flaming fire in the desert,
Of which the branch of the bush was not consumed,
Symbolized the spotlessness of the Virgin Mary.
The Word the Father became incarnate of her,
And the fire of His divinity did not consume the Virgin.
After she had gave birth of Him, her virginity was maintained,
And His divinity unchanged.
Our God, who is true God became son of man,
He came and saved us.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ ሃሌ ሉያ፡ ርዕዮ ፡ ሙሴ፡ ማርያምሃ፡ ዕፀ ፡ ጳጦስ

እንተ ፡ ኢያውዓያ ፡ እሳተ ፡ መለኮት፡

ርእየ ፡ ሙሴ ፡ ወስእነ ፡ ጠይቆቶ፡

ኃይለ ፡ መለኮቱ ፡ ዘላዕሌሁ ፡ ሀሎ፡

ዘቀደሰ ፡ ክህነቶ ፡ ለአሮን፡

ወረደ ፡ ወመጽአ ፡ ለአድህኖ፡ Habte Maryam Werkneh and others, eds. *Ämäsətu Säwatəwä Zemawoc* [The Five part of chants] (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam H.I.M. Printing Press, 1968), 314

⁴²⁷ ዕፀ ፡ እንተ ፡ ርእየ ፡ ሙሴ ፡ በነደ ፡ እሳት ፡ ውስተ ፡ ገዳም ፡

ወአዕጹቂሃ ፡ ኢትውዒ፤

ትመስል ፡ ማርያም ፡ ድንግል ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ ርኩስ፡

ተሰብአ ፡ እምኔሃ ፡ ቃለ ፡ አብ፡

ወኢያውዓያ ፡ እሳተ ፡ መለኮቱ ፡ ለድንግል ፡

እምድጎረ ፡ ወለደቶ ፡ ድንግልናሃ ፡ ተረክበ ፡

ወመለኮቱ ፡ ኢተወለጠ ፡

ኮነ ፡ ወልደ ፡ እጓለ ፡ እመ ፡ ሕያው ፡ አምላክ ፡ ዘበአማን ፡

When Hans Urs Von Balthasar gave the title of his study on Maximus the Confessor as *Cosmic Liturgy*,⁴³³ he was on to something. Anchored in the writing of the church fathers⁴³⁴ before him, St. Maximus argued that Christ and the salvation He brought is cosmic in its dimension. It affects the whole creation. In Psalm 148 the psalmist called us to cosmic liturgy. We can see clearly the role of creation in the worship of the living God. Metropolitan Zizioulas, a theologian with a deep commitment to the environment, said that one of the sad situations in modern theology is the “total absence” of creation in the discussion of Christ's salvation. As he points out based on the biblical texts like Romans 8:19-21, the ancient church always understood the cosmic dimension of the salvation of Christ.⁴³⁵ In his Easter Sunday hymn St. Yared echoes Psalm 148 when he said the following:

Hallelujah! Let the heaven rejoice and the earth be joyful,
 Let the depth of the foundation [of the earth] blow the horn.
 Let the the mountains and the hills shout,
 And all the trees of the forest.
 Today is great joy in heaven
 Let the earth make passover,
 It is cleansed by the blood of Christ.⁴³⁶

⁴³³ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1998)

⁴³⁴ According to Balthasar, Maximus incorporated three bodies of material: Origen, Evagirus and Alexandrian Christology). Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 47

⁴³⁵ Metropolitan Zizioulas, *The Natural World as the Gospel (Good News) of Creation*. Accessed Feb, 21, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U_94CoM8GE

⁴³⁶ ሃሌ: ሉዖ:

ይቅፌሃሕ: ሰማይ: ወትትሐሰይ: ምድር: ምድር:

ወይንፍሐ: ቀርነ: መሠረታተ: ሕምዝ:

ወይወውዑ: አድባር: ወአውግር:

ወኩሉ: ዕፀወ: ገዳም:

ወዮምሰ: አባይ: ፍሥሐ: በሰማያት:

ወምድርኒ: ትገብር: ፋሲካ:

ተሓዲባ: በደመ: ክርስቶስ:

Habte Maryam Werkneh and others, eds. *Ämäsətu Säwatəwä Zemawoc* [The Five part of chants] (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam H.I.M. Printing Press, 1968), 386

Luke 1-2 Incarnation and liturgy

Luke in his infancy stories recorded four hymns,⁴³⁷ and the theme of these hymns is linked to the incarnation of the Word of God and the new relationship which He inaugurated. All of these hymns play a major role in the liturgical prayers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Except for the Gloria, three of these hymns are part of the fifteen canticles of the prophets and chanted every Sunday. In the Ethiopian Liturgy, after the reading of the Gospel between the recitation of the creed and the holy kiss, the whole congregation sings the Gloria "Glory to God in the highest"⁴³⁸ as a call and response with the lead priest. The Gloria summarized the purpose of the mystery of the Incarnation. As Joel B. Green points out, the temple was "the meeting place between heaven and the earthly, the divine and the human", but the birth of Jesus changed that. The glory of God "manifest on the farm." The hymn indicates the coming of the "new world", a world "radically different" from the old one.⁴³⁹ It also indicates a new relationship, a communion which includes heaven and earth. The church fathers put the gloria in the liturgy to indicate that the Eucharist, the holy communion is the sacrament of this new relationship. Saint Yared in the Gate of Light again sings about this text:

... When you gave birth to your child on earth in a manger,
 The cherubim of all eyes and Seraphim with six wings covered you,
 The cloud of light encircled you.
 The Archangels, the army of angels and the host of heaven stood before you in fear
 and trembling,
 At that time, Cherubim and Seraphim praised you,
 with new praise which is not a praise from heaven or a praise from eternity.
 When the angels saw their Lord who sustains all creation in your lap,
 The one who feeds the whole creation feed from your breast like a child,
 They went to heaven and found Him with the Father and Holy Spirit from eternity.
 When they saw the humility of our lord,
 They lift their eyes to heaven,
 They stretched their wings and praised their Lord.
 And they said "Glory to you Lord of all in heaven,"
 When they saw you and your child by yourself in your room,
 They said, "peace on earth,"
 When they saw Him wearing our flesh which He took from you,

⁴³⁷ Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-56), Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79) , Song of the Angels (Luke 2:13-14) , and Song of Simeon Luke 2:29-32)

⁴³⁸ It is known by the latin first sentence, "Gloria in excelsis Deo".

⁴³⁹ Joel B.Green, *The Gospel of Luke*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 179

They worshipped saying "goodwill to the children of humankind." ⁴⁴⁰

Matthew 26 and Revelation 4-7 Eucharistic Liturgy of the Paschal Lamb

At the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus instituted the sacrament of holy communion. In the middle of the Passover supper He gave himself as the paschal lamb. He blessed the bread and the cup and said " Take, eat; this is my body ... Drink for it all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant".(Mat. 26:26-27) The church recognized these words as Words of Institution or Words of Consecration and almost all ancient liturgies contain them. The narrative of the last supper in Gospel of Matthew and the liturgical hymn in the book of Revelations direct us to the "paschal liturgy of the Eucharist"⁴⁴¹ The institutions in the Last Supper again call our attention to the redemption of the whole creation, through the blessing of wine and bread and the mystical union of the believers with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. St. Yared in his hymn for Great Thursday says

Hallelujah,
The one who sit on the Cherubim,
Sat with them at the dinner,
For them He show the mystery of Communion
He is king of kings lord of all creation.⁴⁴²

Conclusion

Through these biblical texts, from the story of creation in the Hebrew Bible up to the liturgical hymns of the book of Revelation, we see the pattern in God's invitation to humanity to His divine life. The Assembly of the Israelites and the church, a chosen people called by God⁴⁴³ in the Old and New Testament, responded to this invitation through liturgical prayers and hymns. Through these liturgical narratives and prayers they saw their relationship with God, creation and themselves. The church in our time, following the saints from the Old and the New testament, using the liturgy as medium, can respond to the divine invitation in their own context.

The History of Liturgical literature of the Ethiopian church

Introduction

⁴⁴⁰ Gate of Light (አንቀጽ ብርሃን), 398-399

⁴⁴¹ Mitch, Curtis, and Edward Sri. The Gospel of Matthew Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010)37

⁴⁴² Habte Maryam Werkneh, The Five part of chants, 464

⁴⁴³ In gr. ekklesia

Liturgy is a name assigned to the corporal or communal prayer of the church, especially the eucharistic prayers and thanksgivings. The word comes from two Greek words, *laos* "for the people" and *ergon* "work". Together it describes the "public work" or worship in the religious setting. In ancient Greece it was used to describe the temple worship, and the translators of the Septuagint used the word to describe the work of the priests and the Levites of the Israelites. The writers of the New Testament also used this word to describe the Christian worship in general and the Eucharistic thanksgiving in particular. Liturgical prayer is the center of the spiritual life of the Orthodox church. The New Testament church continues the Jewish liturgical tradition and the temple service, especially the passover meal liturgy in the Christian context. The Synoptic gospels clearly relate this when they narrate that the Eucharist or the holy communion was instituted during the Passover meal, when Jesus Christ sat with His disciples for the last supper. One of the main parts of the Eucharistic prayer (the anaphora) is the narration of the last supper and how Jesus instituted the sacrament of the holy communion, and for this reason that part of the liturgical prayer is named the institution.⁴⁴⁴

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the liturgical prayers, especially the Eucharistic prayer called Qäddase⁴⁴⁵, play an important role in the development and growth of the spiritual life. In the next two sections. I will explore the history of liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and how these prayers enrich the spiritual life of the faithful.

St. Frumentius and the introduction of liturgical prayers

Luke the evangelist narrates in the Act of the Apostles how the Ethiopian official accepted Christianity and was baptized by the hand of Philip the deacon (Act 8:26-39). As the traditional scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tell us, before Christianity, Ethiopia followed Judaism since the time of King Solomon. Kəbrä Nəgäst or the Glory of Kings, a book which contains the legend of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, tells us about how the priests and the levites who were sent by the king to Ethiopia stole the ark of the Covenant and brought it to Ethiopia. According to this legend the ark of the covenant now resides in Axum Mariam.⁴⁴⁶ Based on this tradition, scholars say the Ethiopian official went to Jerusalem as a Jew to perform his Jewish religious

⁴⁴⁴ Ernest Hammarstdmit, for example, listed the twenty Ethiopic Anaphoras' institution narratives. Ernest Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*. (Wiesbaden, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1987) 12-127

⁴⁴⁵ ቀደስ qəddäsä to praise ቅዱስ qäddase praise, thanksgiving.

⁴⁴⁶ Sir E.A.Wallis Budge. tr. Kəbrä Nəgäst (In Parenthesis Publications, Cambridge, Ontario 2000.)71

obligation and upon his return, received Christianity.⁴⁴⁷ The Ethiopian Orthodox Church considers this event the starting point of its long and illustrious history. Eusebius, the father of church history mentions that the Ethiopian eunuch became an apostle for his people.⁴⁴⁸ Although the church starts its history from this biblical event, before the arrival of St. Frumentius Ethiopia had no priests or bishops, and according to Rufinus, beyond the preaching of the Ethiopian eunuch, there was no baptism or holy communion. For this reason some consider St. Frumentius as the one who introduced Christianity to Ethiopia and they start the history of the church from there. Although there is dispute about the starting point there is no controversy about when the church's liturgical history began. It starts from St. Frumentius, the first bishop of Ethiopia, and St Yared the Ethiopian (A.D 493-571) the greatest hymnographer of the Ethiopian church.

Frumentius and his brother Aedesius were from Syria. While they were traveling, their ship sank near Axum. When they arrived at Axum, the king of Axum Ezana received them and made them part of his entourage. According to Rufinus church history, the king "made one of them, Aedesius, his cupbearer, while to Frumentius, whose intelligence and prudence he could see, he entrusted his accounts and correspondence."⁴⁴⁹ Frumentius saw the need for evangelization and went to Alexandria to explain Ethiopia's situation. St. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, saw the deep commitment of Frumentius for the people of Ethiopia and ordained him as bishop of Axum.⁴⁵⁰

Frumentius and his successors and other missionaries from Syria⁴⁵¹ connected the Ethiopian church with Alexandrian and Syrian liturgical tradition. The translation of the works of St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Ephrem of Syria, the Coptic and Syriac loan words, and the thematic similarity of the content

⁴⁴⁷ Even after Christianity, the Jewish custom and tradition is still visible in the tradition of the Ethiopian churches. For detailed discussion see, E. Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, London UK Oxford University Press 2006.

⁴⁴⁸ " a certain Providence brought from the land of the Ethiopians an officer of the queen of that country, ... he was the first of the Gentiles to receive the mysteries of the Divine word from Philip through revelation, and was the first to return to his native land and preach the Gospel of the knowledge of the God of the universe... and thus in fact was the prophecy fulfilled by him which says 'Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand to God' Eusebius Pamphili, *Ecclesiastical History Books 1-5*. The Fathers of the Church. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington DC.1953.),87-88

⁴⁴⁹ Rufinus of Aquileia. *History of the Church. The Fathers of the church Vol. 133* The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C.2016. pp. 394-395.

⁴⁵⁰ " after considering attentively carefully what Frumentius had said and done ... conferred on him the priesthood, he ordered him to return with the Lord's grace to the place from which he had come. Rufinus of Aquileia. *History of the Church*, 396

⁴⁵¹ According to the tradition, the majority of the Nine Saints, who came to Ethiopia around AD. 480 and responsible for the introduction of monasticism in Ethiopia, came from Syria and Asia Minor . Aba Gorgorios , Yä'itəyopiya Orthodox Täwahədo Betä Krəstiyan Trik (Tnəsa'e Zäguba'e Publisher, 1974(E.C),24

of the liturgical literature is evidence for the extensive influence of these two traditions. The influence of these two traditions is clearly evident in the Eucharistic liturgy of the Ethiopian church.

Eucharistic liturgy of the Ethiopian church.

As the first bishop of Ethiopia, Frumentius brought from Alexandria ecclesiastical rules and orders with ancient Eucharistic prayers (anaphoras). In his seminal study on Ethiopic Anaphoras, Ernest Hammerschmidt assumed that Frumentius took with him the Hippolytus church order (because of its origin, it called the Egyptian church order), the Anaphora of the Apostles, and the Anaphora of our Lord Jesus Christ after he visited St. Athanasius of Alexandria. "The church order (of Egypt) had been made the basis for the service by Frumentius in the Diocese which had been bestowed on him."⁴⁵²

In his short essays on the Rite of Ethiopian (geez) church, Archbishop Pawlos Tzadua also stated the Alexandrian rites' influence, "A comparison between the Ethiopian liturgy and the ancient Alexandrian one confirms the dependence of the Ethiopian Rite on that of Alexandria. There is a similarity between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian Coptic Rites, which stems from their common origin. This can be seen not only in their structure but also, in some instances, texturally."⁴⁵³

Although the Ethiopian rite is heavily influenced by the Alexandrian rite, at the same time it also has its development. As Paulos Tzadua points out, the Ethiopic Liturgy " has undergone such an evolution that the actual form of the liturgy, so very distant from the original, seems on the point of assuming the dignity of an independent rite. Language, customs and songs contributed largely to this evolution, giving the Ethiopian rite its own characteristic features." The influence of the Alexandrian church is not limited to the structure and content of the liturgical order. It also influences the framework of the liturgical year. The Ethiopian Orthodox church uses the Alexandrian calendar to count year, months, and era,⁴⁵⁴ but like the liturgical prayers we can see the development in the liturgical cycle.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Ernest Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*. P. 42

⁴⁵³ Archbishop Paulos Tzadua, *THE DIVINE LITURGY According to the Rite of the Ethiopian (Ge'ez) Church*. <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/church/divineliturgydoc.html>

⁴⁵⁴ The Alexandrian calendar is a mix of the ancient Egyptian solar calendar with the Julian calendar. " The Alexandrian year retains the ancient Egyptian division of the year into twelve months of thirty days each, plus five more days called epagomenal, at its end, as well as the extra day who's intercalation is at the end of every fourth year." Fr. Emmanuel Fritsch, *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church*, *Ethiopian Review Cultures Special Issue Vol. IX-X..(2001)*,21.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*,27

When we are studying the development of Ethiopian liturgy we have to consider the following books which govern the liturgical life of the church.

1. The book of Sinodos collection of ancient canon of the church,⁴⁵⁶
2. Metshafe Kidan or book of Covenant which is the Ethiopian version of the Testamentum Domini, a document of Syrian origin (5th century),
3. The Book of Didaskalia known as Didascalia Apostolorum
4. Fetha Negest (Law of the king), a collection of civic and ecclesiastical laws probably written by Assafi ibin al assal around the middle of the 13th century.

The translation of these books with the major liturgical reformation in the golden era of the Geez literature (15th century) gave a unique and independent nature to the Ethiopian liturgy.

Traditionally the Ethiopian liturgy is divided into three major parts. First, the preparatory prayer (known as Səṗə'atä Gəbts Order of the Egyptian), the ordinary of the mass (known as Liturgy of the Word or Liturgy of the Catechumen) and the last part is the Anaphora or the Eucharistic thanksgiving (also known as liturgy of the faithfuls.)⁴⁵⁷

Besides the Syrian rite the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has the largest collection of anaphoras. It has 20 anaphoras and 14 of them are official liturgies which the church uses throughout the liturgical year. Traditionally these anaphoras are attributed to the apostles and patristic church fathers before the 4th century, but most scholars considered the majority of the anaphoras as indigenous works and the attribution as pseudonym.

These anaphoras are: Anaphora of the Apostles, Anaphora of Our Lord, Anaphora of St. John the Evangelist, Anaphora of the 318 Orthodox Fathers (of the Council of Nicaea), Anaphora of Our Lady (I) (which is said to have been composed by Kyriakos of Behnsa), Anaphora of St. Athanasius, Anaphora of St. Basil⁴⁵⁸, Anaphora of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Anaphora of St. Epiphanius, Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora of St. Cyril(I), Anaphora of St. James of Sarug, Anaphora of St.

⁴⁵⁶ Some of the canons are attributed to the Apostles, Clement bishop of Rome and Hippolytus of Rome. It also contains the canons of the Synods of Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, and the canons of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

⁴⁵⁷ Hammarschidmit put the first two section together as one major section and called them simply as pre-anaphora and divided them as, preparatory prayer, Prothesis (placing the host on the table), the Enarxis (the great entrance) Liturgy of the Catechumens. See. Ernest Hammerschmidt, Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras., 50

⁴⁵⁸ This anaphora is the translation of the Coptic anaphora of St. Basil. See Hammerschmidt, Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras., 27

Gregory, Anaphora of St. Dioscorus, Anaphora of Our Lady (II) by Giyorgis of Gasəčča ⁴⁵⁹
 Anaphora of St. Mark, Anaphora of St. James Brother of the Lord, Anaphora of Our Lady (III) by
 Gregory, Anaphora of Our Lady (IV) by Gregory, Anaphora of St. Cyril (II)

St. Yared and his Liturgical works.

Although Frumentius was crucial in laying the ground for the Ethiopian orthodox church, St Yared is the principal figure in the Ethiopian Orthodox church's liturgical history. St. Yared was born in Axum at the early stage of the introduction of institutionalized Christianity. His birth's exact date is disputed, but some scholars for example, Merigeta Lisane Work, in his seminal study of St. Yared and his liturgical chant, puts the date on the 5th of Miyaziya 493 A.D.⁴⁶⁰ According to tradition, St. Yared is the first child of his parents. His brothers Abyud and Christian were born after him. His parents named him Yared following the instruction of the angel. The angel told them, "He will be the one who will ascend to heaven to bring the holy angels' hymn. Like the bee gathering nectar from trees, flowers, and grasses and making sweet honey for the people, he will gather beautiful words from Old and New Testaments from scholars' homilies and mix it with a beautiful melody and give it to those who learn. He will transform the temple of Ethiopia into the temple of heaven, the priests into the priests (elders) of heaven, to praise their creator God in a beautiful hymn. For this reason, his name will be Yared." ⁴⁶¹

According to the tradition, St. Yared is the first composer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's liturgical chant. Before Yared, the church used non-melodic worship. His work laid the ground for liturgical chant and spiritual poetry, scriptural interpretation, and theological discussion. His influence in the Ethiopian church's life is beyond measure, as the composer St. Yared gave the church lyrics, melody, and a system of musical notation. According to the late archbishop Melke Tsedeq, the ancient musical notation of St. Yared is eight in number. They are corresponding with western musical notation.⁴⁶² In his introductory essay, Hailu Habtu said the musical composition of Yared "involves sound, movement, dance, and some percussion. Its sound is soothing, its movement a gentle swaying of the body sideways and to and fro, its dance a softly rhythmic and

⁴⁵⁹ Sometimes known as Giyorgis of Säglä, he is a prolific writer and liturgical reformer of 15th century Ethiopia. He is responsible for the revision of the liturgical books *Dəggwa* and *Book of Hours*. Gerard Colin, Giyorgis of Säglä. In Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.)). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 2: D-Ha. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2005), 812

⁴⁶⁰ *Ləsanä Wäreṓq Gäbrä Giyorgis Təntawi Sərə'ätä Mahəlet Zä-Abunä Yared Liq [Ancient Order of the Liturgical chant of our Father and teacher Yared]*, (Addis Ababa: Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes & Institut tigre des Langues, 1997), 15

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 15

⁴⁶² Habte Maryam Werkneh, *Təntawi Yä-Etiopia Sərə'ätä Təmhərat [Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum]* (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam H.I.M. Printing Press, 1963), 75

undulating march backward, forwards and sideways, its percussion minimalistic, and, some say, subtly imitative of the human heartbeat." ⁴⁶³

Yared gave the church three melodic modes by which the Ethiopian church sings all of its liturgical chants. These three musical modes are Ge'ez, Isl, and Araray. St Yared's Hagiography attributed the three mystical birds as the source of these melodies. According to the story, God sent these birds to St. Yared, and they revealed the melodies to him. These modes of melodies symbolized the three persons of the Trinity. The Geez mode symbolized the Father. Its "hard, stern, stark and dry" tune can be described as "commanding, imposing, proclamatory." The Izle mode symbolized the Son. The mode's soft and gentle way signifies divine love. The third mode Araray is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This mode is plaintive melancholic and sung on somber occasions or seasons. ⁴⁶⁴

Beside his musical composition, St Yared is also a lyricist and considered as the first poet in the history of Ethiopian orthodox church. Spiritual poetry, also called Qene⁴⁶⁵, is part of the liturgical chant and every time, a new composition of poetry is recited in the middle of the chant. As Habtu states in his introductory essays, Qene is "a very high, elaborate, strict and multi-layer form of Geez that is cryptic, complex, profound, and rich in allusions to religion, legend, history law, social customs, etc, and generally to the human condition."⁴⁶⁶ The lyrics of St. Yared's hymns are deeply scriptural and theological, and they are a great resource for scholars to study the methodology of scriptural interpretation of the ancient church of Ethiopia. His use of patristic literature also needs further study. The arrangement of the hymn also follows salvation history and because of this, Yared's work dictate the lectionary cycle of the church. To understand the scope of his influence in the liturgical life of the Ethiopian church, we have to delve into his works.

1. Dəggwa⁴⁶⁷ (Antiphony for the liturgical year)

⁴⁶³ Hailu Habtu, introduction in *Ləsanä Wäreḳ Gäbrä Giyorgis Təntawi Sərə'ätä Mahəlet Zä-Abunä Yared Liq* [Ancient Order of the Liturgical chant of our Father and teacher Yared], (Addis Ababa: Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes & Institut tigrean des Langues, 1997), xx

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.,xxvii

⁴⁶⁵ The exact meaning of the word disputed. Some say it means submission (to God). Others say it means spiritual poem. Habtä Maryam Wärqənäh, *Təntawi Yä-Etiopia Sərə'ätä Təmhəret* [Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum]

⁴⁶⁶ Hailu Habtu, introduction, xxi

⁴⁶⁷ Habte Maryam Werkneh, The Five part of chants, 249- 398

Deggwa⁴⁶⁸ is the major work of St. Yared and his disciples. Some medieval church scholars, for example, St. George of Gasæçčä, also expanded the work. It is divided into four sections following the four seasons of the liturgical cycle of the church.

The first section of the hymn is called Yohannəs (John the Baptist). As “the bridge between Old and New Testament” and as the first for the New Testament, John the Baptist’s feast day is the first day of the New Year in the Ethiopian calendar.⁴⁶⁹ This section is the most expansive section of the Deggwa⁴⁷⁰ and it covers the first three months, including the flower season.⁴⁷¹ The second section of the hymn is called Astäməhəro (instruction or supplication). This section covers the advent, Christmas, baptism, and Epiphany season [ዘመነ ኢትዮጵያ] or Christmastide until the arrival of the Lenten season. This section also appears again during the *Kiremt* or summer season between the Paschal season and the New Year. The third section is the Tsome Deggwa, and it covers the Lent season. Some scholars, including the late archbishop Melke Tsedek and his team, considered Tsome Deggwa as a separate work.⁴⁷² Habte Michael Kidane argued that the separation was a recent development (18th c.) which happened for “practical reason”.⁴⁷³ The last section of Deggwa is called Fasika and covers the whole of eastertide.

2. Zəmmare⁴⁷⁴ (Eucharistic antiphony)

Tradition ascribes this work to St. Yared, and according to Ethiopian scholars, Yared composed this Zəmmare in Zur Amba monastery in Northern Ethiopia.⁴⁷⁵ Zəmmare is usually chanted during and after the congregation receives holy communion. The content of the chant is directed to the Eucharist, and we can see that even from the name of the titles of the five sections of Zəmmare :

⁴⁶⁸ “ Like Siltanat Habte Maryam Werkneh later (archbishop Melke Tsedek) suggested that the meaning of the word Deggwa means small hand writing or collection., Habte Maryam Werkneh *Təntawi Yä-Etiopia Sərə’ätä Təmhərat [Ancient Ethiopian Education Curriculum]*,75

⁴⁶⁹ The Ethiopian New Year started in Meskerem 1st (September 11)

⁴⁷⁰ Habte Maryam Werkneh, *Ancient Ethiopian* p. 80.

⁴⁷¹ The flower season (ዘመነ ጸጌ) starts on September 26 and ends on Hedar 6 and in this season the church remembers the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt.

⁴⁷² Habte Maryam Werkneh, *The Five part of chants*, 1-101

⁴⁷³ *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol.2 p. 123

⁴⁷⁴ Habte Maryam Werkneh, *The Five part of chants*,401-527

⁴⁷⁵ Habte Maryam Werkneh, *Ancient Ethiopian*, 102

Həbəsət (ካብስት) which means prosphora, Şəwa'ə (ጸዋዕ), the chalice, Mänəfäs (ሙንፈስ) the Holy Spirit, Äkotet (አኩት) eucharistic praise, and Məştir (ሙሶጢር), mystery [of the communion].⁴⁷⁶

3. Mäwasə'ət⁴⁷⁷

Mäwasə'ət ⁴⁷⁸ is also attributed as the work of St. Yared. This antiphon is chanted with Psalms and canticles inserted between psalms and biblical canticles verses. The chant is used on feast days of the saints of the church and other church feasts. It is also part of the funeral liturgical prayer and for this reason it is called Säwasəw näfs (Ladder of the soul) or mārḥ lemängəstā sämayat (Guide to the Kingdom of heaven.)⁴⁷⁹

4. Mə'əraf⁴⁸⁰

According to Ethiopian scholars, Mə'əraf is the last work of St Yared. He composed this chant at Semen mountain in northern Ethiopia. Like Me'wase'et chant Me'eraf is also performed with the recitation of Psalm. The word Mə'əraf indicates that the antiphon has to be performed after reading or chanting the book of Psalms verses, used as a resting place for the reading of the Psalm.⁴⁸¹ Mə'əraf also contains other works by St. Yared. Ankese Birhan or Gate of Light, a hymn to St. Mary, and a Litanical prayer called Zäyənägəs (God enthroned). Mə'əraf uses the whole book of Psalms and other works like Mystagogia and Prayer of the covenant known as Testamentum Domini.⁴⁸²

Ethiopic Liturgical Literature in the western world

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.,202-204.

⁴⁷⁷ Habte Maryam Werkneh, and others, The Five part of chants ,529-604

⁴⁷⁸ Some scholars said Mewase'et derived from the geez verb Awsə'a meaning " respond" to indicate that this antiphon perform between the left and right side of the chorus. See Habte Michael Kidane, " Mäwasə'ət" in Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 3: He-N. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007) 877.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.,877

⁴⁸⁰ Habte Maryam Werkneh, The Five part of chants, 103-246

⁴⁸¹ Getachew Haile, " Mə'əraf", in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 3, p. 910.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 910-911

The Ethiopian Orthodox church presence in western world is very recent. The expansion of the church in the USA happened following the immigration of a large Ethiopian population after the downfall of the imperial government and through the diversity visa. For this reason, the congregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Northern American and Europe is almost all from the immigrant Ethiopian Community. In these churches the Eucharistic liturgical prayers and St. Yared's liturgical chants play a crucial role in their worshipping life.

Liturgical prayers: Problems and opportunities.

Tracy Robinson in *Liturgy and Identity* describes the aspect of the liturgy as a "framework for corporate worship". Liturgy is creating "meaning through communicating in diverse ways the story of God's relating to humankind", and offering "the possibilities of fresh encounter of God, ourselves and with others." Robinson argued that liturgy "makes sense of who we are both personally and corporately as a worshipping community - it helps to form our identity in relation to God, to self, to others and to the world as whole."⁴⁸³ Here the key word is identity. As the worshipping community, the church will form its own identity through liturgy.

In the west, the greater emphasis is given to "individual relationship," sometimes at the expense of communal or corporal worship. However, without communal worship, there is no individual devotion or spiritual formation. As early church fathers say repeatedly, personal spiritual growth comes in the context of communal spiritual life. Professor Florovsky wrote that "Personal devotion and community worship belong intimately together, and each of them is genuine and authentic, and truly Christian, only through the other." He argued that "common prayer presupposes and requires personal training. Yet, personal prayer itself is possible only in the context of the community, since no person is Christian except as a member of the body. Even in the solitude "in the chamber" a Christian prays as a member of the redeemed community, the Church."⁴⁸⁴ As St. Cyprian said in his famous dictum "outside the church [the worshipping community or the mystical body of Christ] there is no salvation. "

Liturgical prayers invite us into this community. As we saw in our biblical and theological discussion, these prayers invite us into the divine life. They are "our window onto the spiritual world, our participation in the life of Christ, our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and the foretaste of the things

⁴⁸³Tracy Robinson, *Liturgy and Identity: what does the Liturgy Make of Me?* MA thesis (Ripon College Cuddesdon- Oxford Brookes University, 2009), 5

⁴⁸⁴ George Florovsky, *Worship and Every day Life: An Eastern Orthodox View in Studia Liturgical II*, 4 (1963), 272

to come."⁴⁸⁵ The time of liturgy is the time of formation, restoration and transformation.⁴⁸⁶ Susan Wood in her essay describes this 'formative environment' as follows. "Within the liturgy we come to know ourselves and God because the liturgy orders our relationships: my relationship to others within the body of Christ sacramentally constituted within the Eucharist, my relationship to God as a recipient of God's graciousness, my relationship to the world by being not only sent, but missioned and commissioned to live ethically within history what has been experienced in the metahistorical time and space of the liturgy. In short, in the liturgy we do not acquire knowledge about God; we acquire knowledge of God."⁴⁸⁷

As we discuss the place of liturgical prayer in Christian life, we have to acknowledge its challenge in this so-called post-Christian world. In some circles, these prayers are considered as mere rituals, or extravagant displays of organized religion. Some argue that the language of the liturgical prayers is an expression of oppression, which is the by-product of the oppressive culture. Fr. Brendan Byrne, biblical scholar and former member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of the Roman Catholic Church argued that "If they are led to address the deity in language fitting for a Byzantine emperor, they will imagine and think of God - and their relationship with God - in similarly oppressive terms."⁴⁸⁸ At the same time some liberation theologians point out that because of its transformational power and the ability "to form a community into a cohesive group of people striving to live out their lives according to the example and teachings of Christ" liturgy "may become a means of subverting the dominant paradigm which globalization encourages in our time, thereby interjecting a different set of values and attitudes into the world that will give rise to more just and equitable systems of governance."⁴⁸⁹

With these challenging voices there are also voices from within—warning voices. Fifty years ago, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, one of the first leading exponents of liturgical theology in America, wrote a series of articles entitled 'Problems of Orthodox in America.' In these three essays, he outlined the problems of Orthodox Christianity here in America, and after half a century, these articles offer us deep insight about our current situation. According to Fr Schmemmann, the Orthodox Church in America has three problems: canonical, liturgical and spiritual. About canonical problem he

⁴⁸⁵ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in theology and Liturgy*. Vs. 3. Aspect of Orthodox Worship. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press), 11

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid.* 10

⁴⁸⁷ Susan K. Wood, "Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy" *Studia Liturgica*, 29, (1999), 30. Quoted in Calivas *Essays in theology and liturgy*, 10

⁴⁸⁸ <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8586/bible-scholar-attacks-oppressive-language-of-liturgy>

⁴⁸⁹ Catherine J. Brozena, *Liturgy in a Time of Globalization: Transformation for Social Change*. M.A thesis., (Graduate Theological Union, 2006), 111.

argued⁴⁹⁰ that the "false idea of canonicity" led the Orthodox Church into the ethnocentric division which becomes "distractive of church's unity."⁴⁹¹ He points out the animosity between different jurisdictions and, above all, within a particular jurisdiction, and this division and animosity is in the name of the church canon.⁴⁹² This problem is not new for the Ethiopian Orthodox church. Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox church are currently in a major crisis; a crisis arises from ethnic politics and hostility. This strife led the church into a canonical problem. For a quarter of the century, the Ethiopian church divided into two synods, the exiled synod and the synod in Ethiopia. Although the synod united, for now, the wound is still fresh. The unity is also merely political and needs much work toward real unity.

The second problem Schmemmann addressed is the Liturgical problem⁴⁹³. The problem has two side questions: how much (quantitative) and how well (qualitative). How much can we preserve from the vast heritage of the liturgical tradition brought from the old world and how well we can preserve the power of the liturgy. As Fr. Schmemmann argued, 'the real function of the liturgy in the Orthodox Church: to immerse the man in the spiritual reality, beauty and depth of the Kingdom of God and to *change* his mind and his heart.' but this power of the liturgy 'vanished' in this new world. For that reason, Fr. Schmemmann put forward two proposals as a solution for the liturgical problem: The first proposal is liturgical restoration, that is, re-educating the clergy and the laity about the importance of the liturgy, and the second is liturgical translation, translating the liturgical prayers with the understanding of the language and the culture of the land without diminishing the power of the liturgy.

The third and last problem is the spiritual problem⁴⁹⁴. Fr Schmemmann called it "the ultimate problem of the church". This problem puts forward the most important question for the Orthodox believer: What does it mean to be an Orthodox in America in the 21st century, and how can one truly be it? Fr. Schmemmann points out that for so many Orthodox Christians, "such a problem does not seem to exist'. Even with the acceptance, the most common answer is 'build "bigger 'n better" churches and all kinds of "facilities," keep your congregation busy and happy, serve the prescribed services, constantly affirm that Orthodoxy is the true faith. And since all this is being done rather successfully, the very existence of any deep problem is therefore denied.' These are the most common answers

⁴⁹⁰ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America : The Canonical Problem" St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly, Vol. 8, # 2, 1964 pp.67-85.

⁴⁹¹ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America : The Canonical Problem", 68-69

⁴⁹² Ibid, 71

⁴⁹³ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America : The Liturgical Problem" St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly, Vol. 8, # 4, 1964, pp. 164-185.

⁴⁹⁴ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America : The Spiritual Problem" St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly,, Vol. 9, # 4, 1964, pp.171-193.

for the spiritual crisis in our church. Besides that, there is an "atmosphere of an almost compulsory official optimism which regards every word of criticism and self criticism as subversive and criminal.'

These problems and their questions and challenges still demand honest dialogue. They demand dialogue with our past and present identity. To derive benefit from the rich liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as Fr. Schmemmann indicates, we have to acknowledge our canonical, liturgical and spiritual problem. We can tackle this problem within the tradition of the church. The Liturgical prayers are deeply rooted in the tradition of the church. As Professor John Meyendorff said, "any Orthodox theology and any Orthodox witness is traditional, in the sense that it is consistency consistent not only with Scripture but also with the experience of the Fathers and the saints," which includes "the continuous celebration of... the liturgy of the church."⁴⁹⁵ Nevertheless, this tradition is not a "dead tradition" or a simple repetition of the past. Fr Meyendorff said this kind of repetition is "unfaithful to the spirit of the Fathers and to the intention embodied in their theology." He argued that one of patristic theology's essential characteristics was to face the challenges of its own time while remaining consistent with the original apostolic Orthodox faith. This kind of understanding of Tradition will help the church to understand the challenge of the time and to use the rich heritage of the liturgical tradition.

Synthesis

Areas of Agreement

The congregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Northern American and Europe is almost all from the immigrant Ethiopian Community. In these churches, the Eucharistic liturgical prayers and St. Yared's liturgical chants play a crucial role in their worshipping life. With its rich biblical and theological tradition rooted with the spirituality of the church fathers, the liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox church can be an instrument to introduce the spiritual life for the younger generation.

First, the Ethiopian liturgy can connect them with the past without pushing aside the present, and through that, it can give them part of the answer for their quest for identity. The sociological aspect of the liturgy in the formation of identity is vital in the immigrant community. As several studies confirm, the question of identity is the most pressing problem in the young generation of the immigrant community. Liturgy can give a new meaning to their identity. The liturgical practices of kissing the icon or the gospel, making the sign of the cross, prostration, and others exercises are not simple rituals. They are "constitutive elements of ritual and devotional life as well as what it means to be eastern Orthodox in both the past and the present."⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1978), 7

⁴⁹⁶ Daniel Winchester, "Windows into Heaven, Mirrors for the Soul: How Icons Shape Identities among the Eastern Orthodox." *Liturgy (Washington)* 35, no. 2 (2020): 48-54.

Second, the liturgy can serve as the guideline for the spiritual life. As we saw from our short survey, the liturgical literature and the liturgical calendar of the church are composed based on the life of the church and its saints. They are steering our attention from temporal and superficial things to spiritual exercises like fasting, prayer, sabbath, silence, praise, and others. The Lenten Antiphony of St. Yared is an excellent example of this kind of use. It can serve as a guide to study spirituality in a more profound, meaningful way.

Tension

As Schmemmann points out in his essays, these liturgical works, with the current situation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, become the source of three main challenges to the current church: The first challenge is Clericalism. Clericalism is the "differentiating" or "stratification" process of the ministers from the organic state of the body of Christ.⁴⁹⁷ The liturgical life of the church is very far from the daily life of the congregation. It is mainly a job left to the priests and other ministers.

The second problem is the language problem. All of the liturgy is sung in the Ethiopic or Geez language, the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Church. Again even the majority of the clergy have little or no knowledge of the language. Because of the clerical exclusivity of the chant and because of the central role of the chant in the liturgical prayer of the church, young people reject the liturgical prayers of the church, and they mention it as the main reason for leaving the church.

The third problem came from the first two problems. Because of the language barrier and that it is only accessible to clergy, most of the liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Church is out of the reach of the young generation. The accessibility is also hampered because of the culture surrounding these literature. Almost all of them have to be memorized and sung without books; for this reason, to study these liturgical books requires a lot of time and energy.

Conclusion.

To address this problem the church has tried many things. The first one is translating some liturgical books into English and in some cases projecting the liturgy using modern technology at the church. The second one is to teach the liturgy in a semi-traditional setting in every church, but the problem is still untouched and unsolved.

To solve these problems we have to put forward these three foundational solutions. First, we have to modernize how to study the liturgical study of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. We have to exploit the modern educational approach for the liturgical study of the Ethiopian church. For

⁴⁹⁷ George Wilson, *Clericalism : The Death of Priesthood*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.) 21

example, there is great resistance to updating the liturgical books with western musical notation. The traditionalists see this as an attack to the whole system. Some consider it as sacrilege. But the young person who is living in the western hemisphere is exposed to this musical notation. She or he can study the liturgical text with modern musical notation easily.

The other solution is to create a curriculum to introduce the spiritual and theological benefits of this liturgical literature. One of the problems with the teaching of the liturgical literature is that in most cases the focus is on the melodies and not on the content of the hymns. If we introduce the spiritual disciplines and theological wealth of these texts then the young generation will open their eyes and will be willing to study more.

Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

NPO STATEMENT

The monastic tradition and liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is underutilized to address the need for spiritual direction ministry.

NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

The project's main objective is to study the liturgical and monastic tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, relating to the ministry of spiritual discipline and direction. At the end of the study, we will have a published curriculum on spiritual discipline with a training manual for priests and Sunday school teachers. The curriculum and the manual are based on the liturgical and monastic traditions. The study requires translation of selected liturgical texts from Ethiopic, the church's classical language, into English and Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia.)

NPO CONTEXT

My NPO ministry context includes the Ethiopian Orthodox church, their priests, and Sunday school teachers in America. For the last 20 years, I have been a priest in the Los Angeles Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox church. For this very reason, the church I am serving will be the primary focus of my project. Although the primary focus is the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Los Angeles, the project also includes the wider faith community.

ROOT CAUSES

My NPO's root cause is the urgent need for spiritual renewal in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, especially among young people, and the opportunity to use the church's rich liturgical and monastic tradition. As one of the ancient churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox church has ancient liturgical chants and monastic writings, but most of these materials are hidden from the public. Very few members of the clergy are knowledgeable enough to understand the content of these works of literature. Still, if we put aside the language barrier, we can find ancient wisdom for our time's challenges, and the spiritual hunger we are witnessing in our young people's lives will be satisfied with this wisdom.

Definition of " Done"

At the end of this project, there will be a curriculum or a study guide to address the NPO. The curriculum or study guide has to be in English and Amharic, which is the official language of Ethiopia.

Three Big Ideas

- Curriculum of spiritual formation based on liturgical literature of EOTC
- Guide for Spiritual Exercise for lent season based on Spiritual Exercise of St. Yared the composer.
- Workshop and training for clergy and Youth ministers on spiritual formation based liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Concept Pitches

Big Idea I: Curriculum of spiritual formation based on liturgical literature of EOTC.

Audience: Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergies and youth ministers.

NPO: There is no curriculum or teaching material on spiritual formation to address the spiritual need of the congregation.

Benefit: It will introduce the practical spiritual teaching of the church fathers in relation to spiritual formation.

Approach: The main part of the curriculum is to introduce spirituality in the day to day life of the audience.

Risks: The big obstacle for this concept might be resistance from clergies or church authorities to use the curriculum.

Assumptions/Hypotheses to test: The curriculum is working if the clergies using it to teach the congregation about spiritual formation.

Benchmarks of success: The project is successful if the congregations practice spiritual disciplines (spiritual reading, sabbath, silence, giving...etc.) in their daily lives based on the curriculum.

Other Approaches: Others tried to address the NPO by providing more information about spirituality. This curriculum is unique in its approach because of its emphasis on practicing spiritual life in our day-to-day life.

Big Idea II: Spiritual guide for lent season based on Spiritual Exercise of St. Yared the composer.

Audience: Youth (12 years old and up) and Adults .

NPO: We didn't utilize the liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and St Yared's liturgical hymns are the most important text to introduce the spiritual exercise.

Benefit: Using St Yared hymns for lent season as guide for spiritual formation and practicing spiritual disciplines in the fasting season.

Approach: Introducing St Yared weekly spiritual themes for lent, and using his hymns and related scriptural and patristic texts, introduce different spiritual disciplines in for the particular days of the week.

Risks: The inability to convince the congregation about the new way of observing the lent season.

Assumptions/Hypotheses to test: If the congregation using the guide to cultivate their spiritual life in lent season, then the guide is working.

Benchmarks of success: If the congregation practicing new spiritual exercise using this guide, then the project is successful.

Other Approaches: Some clergies use St Yared hymns for spiritual formation, but the main focus is on the hymns's melodies. In our approach, the main target is the spiritual world of St. Yared and using the themes of the hymns as a spiritual guide.

Big Idea III: Workshop and training on spiritual formation based liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Audience: Clergies and Youth ministers

NPO: We have to train clergies and youth ministers how to use the liturgical literature of the church for the teaching of spiritual formation

Benefit: If the clergies and youth ministers saw the benefit of the these liturgical literature for spiritual formation, then they can address the spiritual need of the congregation by providing biblical and patristic teaching on spiritual formation

Approach: We are producing a training workshop manual to introduce the new approach of teaching spiritual formation by using the liturgical literature of the church. In these workshops and training, we explore the themes and spiritual disciplines that we found in the church's liturgical text and practice how to apply them in our day-to-day life and the life of the congregation.

Risks: The resistance of the clergies to learn the new approach and methods

Assumptions/Hypotheses to test: If the clergy and the youth ministry participate in the workshop or receive training on the new approach of spiritual formation teaching and are willing to teach based on the new manual, then the project is working.

Benchmarks of success: If the clergies applied their training in the Spiritual formation of their congregation, and if the congregation following the spiritual disciplines according to the church fathers and mothers of EOTC then the project is successful.

Other Approaches: To cultivate the spiritual life of the congregation, others also uses St Yared hymns, but most of the time the main focus is on the humans and its melodies. In this approach the main target is the spiritual world of St. Yared and using him as spiritual guide.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders in my discovery session included a clergyman, conflict resolution expert, elementary school teacher, a high school teacher, business woman, nurse, youth ministers and Sunday school teachers.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

My one-on-one interviewees included a University professor/researcher who is an expert on Ethiopian and African literature, Phd Candidate and scholar of Geez language, and priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

3-5 KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

Biblically, I will explore worship and spirituality, the biblical concept of Sabbath, fasting, prayer, silence, and almsgiving.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Leading voices within my field of research include Gettachew Haile, Ralph Lee, B Velat scholars of Ethiopian liturgy studies; A. Schmemmann, a theologian from eastern orthodox tradition and pioneer of the field of liturgical theology in the 20th century; D.W. Fagerberg and Aidan Kavanagh, leading liturgists from Roman Catholic tradition; Robert F. Taft, theologian and expert on oriental liturgy. Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Gerald May, and Diogenes Allen, also leading voices in spiritual formation and direction; from the ancient church writers and hymnologists, Evagrius of Pontus and Saint Yared the Ethiopian and their literature will be the primary sources for the ancient liturgical monastic literature. Other areas of studies related to the project include spiritual formation, spiritual direction.

Annotated Bibliography

Lossky, Vladimir, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976.

Mystical Theology is one of the most important and influential books in the modern history of Orthodox theology. In this book, Lossky, one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century, discusses the divine darkness and the importance of apophatic theology, the uncreated energies, and the participation in the divine life. One of the most significant contributions of Lossky is rejecting the scholastic way of doing theology which was acceptable in every Orthodox seminary, and embracing the patristic and mystical theology of the orthodox fathers. Especially the Cappadocian fathers of the fourth century and their followers like Maximus, the confessor of the 6th century, and Gregory Palamas of the 14th century. As the first theologians who

formulated the Neo-patristic Synthesis, Lossky and Fr Florovsky influenced future scholars to explore the sacramental and liturgical theology of the Orthodox Church without rejecting its mystical dimension.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Orthodox Spirituality: A practical Guide for the faithful and a definitive Manual for the Scholar*. South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary Press.

This book displays the foundation of Orthodox spirituality and how to achieve its goal. Fr. Dumitru Staniloae told us the goal of Orthodox spirituality is the union of the believer with God in Christ. Because of this, Orthodox spirituality is centered on Christological, Pneumatological, and ecclesiological. That means it is achieved through participation in the life and work of Christ, by the holy spirit, and the mystery of the church. Staniloae's approach is heavily influenced by Evagrius of Ponticus's work on passion and Maximos the Confessor's theology. The book shows us the steps to acquire spiritual discipline with a firm foundation of patristic theology.

Fritsch, Emmanuel. *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church*

This book describes the lectionary cycle of the Ethiopian church its sources. In addition to the detailed description of the liturgy of the word in Ethiopian liturgy and the liturgical seasons of the year, it also listed St. Yared's chants for these liturgical seasons. The author's careful research of the ancient manuscripts and collection of the oral tradition from the traditional scholars of the church makes the book very precious. It gives historical and theological context for studying the liturgical tradition of the Ethiopian church.

APPENDIX 1

DISIGN WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This workshop was conducted at the time great sorrow and distress in Ethiopian community in US and around the world. Because of the civil war in Ethiopia the community here in US is also affected and divided. When the participants trying to address the NPO which is how to utilize the liturgical literature of the church for spiritual formation, they also address how the NPO help to solve the current situation in the community. As some of the participants described in later correspondence, the workshop gave them a hope at the time of despair.

Like the last workshop, this workshop also conducted in vertical setting. Because of the COVID-19 variants restrictions, we conducted the design workshop in a virtual setting using Zoom video conferencing for the workshop and its activity. The majority of the design workshop participants were selected from Virgin Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the church I serve as a priest. Some of them are members of the Ethiopian community who are willing to participate and express their view. In the selection process of the participants, we tried to include some participant from previous NPO discovery workshop and some new participant from every part of the congregation: women and men, young and old, laypersons and clergy. We also invited non believer who has great respect for the church. These diverse voices helped us to explore the NPO thoroughly and give us a design to achieve the NPO.

The workshop's first act was to ask the participants whether their participation in the workshop was on their own accord and if they did not object to video recording the meeting. I also explained the privacy rights of the workshop participants, as stated clearly in the consent letter signed by the participants. Once the participants willingly gave their consent, I explained the NPO which formulated in previous workshop and if they agree or disagree with the NPO Statement.

Following the revisiting of the NPO we discuss about how to address the NPO. With brainstorming other method of questions we explore ways to address the NPO. After exploring different ideas they agree to select three big ideas with their approach, benefit, risk and others approach to address the NPO.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW DISCOVERIES

I interviewed three scholars who have academic and ecclesiastic background. Based on the outcome of. The design workshop, I asked them which way better to address the NPO.

The first scholar is assistant professor of African literature and author of two academic book on Ethiopian women's and ancient text. Her advice was more about the ancient texts and their contribution to address the current need of the congregation especially the younger one. She advised me to translate St. Yared's Chant in to English and Amharic and make the themes from the chants as springboard to explore the current issues among the community.

The second scholar is a Geez language scholar and phd candidate. He is a young scholar with passion to serve the younger generation. He gave me an advice from his own experience how to avoid the resistance from the clergy about the new approach on spiritual formation.

The third scholar is an Orthodox priest and monk who served the church for the last 30 years. As a convert to Orthodox from Catholicism gave him unique perspective about describing the orthodox liturgical tradition in relation to others churches tradition. He gave me an advice to explore other western liturgical traditions. According to him, these traditions can help me to address the spiritual need of the younger generation in western world even though they are raised in eastern tradition.

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION

On OC.28, 2021, I met with six individuals. We met on Zoom because of the restriction of the COVID-19. We had an in-depth discussion on the following questions:

A. Can the liturgical and monastic tradition of the church address the current spiritual need of the community? If yes, then how can we use these liturgical and monastic literature to address the NPO?

I asked this question to re-examine the NPO and see the patterns, commonalities, differences, and outliers. The participant reaffirmed the NPO and asked me to explore how to meet the need of the Amharic speakers, adults, and the younger generation, which are English speakers. That means I have to produce bilingual material on spiritual formation.

B. Which monastic or liturgical work is more useful for in-depth study?

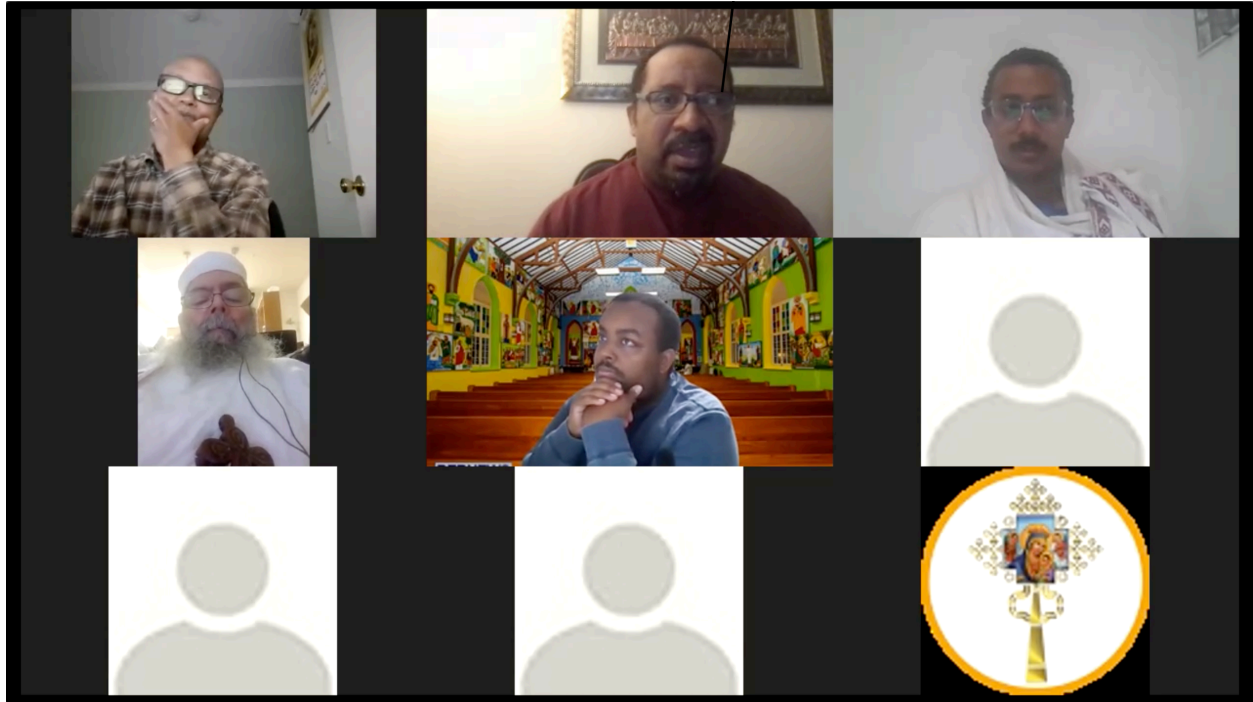
The consensus is to study St. Yared liturgical books:

1. It is the original Christian liturgical work from Africa, and it can resonate with the younger generation's question of identity.
2. Most scholars (western and Africanists) ignore the contribution of St. Yared's work in studying the liturgy and its relation with the broader Christian tradition.
3. St. Yared's work is the most influential work in the spirituality of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

C. In what way the project has to go? Dissertation or curriculum on a spiritual direction based on the in-depth study of monastic and liturgical literature of the Ethiopian orthodox Which way us appropriate to address the NPO?

The participant's opinion is divided in this area. Some asked me to write in-depth research, including collecting the oral tradition of the scholars of the St. Yared chant. They prefer a dissertation instead of a curriculum or study guide format. They argue that, If I lay the academic foundation of the liturgical hymn for spiritual formation, others can use that as starting point. Other participants discussed that the need is not about more studies. The urgent need is to have the

spiritual formation ministry in our church and address the younger generation's needs. In that case, the best way is to put the study into practice through a curriculum or study guide, and It can be more beneficial for the stakeholders.



Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report

Prototype I: Curriculum of spiritual formation based on liturgical literature of EOTC.

Prototype description and scope: It is a showcase of the curriculum with a full table of content with a summary of the chapters and one chapter with full content. The curriculum is for Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergies and youth ministers to teach spiritual formation based on the liturgical literature of EOTC.

NPO: There is no curriculum or teaching material on spiritual formation based on the liturgical literature of EOTC to address the spiritual need of the congregation.

Research question: What is the history of spiritual formation in the Orthodox Church? What is the role of liturgical literature in spiritual formation? Which EOTC liturgical literatures are more helpful in teaching spiritual formation in EOTC, and how can we use them?

Benchmarks of success: The prototype is successful if the clergies and youth ministers are willing to put the curriculum in their classroom after the initial experiment of the prototype and the students practice spiritual disciplines (spiritual reading, sabbath, silence, giving, etc.) in their daily lives based on the curriculum.

Prototype II: Spiritual guide for lent season based on the Spiritual Exercise of St. Yared, the composer.

Prototype description and scope: It shows a full table of content with a summary of the chapters and one or two chapters with full content. The guide is for clergies, youth ministers and the laities to guide them how to use St Yared's chant for Lent in their daily devotion.

NPO: We didn't utilize the liturgical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and St Yared's liturgical hymns are the most important text to introduce the spiritual exercise.

Research question: What was the spiritual world of St. Yared? What are the foundations of St. Yared's spirituality ? What is the place of Yared's Lent chant in his corpus? How can we use St Yared's spirituality for 21st century christianity.

Benchmarks of success: The prototype is successful if it introducing spiritual disciplines of St. Yared using his hymns and the congregation use it in the lent season daily spiritual practice.

Participant demographic :

The participants were bishops, clergies and youth ministers, and members of the congregation. I selected the members from my congregation and other churches. In the selection process, I tried to include women and men from different age groups. I gave special attention to young people because of the urgent situation in my ministry context.

Summarize what I learned from the discussion on the prototypes.

What worked?

At first, the plan was to send the prototypes with questioners but to have the participants' responses on time, I invited them face to face and via zoom and described the two prototypes and asked them their reactions. As a result, all participants answered my questions concerning the two prototypes.

What could be improved?

For Some people, the project is very important, and they want to have more time to study in-depth to respond to their reaction with more understanding. For some, the subject by itself is new. They are not familiar with the liturgical or theological terms. For that reason, they asked me to put some glossary for important terms somewhere in the documents.

What matters to the participants?

Almost for all participants, the most urgent matter is the spiritual well-being of young people. They asked me if the project addresses important issues for young people. I want to improve the project in some areas to address the concern of young people in depth.

What was your important discovery?

When I selected the two prototypes, I thought most people would select the Lenten Guide. But to my surprise, they chose the Curriculum on Spiritual formation unanimously. They told me that, as the spiritual formation is a forgotten topic in the current church, the curriculum will allow the congregation to study and practice more deeply.

Background Research Essay on Emerging Solution

In my presentation of the project prototypes, three main ideas emerged after group and one-to-one discussion:

1. How can the current project address the most critical issues in our time? For example, how the church can tackle the issue of racism and ethnic hatred and how it is related to spiritual formation.
2. How Can we use spiritual formation as a vehicle for unity among Christian churches? Division among Catholics, protestants, and Orthodox, is the scandal of Christianity in our time. How can spiritual formation be a source of ecumenical unity?
3. What kind of approach do we have to take when discussing the formation of young people's spiritual life. The church tried to reach young people with different programs without success in the past. What is the difference between those programs and this project?

Racism or ethnic hatred and Spiritual formation

Ethiopians have seen two major civil wars and widespread ethnic conflicts for the past fifty years. These conflicts and wars become a source of division and spiritual crisis for the congregation. In the long history of Ethiopia, the church was the symbol of unity, but now it has become part of the problem. Spiritual formation is one of the tools to tackle the issue of racism or ethnic hatred. To fight racism in the church context, we must first recognize racism or ethnic hatred as a spiritual problem.

One of the theological foundations of spiritual formation is that God created the human race in his image and likeness to have fellowship with them. As St. Athanasius said in *On Incarnation*, "God had mercy upon the human race, and seeing that by the principle of its own coming into being it would not be able to endure eternally, he granted them a further gift, creating human beings not simply like all the irrational animals upon the earth but making them according to his image, giving them a share of the power of his own Word, so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life which is really that of the holy ones in paradise."⁴⁹⁸ Here, Athanasius says that human beings have "the true life" a life of freedom and dignity because they have the image and likeness of God. Beyond that, because of their participation in the divine, they have communion with God. This relationship is the foundation of personhood. As Metropolitan Zizioulas, the most influential exponent of personhood said, "There is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as 'individual', conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category."⁴⁹⁹

But after the fall, this relationship changed dramatically. Metropolitan Iosif, in his article on racism said that "the fall causes in humans an ontological deviation that is revealed and operates on the basic and superior functions of the soul"⁵⁰⁰ Before the fall, human beings "resemble their own Creator through their 'participation- knowledge in God'. Because they are 'being in relationship' and 'are created in pursuit of their 'unitive' mission between the Uncreated and the created,"⁵⁰¹ after the fall the human race "breaks the relationship-communion with God; destroys the primordial wealth of the powers of the soul(notice system) and their operations."⁵⁰² This breakdown in relationship also manifested in relationship with fellow human beings. According to Metropolitan,

⁴⁹⁸ Athanasius. *On incarnation*, (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 53

⁴⁹⁹ John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985)18.

⁵⁰⁰ Iosif Bosch, " Racism as a passion of the Soul", *International Review of Mission* (Vol. 110.No.1 May 2021), 90

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, 85-86

⁵⁰² *Ibid*, 89

"racism is one of the many expression of humankind's fallen nature." For this reason, it is "a passion of the fallen nature of humankind" or "spiritual disorder."⁵⁰³

Then what is the solution? As a spiritual disorder, the healing of racism has to be spiritual. According to St. John Damascene and other orthodox theologians," the healing redemption of the Adamic nature could only be accomplished by the Christ-Messiah through the hypostatic union in his own person."⁵⁰⁴ Christ is "creative-perfective archetype of humankind, through whom not only humans but all things were made and in whom all things are recaptured and perfected." For this reason, "the process of reconciliation between human beings presupposes the other one, which begins in each person and aims at reconciliation with God." And, the basis of this reconciliation has to be the "Kingdom-Dominion of equality that the God-made human came to inaugurate."⁵⁰⁵

How can we apply racial reconciliation using spiritual formation as foundation for the process? Catherine Meeks, Chairperson of the Beloved Community: Commission for Dismantling Racism,⁵⁰⁶ an organization of Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, and an outspoken advocate of racial healing answers this way: "We're Christians, so we thought, why not start by affirming we're Christians, a community of people who have committed to be on a journey with each other and to care about one another. We have a serious illness called racism. We can do something about it because we have this commitment. The Eucharist is our best way to make that affirmation. At the beginning of every training, we celebrate the Eucharist. Then the day flows from that. Throughout the day we ask people to look for the places where they are most aware of God's presence."⁵⁰⁷ Dr. Meeks's sacramental approach is very applicable in our context. In Orthodox Church, Eucharist is the center of worship. Yet, we don't connect the Eucharistic liturgy with racial harmony. If we link the church's sacramental life with racial healing, we can say the church is alive and well.

Unity of the Church and Spiritual Formation

One of the criticisms of the modern ecumenical movement is its project of unity is based on contemporary social and political ideologies instead of the rich spiritual heritage of the church. For example, the leading ecumenical organization, the World Council of Churches, became a platform

⁵⁰³ Ibid,94-95

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid,96

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid,97

⁵⁰⁶ Now it is called "Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing."

⁵⁰⁷ Catherine Meeks, "A beloved community: Christian churches can address racism through spiritual formation. U.S. Catholic October 2017, 18.

for Soviet propaganda when it exposed itself to this influence, especially during the Cold War. Much of the effort was to equate socialism with the gospel and teach "communist gospel."⁵⁰⁸

True unity comes when there is a shared value between the opposing sides. To create this shared value, some churches have begun theological dialogue—the dialogue between Catholic and Lutheran theologians on justification and St. Mary produced a good result.⁵⁰⁹ The same theological discussion took place between the Orthodox and the Reformed churches. But unfortunately, these discussions were between scholars and didn't reach the congregations. So yes, they produce theological consensus, but with little fellowship, as Ola Tjørhom points out in the most important article.⁵¹⁰

Is there a better way to unite people? Some offer hidden ecumenism, which means working together on social issues, as an alternative. They emphasize that such cooperation brings true unity.⁵¹¹ Another one is Spiritual Ecumenism. Spiritual Ecumenism is gaining momentum and should be considered in other churches as well. What is spiritual ecumenism? In short it means ecumenism around spirituality. Cardinal Walter Kasper puts it this way. "It is significant that Jesus did not express his desire for unity in a teaching or a commandment, but in a prayer to his Father. Unity is a gift from above. Since unity is a gift, it is fitting that Christians should pray for it together. Spiritual Ecumenism is called 'the soul of the whole ecumenical movement'. The work of ecumenism is rooted in the foundations of Christian spirituality, requiring more than ecclesial diplomacy and academic dialogue."⁵¹²

This new way of unity and fellowship has led many Christians of different faith traditions to pay more attention to the Spiritual Formation. One of the positive outcomes of the renewed interest in Spiritual formation is the willingness to study and practice the spiritual exercise of the ancient church. Nowadays, the desert fathers and fathers, the Benedictine and Ignatius spiritualities practiced and studied outside the Catholic and Orthodox churches. As a result, some of the best writers about monastic spirituality are protestant pastors and lay leaders with a deep appreciation

⁵⁰⁸ Gerhard Besier, "80 Years of the World Council of Churches." *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 30, no. 2 (2017), 303-306

⁵⁰⁹ John Henry Paul Reumann, Joseph A Fitzmyer, and Jerome D Quinn, . *Righteousness in the New Testament : Justification in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue*. Philadelphia, PA New York: Fortress Press ; Paulist Press, 1982.

⁵¹⁰ Ola Tjørhom, . "Fifty Years of International Catholic–Lutheran Dialogue: Much Consensus, Little Fellowship?" *Theological Studies (Baltimore)* 81, no. 1 (2020): 65-87.

⁵¹¹ Will Adam, and Graeme Smith. "Hidden Ecumenism." *Theology (Norwich)* 103, no. 816 (2000): 412

⁵¹² Cardinal Walter Kasper, *A short Summary of A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*.

of monastic spirituality. David Robinson's guide to Benedictine spirituality,⁵¹³ Kathleen Norris' reflection on monastic life⁵¹⁴ Gerald Sittser's survey of the history of Christian spirituality⁵¹⁵ are few examples of in this regard.

Youth and Spiritual formation

In my congregation and the other Ethiopian Orthodox churches in the outside world, youth issues are most pressing. On the one hand, young people are losing interest in spiritual matters. A few left the church altogether. On the other hand, young people are exposed to drugs, gang violence, and mental illness just like any other community. When it comes to youth issues, the focus is on secondary matters. Therefore, the programs and plans revolve around these issues. But the solution from these programs is temporary and superficial. It does not address the root of the problem. The root problem is spiritual. Again, even when we talk about youth and spiritual formation, the immediate focus is on adjusting these behavior of young people. There are two possible reasons for this. First, we put young people in one category. In general, young people are "viewed as immature, lacking focus and direction." In my community, this view is persistent. As a result, the Spiritual Formation Curriculum's primary goal is developing life skills like dating, coping with peer pressure and stress, etc.⁵¹⁶ The second reason is that our perception of Spiritual formation in relation to youth is misguided. Spiritual formation is more than leading an ethical life. It is more than activities and programs. As A. Cloete, said, "Spiritual formation is not some kind of trick, tool or strategy that can be employed in youth ministry, but is an integral part of our human existence. Spiritual formation is a process that we should be aware of in youth ministry, not as something that we can accomplish through the ministry, but of which we are a part of and in service of."⁵¹⁷

For both young people and adults, Spiritual Formation is the process by which we come to know our identity in Christ, know God, and be known by God. In other words, young people are "spiritual beings fearfully and wonderfully made." Then the issue of spiritual formation must be comprehensive addressing the whole person."⁵¹⁸ Using James Loder's Theological Psychological approach, Gushiken gives us crucial advice on the Spiritual Formation Curriculum that we should

⁵¹³ David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010.

⁵¹⁴ Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.

⁵¹⁵ Sittser, Gerald Lawson, *Water from a Deep Well : Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2007.

⁵¹⁶ Kevin M Gushiken, "Nurturing Spiritual Identity Formation in Youth Curriculum from the Theological-Psychological Approach of James Loder." *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 319

⁵¹⁷ A. Cloete, "Spiritual Formation as Focus of Youth Ministry," *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 53, no. 3 & 4 (2012): 74

⁵¹⁸ Gushiken, Nurturing spiritual Identity, 326

design for our youth. According to Gushiken, young people come to spiritual maturity as they enter into a lifelong development. God's view is more than family and society expectations and more than their own experiences. Understanding this divine reality, which means spirituality as the center of their existence and living according to God's view, is an area of spiritual formation development for young people.

Figure 1. Identity issues based on Loder's conclusions.⁵¹⁹

	Area of Spiritual Formation (discovering God's view)	
	Bodily	
Societal Expectations of Space/Time (focused/Goal Oriented)	God's view of time (present-obedience/future trust)	Personal Expression of Space/Time (Individual Expression)
	Ideology	
Family Values (taught from childhood)	God's value/belief System (biblical-theology)	Personal Worldview (questioning leading to adoption)
	Authority	
High View (leadership/ control)	God's call in life (content as leader or follower)	Free Spirited (independence)
	Love	
Intimacy (emotional connection)	God's presence (divine omnipresence)	Loneliness (isolation)
	Work	
Achievement (self-worth)	God's redemption (worth as child of God)	Emptiness (self-despair)

Conclusion

My conversation with stakeholders was very fruitful and encouraged me to examine my project from different angles and carefully study the current state of the church. Of course, this project requires patience and a lot of time. But the church will benefit greatly if it is completed, including the input from stakeholders. It will also help alleviate the spiritual crisis that plagued the Ethiopian church and society in general.

Most Viable Prototype (MVP)

My discussion with stakeholders and in-depth study of the two prototypes concluded that the project has to be a Spiritual Formation Course curriculum based on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's liturgical and monastic texts. Therefore, although the second prototype, the Spiritual Guide based on St. Yared's hymn for the Great Lent, may be published independently in the future, I have chosen to include it in this Spiritual Formation Curriculum. It will be one of the major sections of the curriculum where we will discuss the non-eucharistic hymn and spiritual formation.

Since it takes a lot of time to write the curriculum or textbook for the course, I plan to start working now and, God willing, present it to the project manager in September 2022 and receive the comments and suggestions,

Developing this course requires the knowledge of the history and theology of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, the liturgical and monastic books, and their historical background. As a priest who has served the church for the last twenty years, I have an intimate relationship with the church's culture, spirituality, and literary world. I am also planning to use some traditional church scholars as resource persons. They are the repository of the church's liturgical oral tradition from our forefathers and mothers.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 326

Appendix

A. Prototypes

Curriculum of spiritual formation based on liturgical literature of EOTC.

(Low Resolution presented for discussion)

1. Introduction: Spiritual formation in Ethiopian Orthodox Church

In this section, we will define what Spiritual Formation is, and the role of Spiritual Formation in Orthodox theology and spirituality. We also look at Spiritual Formation in the Ethiopian Orthodox church tradition. Finally, we also explore the source material used to study the Ethiopian Orthodox Spirituality.

2. Liturgy and Spiritual formation in EOTC

Learning Objective

After we finish this lesson, we will learn about

- + The meaning of Liturgy
- + Liturgy in the Old Testament
- + Liturgy in the New Testament
- + Liturgy and spiritual formation

2.1 What is liturgy ⁵²⁰

- + The word " liturgy came from ancient Greek public life. (Elitorgia, leitosis= related to the people and ergon=work.
- + In ancient Greek, the word indicates voluntary service to the community or government in times of war.
- + The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the word liturgy to describe the worship of Yahweh by the assembly of Israelites. (Ex 28:43, 2 Chr 13:10)
- + The New Testament writers also used it as a word for the temple and religious service. For example, when Luke speaks of Zachary's service at the temple, he uses the word liturgy (Luke 1:23). Paul also calls himself " liturgies of Christ Jesus o the Gentiles" (Rom 15:16), using the word about the collection for the poor and the services to himself (2 Cor 9:12, Phil 2:30.

⁵²⁰ Most of the discussion in this section came from John H Miller, "The Nature and Definition of the Liturgy." *Theological Studies* 18, no. 3 (September 1957): 325–56.

- + The writer of the Hebrew⁵²¹ also uses the word liturgy to describe the priestly work of Jesus Christ. He said, " We have such a high priest . . . a minister (leitourgios, liturgist) of Holies ... But now He has obtained a superior ministry (leitourgias, liturgy)...."⁵²²
- + In the apostolic writings, for example, in Didache⁵²³ and Clement of Rome⁵²⁴ the word indicates any communal religious or spiritual activities.
- + In the latter patristic period, the word liturgy is closely associated with the Eucharistic celebration. The apostolic Constitution of Hippolytus, the Liturgy of St. Basil, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom of the 4th century indicate this trend.

2.1.2 Definition of Liturgy

- + The most common definition is " liturgy is the public worship of the church." This definition is primarily depend on the the greek root word, and it indicate its communal activity.
- + On the same line, Thorson difine liturgy as "the order of rites and rituals performed during regular Christian gatherings and on holy days."⁵²⁵ Here also the emphasis is more about rituals, order and regulation of the rituals. It didn't describe the nature or the content of liturgy.
- + Alikiviadis C. Calivas difine that " the liturgy in all of its expressions is a festival of faith, a celebration of the gift of Knowledge of the Holy Trinity, a reaffirmation of the new life that comes from the Triune God."⁵²⁶
- + Calivas's definition explain three things. First, Liturgy is a celebration, a public celebration of the faithful. Second The liturgical celebration comes from participation in the communion with Holy Trinity. Third, It is also the reaffirmation of the new life.

2.2 What is happening in the liturgy?

- + " In the liturgy the Son and the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is present to his people, fulfilling his promise to be in their midst When they gather together in his Name (Mat. 18:20)"⁵²⁷
- + In the liturgy, as Olivier Clement said, " the eternal God, the unfathomed deep beyond all, takes us to himself as a father his child. He admits us to an area of non death... His sweetness invades our heart, we thirst for him, we long for all humankind to share this Joy of ours, we pray that all may be saved."⁵²⁸

⁵²¹ According to Orthodox Tradition St. Paul is the writer of the letter.

⁵²² Miller, the nature and definition of the liturgy, 327

⁵²³ Didache 15,1

⁵²⁴ Clement of Rome, Epistle to Coronthians 40,2-5

⁵²⁵ "Liturgy." In Donald A. Thorsen, The IVP Pocket Reference Series: Pocket Dictionary of Christian Spirituality, (Downers Gorge, IL: IVP, 2018),74 .

⁵²⁶ Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Essays in Theology Liturgy: Aspects of Orthodox Worship*, Vol.3 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press,2003)2

⁵²⁷ Ibid,6

⁵²⁸ Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press,1995),199

- + In liturgy through the the " presence and the action of Christ, time is sanctified."⁵²⁹ The liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church starts with the proclamation of these words. " How awesome is this day and how marvelous this hour wherein the Holy Spirit will descend from heaven and overshadow and hallow this sacrifice." ⁵³⁰
- + Liturgy is the mystery of incarnation in action. The Son of God " broke into cosmic time and human history" through his incarnation.⁵³¹ As Paul said, " when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Gal. 4:4-5.) " In the person of Jesus Christ, God lived and accomplished human salvation in time and space."⁵³²
- + In the liturgy we break into the eternal time and be at the Calvary to see the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. For that reason, " liturgical time is... the time of Christ which extends itself into the time of the church." The past and the present unified and become " today."⁵³³

2.3. Liturgy and Spiritual formation EOTC

2.4. Liturgy in the Old Testament and New Testament

2.5. Non Eucharistic and Eucharistic liturgy in EOTC

2.7 Liturgy in our Time

2.8 Conclusion

3. The Ethiopian Orthodox Liturgical calendar and its role in the spiritual formation

This section will discuss the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's liturgical calendar, its feasts and fasts, and their place in the spiritual life of the faithful. At the Church's traditional school, Numeracy is one of the four major departments. St. Yared, the first liturgical composer of the Ethiopian Church, played a crucial role in the liturgical calendar based on the Julian calendar. St. Yared recorded the hymns for the seasons of the year, the major and minor feasts of the Lord, the feasts of St. Mary, and the feasts of the saints. The Church also has seven fasting seasons. These feasts and fasting seasons have a profound effect on the congregation's spiritual life. We will look at this in more detail in this section.

3.1 Time and space in the Liturgy

3.2 Liturgical Calendar in EOTC

3.3 The nine major feasts of our Lord in EOTC

3.4 The nine minor feasts of our Lord in EOTC

3.5 The feasts of our Lady Mary

3.6. The feasts of the saints

3.7 The seven fasting season of the EOTC

3.8 Conclusion

⁵²⁹ Thomas Merton, "Time and Liturgy", *Worship* 31.1 Dec. 1969, 2

⁵³⁰ Marcos Daoud. *Liturgy Ethiopian Church*. (New York, NY:Taylor and Francis, 2013),18

⁵³¹ Anscar J Chupungco, ed. *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Volume V : Liturgical Time and Space. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000.)xx.

⁵³² Ibid

⁵³³ Ibid,77

4. The Spiritual formation in Eucharistic Liturgy of EOTC

The liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is divided into three main parts. The first part of the liturgy is the preparatory part of the liturgy. It is time for the priests and the people to prepare for liturgy. At this time, the lead priest prays on the holy utensils, vestments, and the altar. He also prays the prayer of the penitent (ጸሎተ ንስሐ) for himself, for the congregation and to those who serve with him at the liturgy. The second section is Liturgy of the Word. In this part of the liturgy, the holy scriptures, Paul's letters, the general epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the gospels are read. According to the early church tradition, the catechumens participate only in this part of the liturgy. The third part is the central part of the liturgy. It is the Eucharistic thanksgiving of the holy communion called (Anaphora). Currently, the Ethiopian Church uses 14 Anaphoras in its Eucharistic liturgy. Again according to the ancient practice, the participants in this part of the liturgy have to be those who were baptized. The liturgy includes prayer, scripture reading, singing, prostration, confession, and worshiping with the faithful. This section will explore how the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy formed the congregation's spiritual life.

- 4.1 The role of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the EOTC spirituality
- 4.2 The main section of the Eucharistic Liturgy of EOTC
- 4.3 The fourteen Anaphoras of the EOTC and their spiritual themes
- 4.5 The Eucharistic liturgy and preaching
- 4.6 The Eucharistic liturgy and youth Choir
- 4.7 Conclusion

5. St Yared and his work

St. Yared is the most influential figure in the worship and spiritual life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. St. Yared not only composed the spiritual melody of the Church but also laid the foundation for the interpretation of Scripture, a spiritual poem, the Church's teaching on spirituality. He also profoundly affected the Church's liturgical calendar, with hymns dedicated to the feasts and fasting seasons.

To study the spiritual life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one must first look carefully at the works of St. Yared. St. Yared has given us four works that have a profound and timeless effect on the overall life of the Church. They are Dəgg^wa, Zəmmarē, Mäwasə'ət and Mə'əraf. Some scholars consider the Lenten Dəgg^wa to be one of the five works of St. Yared. As a result, they listed that the works of St. Yared are five collections of hymns.⁵³⁴ In this section, I will discuss these major works and their spiritual themes, and how they shaped the spiritual teaching of the Church.

6. Sacramental theology and spiritual formation in Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Although the Orthodox Church believes that every spiritual activity in the church is mysteries, the seven sacraments considered mysteries are Baptism, Chrismation (holy Meron), Holy Communion, Repentance (Confession), and Holy Matrimony, Holy Order, and Holy unction of the sick. In this

⁵³⁴ Habtä Maryam Wärqənäh and others, eds. *Ämäsətu Säwatəwä Zēmawoç* [The Five Compendiums of Melodies] (Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam H.I.M. Printing Press, 1968).

section, we will look at the role of these seven mysteries in the spiritual life of the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

7. Spiritual Disciplines in the Liturgical tradition of EOTC.

Spiritual disciplines are a daily occurrence of the Christian life. They are given to us as tools to develop spiritual habits, and they are necessary to fight the world, the flesh, and Satan. Through these disciplines, we can approach God by looking into ourselves and understanding the world and the times we live in. The Orthodox Church received this wonderful exercise from monastic fathers and mothers with their more profound understanding. This section will look at Sabbath Silence Prostration, Prayer, Singing, Almsgiving, Communion, hospitality, and Obedience and what it means in our daily spiritual life.

8. Challenges and opportunities in the spiritual life of the EOTC.

Ethiopia's political and social crisis has profoundly affected its religious institution. Likewise, the global political and spiritual crisis also has its implications. Thus, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church members face significant challenges in the twenty-first century. Yet, at the same time, because of the church's spiritual values, the church's spiritual tradition has the potential to bring Christianity to life. In this section, we will look at these challenges and opportunities.

Spiritual guide for lent season based on the Spiritual Exercise of St. Yared, the composer

(Sample prepared for project prototype discussion)

1. Introduction: St. Yared hymn and spiritual formation

Put the hymn of St. Yared first.

Spiritual hymns play a vital role in spiritual formation. The book of Psalms, for example, is the most important hymn in Jewish and Christian spirituality. Likewise, St. Yared's hymns play a vital role in the spiritual life of EOTC. There is no spiritual leader in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church who has been as influential as St. Yared.

One of the works of St. Yared, which is sung during the Great Fast (the Lenten Fast), is his work

called the Lenten Dagg^wa. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox church tradition, the great lent

has eight weeks. St. Yared gave a name for each week and composed a hymn for each day of the week divided into liturgical hours. These weeks are

First Week of Lent (The Preparatory week)

Second Week of Lent (Holiness Week)

Third Week of Lent (Synagogue Week)

Fourth Week of Lent (The Paralytic Week)

Fifth Week of Lent (The Mount Olive Week)

Sixth Week of Lent (The Good Servant Week)

Seventh Week of Lent (The Nicodimus Week)

Eighth Week of Lent (The Holy Week)

In this section, we will look at the life of St. Yared and his role in the Ethiopian Church. We will also explore the place of Lent in the Christian tradition, in particular, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

The following four lenten guides are taken as a sample from the first four days of the first week of Lent.

First Week of Lent (The Preparatory week)

The Eve of the First Week of Lent

A. Remember:

As seen in the introduction, Lent is a time of great spiritual exercise. In the history of the Church, the saints, known for their great spiritual work, benefited greatly from this fast. So, likewise, we can benefit greatly from it if we follow their example.

B. Before you start:

1. Thank God for bringing you to this great fast.
2. During this fast, dedicate yourself to God so that you can grow spiritually.

C. From St. Yared Chant

"Be like a wise person,
 The one who fasts and prays,
 The one who asks for forgiveness of sin.
 Walk in righteousness, and you might find goodness.
 Honor the Sabbath; learn to do right;
 Go in righteousness, and you might find goodness.
 Go in righteousness, and you might find goodness." ⁵³⁵

D. Reflection Questions

1. Why is St. Yared considered a person who fasts and prays and asks for forgiveness of sins as a wise person?
1. Is your standard of wisdom the same as that of St. Yared?
2. What is the connection between fasting, prayer, and asking for forgiveness of sins? Compare the St. Yared's with our Lord's teaching on Matthew 17:21 and James 5:16.

E. Spiritual Practice

⁵³⁵ Mengistu Gebre Ab. ed. ጳጳስ ድጋ ዘቅዱስ ያሬድ [St. Yared's Dəgg^wa for Lent] (no printing press, 2015, 1

The spiritual truths we find in the hymn of St. Yared apply to our daily lives. Moreover, many of St. Yared's Hymns guide us on how to apply these truths in our lives. In this hymn, we find three commands: Walk in righteousness, honor the Sabbath, and learn to do right.

Sunday of the First Week of Lent

A. Remember:

This is the first Sunday of Lent. Since the apostles' days, the first day of the week has been a day of worship and prayer for Christians. St. Yared calls Sunday a Christian Sabbath. For example, in his Easter Sunday Mäzmur⁵³⁶, he said, " Today, on the Christian Sabbath, there is joy."

However, this does not mean that St. Yared forgets the original Sabbath day, Saturday. Like for Sundays, he also composed in honor of the Sabbath.

B. Before you start:

1. Give thanks to God for this day.
2. Think of how the holy apostles and the first Christians felt when they met regularly on the first day of the week after the Lord's resurrection: Be in that spirit as well.

C. From St. Yared Sunday Mäzmur

Serve God with fear, rejoice him with trembling.

His mercy endures forever,

and his righteousness endures to all generations.

We are his people.

Enter into his court with thanksgiving,

and into his gate, with praise (v.4)

His mercy endures forever,

⁵³⁶ In St. Yared's works, the word Mäzmur refers to one of the most important hymns sung before the Eucharistic liturgy. St. Yared composed a hymn for each of the Sundays of the year.

and his righteousness endures to all generations.

We are his people.

Let us fast, let us love our neighbor, and let us love one another

His mercy endures forever,

and his righteousness endures to all generations.

We are his people.

Honor the Sabbath and do justice.

The Sabbath was made for man, Mark 2:27

His mercy endures forever,

and his righteousness endures to all generations.

We are his people.

I will sing of mercy and justice;

I will sing praises., I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

His mercy endures forever,

and his righteousness endures to all generations.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.⁵³⁷

D. Reflection Questions:

1. What do you think are the obstacles to serving God and pleasing him? Have these things happened in your life? What did you do to avoid it?
2. St. Yared's hymns are based entirely on the Bible, especially the Psalms. For example, today's Mezmur is composed of Ps. 2:11; Ps.99(100): 4-5) and from (Ps.100 (101). Do you read your Bible daily to read? What role does God's Word play in your daily life?
3. Is Sabbath observance a part of your spiritual life? If not, why?

⁵³⁷ ጸሎ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያሬድ St. Yared's Dəgg^wa for Lent, 2

E. Spiritual practice

Sabbath in St. Yared's Lenten Hymns

In the hymns of St. Yared, honoring the Sabbath is one of the continuous themes. According to St. Yared, God made the Sabbath because He loves humankind. On the purpose of the Sabbath, he said, "God gave us the Sabbath, to rest and to send praise for his glorious name and offer pure prayer in this day." When St. Yared speaks of the Sabbath, he speaks of Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, and the first Sabbath, Saturday. For example, he quotes from the Torah: "He sent down the Torah to the children of Israel. . . Moses commanded them to keep the Sabbath. And he said to them, Do your work six days. But on the seventh day, you should rest (Ex. 34:21)

Speaking of the benefit of honoring the Sabbath, he said, "He who observes the Sabbath will find rest, life everlasting." Then he said, " God made the Sabbath rest for the people to take away sorrow and an evil thought from us and that he may fill our mind with grace he made the Sabbath rest for the people, And he rested from all his work."⁵³⁸ For St. Yared, observance of the Sabbath is not an empty religious ritual. Since this kind of view led many to a miserable life, he points out how we can avoid that pitfall. He sang in many places that we should honor the Sabbath in righteousness, truth, and purity of heart.

Monday of the First Week of Lent (Preparatory Week)

A. Remember:

Although Sunday is the first day of the week, this is the first day of Lent fasting. According to the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, it is called the entrance of fasting. A special lectionary reading is composed for this day. On this day, St.Yared reminds us to think about our own spiritual life; he also says that the church, which speaks of its faith in Christ, is full of mercy and leads the saints to joy and peace.

⁵³⁸ Ibid,4-6

B. Before you start:

1. Come to God in thanksgiving on this first day of fasting;
2. During this fasting season, Ask for help from God for struggles within your life. Ask for his grace.

C. From St. Yared Chant

Restore me, O God, from my error,
That I may live and keep your word,
Let me learn and understand your commandments.
Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

Just as you restored Paul when he was a persecutor,
and the robber you chose within a second,
Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

As you turned the tax collector into the evangelist,
To be on the pinnacle of power,
Restore me, O Lord, with your kindness.

You restored your people Israel,
Restore me, too, your servant.
Restore me, O Lord, in your kindness,
Give me joy and your salvation.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁹ ጸሎት ድን ዘቅዱስ ያሬድ St. Yared's Dəgg^wa for Lent, 16-17

D. Reflection Questions

1. In this chant, Yared mentions four examples of spiritual restoration. Which example relates to your life story?
2. This chant show how Yared's relationship with God is intimate. What is the secret of this spiritual intimacy? Do you have this kind of close relationship with God?
3. What is the relationship between joy and salvation? Do you have joy in your life?

E. Spiritual Exercise

Repentance is the foundation of spiritual life. The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Unfortunately, many Christians are trying to lead Christianity without repentance. This unrepentant life leads to a life full of shame and guilt. What do you plan to do to make repentance the center of your spiritual life in this fasting season?

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent (Preparatory Week)

A. Remember:

St. Yared sings about the church on this day. He says that the church is built up by the Holy Spirit, sealed with the blood of Christ. He advises Christians on how to live in peace and avoid the futility of this world. During this fast, he says, "Let your eyes fast, let your mouth fast, and let your ears fast from hearing evil."⁵⁴⁰

B. Before you start:

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid,21.

1. Praise God for all the good that He has done for you. Then, Tell God things you are struggling with and have not been able to trust in God.
2. Be in silence in God's presence for 5 minutes.

C. From St. Yared Chant

My beloved brothers and sisters,
 What profit do we have from this earth's wealth?
 Have you not heard of the corruption of the world?
 That everyone dies.
 He who is steadfast at soul,
 And trusts in God will be saved.⁵⁴¹

The sun which never sets,
 The lamp inextinguishable,
 The rich who do not need to borrow,
 The adornment of the apostles,
 The wealth of the poor,
 The refuge of the oppressed,
 We always praise you, O Merciful King.⁵⁴²

Follow the path of peace,
 And walk on it,
 Walk with good works,
 For the world is passing away,

⁵⁴¹ Ibid,20

⁵⁴² Ibid,21

Its passion is also passing away,

Everything will grow old like a garment.

Seek Christ's kingdom and his righteousness.⁵⁴³

D. Reflection Questions

1. Which of these chants speak to you directly? Why?
2. What are some of the obstacles to waking in peace?
3. St. Yared calls God the lamp inextinguishable, the sun which never sets. What is God to you?

E. Spiritual exercise

In his hymns, St. Yared speaks about the futility of this world and the danger of relying on earthly wealth and possessions. Referring to what the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, St. Yared tells us that we must seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of Christ. When our hearts are filled with the wealth and possessions of this world, anxiety dominates our minds. We will be far from the peace of God. On the other hand, when we trust God, God's joy becomes our peace in our daily struggle.

B. Survey questioners

1. Which of the two prototypes is beneficial for the church?
2. What are the pros and cons of the prototype you choose?
3. Why didn't you choose the other prototype?
4. Is there a way you believe your chosen prototype should improve?
5. What problem do you think will happen when the prototype you choose is implemented?
6. For youth ministry, how vital is this prototype?
7. To church leaders: Are you willing to use this prototype in the church?

⁵⁴³ Ibid,21

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