

Sermon about: “The priorities in our lives”

Main points of the sermon:

1- Introduction about the Holy Lent:

1-1: The Holy Lent is a Journey:

2- The Holy Lent is the holiest fast in our Coptic Orthodox Church:

2-1: Since Our Lord Jesus Christ fasted this fast on our behalf,

2-2: because the Holy Lent is an apostolic fasting.

2-3: because the church designated a week of preparation to precede the forty days fasting.

2-4: since the Church also designated three days of Jonah’s fasting before the Holy Lent by two weeks.

2-5: The Holy Lent is the holiest fast since it is an ascetic fasting,

2-6: As the Holy Lent is a period of prayer,

2-7: As the Holy Lent is a period of repentance.

2-8: As the Holy Lent is a period of reconciliation with others.

2-9: As the Holy Lent is a period of practicing mercy.

3- The priorities in our Lives:

3-1: The first ever priority in our lives is to seek the kingdom of God:

3-2: Then we need to love the Lord from all our hearts , souls and minds:

3-3: : We need to set one of our priorities as to not condemn any one :

3-4: Another one of the priorities is that we need to deliver to all the sound faith.

3- Introduction about the Holy Lent:

1-1: The Holy Lent is a Journey:

It is our journey from this world to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Holy Lent is the spiritual journey that leads us to our resurrection, the end of the old and the beginning of the new. In our Journey we need to follow the steps of our fathers the apostles in their journey taking with them the power from our Lord and not associating ourselves with anything else from this world as we read in *Luke 9:1-6 New King James Version (NKJV)* **9 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 And He said to them, “Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.**

4 “Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”

6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”

2- The Holy Lent is the holiest fast in our Coptic Orthodox Church:

Because of the followings reasons:

2-1: Our Lord Jesus Christ fasted this fast on our behalf, as we read in *New King James Version (NKJV)* **4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.**

2-2: The Holy Lent is an apostolic fasting , In the Apostolic Constitutions , a fourth Century compilation of treatises on Early Christian doctrine , Spirituality , and worship , we find the following description of the forty – day fast:” after that (i.e. The Feast of the Theophany) , your are to observe the fast of the forty days , “in which you are to remember the Lord’s way of life and His commandments ‘ this fast is to be observed before the fast of Easter , beginning on Monday and ending on Friday . After these days , , end this fast and begin the holy week of the Passover , all of you fasting with fear and trembling , and praying during it for the departed”¹

2-3: The church designated a week of preparation to precede the forty days fasting as the aim of this is to prepare ourselves in a spiritual manner.

¹ - Apostolic Constitutions V.13:3-4

2-4: The Holy Church designated also three days of Jonah’s fasting before the Holy Lent by two weeks, to teach us the importance of repentance and many other lessons.

2-5: The Holy Lent is the holiest fast as it is an ascetic fasting (abstinence), as the church teaches us to fast until Sunset. The 12th Century historian of Coptic Canon Laws, Ibn Al – Assal² , refers to several restrictions during the Holy Lent , he mentioned that: there should be no celebration of the martyrs during the weekdays of the Holy Lent , there will be no weddings ... believers should fast until the 11th hour (5:00 P.M.), women were not allowed to wear jewellery. Also His Holiness Pope Tawadros II³ said:” **we need to practice 12 Metania (prostrations) each day of the Holy Lent and increase this number each day during the Holy Lent**”.

2-6: As the Holy Lent is a period of prayer, we should be praying more than one Holy Mass each day of the Holy Lent and we are used to and supposed to pray all the hours of the Holy Agpia until the Compline prayer⁴.

2-7: As the Holy Lent is a period of repentance, during the third Sunday of the Holy Lent , the Holy Church offers us the gospel reading of the prodigal Son as a model of repentance , which requires awakening , confession of sins , leaving the place of sin , and returning to the Heavenly Father with confidence in His mercies and acceptance as we read in **Luke 15:17-19 New King James Version (NKJV)** ¹⁷ **“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”**

2-8: As the Holy Lent is a period of reconciliation with others, as we plead and ask God to forgive our sins. We must also forgive those who have sinned against us, let us read what our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned about forgiveness in **Matthew 18:21-35 New King James Version (NKJV)** ²¹ **Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”**

²² **Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought**

² - Magmou Al- Safwy Ibn Al- Assal , translated by Dr. William A. Hanna, based on translation of the Arabic text published by Hegumen Father Philothaos Awad in 1886 AD, ch.15

³ - His Holiness Pope Tawadros weekly Sermon on Wednesday Feb 19th ,2014 in the Great Cathedral , the Papal Residence, El Anba Rewis , El Abasia , Cairo , Egypt.

⁴ - The Compline prayer in the book of hours (Agpeya) of the Coptic Orthodox Church corresponds to the Twelfth Hour of the day , which is at 6:00 P.M.

to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet^[29] and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

2-9: As the Holy Lent is a period of practicing mercy, Isaiah the prophet mentions to us the importance of doing mercy during our fasting as one of the pillars of the accepted fasting, let us read *Isaiah 58:6-7 New King James Version (NKJV)*

⁶ "Is this not the fast that I have chosen:

To loose the bonds of wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

To let the oppressed go free,

And that you break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;

When you see the naked, that you cover him,

And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

4- The priorities in our Lives:

3-1: The first ever priority in our lives is to seek the kingdom of God:

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in *Matthew 6:31-33 New King James Version (NKJV)* *31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

3-2: Then we need to the love our Lord from all our hearts , souls and minds:

as we read what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 12:28-30 New King James Version (NKJV)²⁸ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.'³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. 'This is the first commandment.

3-3: : We need to set one of our priorities as to not condemn any one :

Let us read this amazing story which in **John 8:3-11**New King James Version (NKJV)

³ Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,⁴ they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.⁵ Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"⁶ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

⁷ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.⁹ Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

3-4: one of the priorities is that we need to deliver to all the sound faith.

1Corinthians 15:3-7, New King James Version (NKJV)³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

Then we must share the preaching of the Gospel of peace to the whole world, as our Lord said in **Mark 13:10** And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

