

Kadosh Marian Voice

Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness



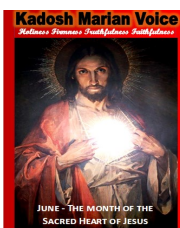
JUNE

THE MONTH OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Q2 2023 Edition

CONTENTS

4	THE EDITORIAL <i>Rev Joseph Xavier</i>
6	AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL PRECEPTS & PRACTICES IN LIFE <i>H.G. Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios</i>
11	MARY & THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST <i>Rev Henry Avemaria (Ph.D)</i>
14	THE EVER-LIVING MOTHER <i>Rev Pious Mallier</i>
15	PATIENCE LEADS TO SUCCESS <i>Rani Thomas</i>
19	BOLD PRAYERS <i>Eva Thompson</i>
21	THE SCAPULAR—A WEAPON AGAINST THE DEVIL <i>Rakhu Augustus</i>
22	OHR <i>Lara J M</i>
25	DAUGHTER OF SAIGON (SHORT STORY) <i>Sheela Daniel</i>
28	HARDENED HEART <i>Nisha Jacob</i>
31	KADOSH MARIAN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY



Catholics dedicate the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in veneration and in gratitude for His merciful heart and His redeeming love for mankind. Cover page is dedicated this time for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. More details are available in the editorial section in page 4.

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ABOUT KADOSH MARIAN MINISTRIES

“Kadosh” In Jewish thinking, “The Holy One, blessed be He” (hakkadosh, barukh hu) is one of the most commonly used designation for God. **“Marian”** is a given name, the Hebrew meaning of Marian is “the precious one” or “unique from the word” or “Mariam”

Kadosh Marian Ministries is a non-profit organization with its roots across the world. It is also established since 1994 as an approved charitable trust in UK, subsequently in India and New York. Kadosh Marian Ministries obtained approval for the area of operation to include USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa with the following objectives: -

- Conducting certificate oriented theological courses duly awarded by Catholic Dioceses, and various international accredited universities.
- Conducting Charismatic Renewal services to revive the trooping spirit of the flagging faithful.
- Administering Sacraments by ordained Catholic Priests and Bishops.
- Promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- Conducting guidance, counselling and healing through deliverance services to the needy, lonely and the afflicted ones.
- Participating to feed 200 poor people daily.
- Participating to provide pension to 75 widows monthly.
- Participating to provide scholarship for 302 children annually.
- Visiting refugee camps and providing food, clothes and medicines.
- Contributing to build five homes for poor families in a year minimum.

We welcome you to join us, slake the thirst, and enjoy the abundance of Spirit of the Sovereign Lord – Immanuel. All the above charitable activities are routed in consultation with Catholic Priests and Bishops.

Kadosh Marian Institute of Theology	Kadosh Marian Music Band	Kadosh Marian Charitable Trust
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Kadosh Marian Children’s Ministry	Kadosh Marian Evangelization Ministry	Kadosh Marian Youth Ministry
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EDITORIAL

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The season of the liturgical year invites us to meditate on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I start to pen this editorial praying to the sacred heart of Jesus.

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore You, I love You, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer You this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to Your will. Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in You and for You.



On examining the historicity of the origin of the Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus, we understand that St. Margaret Maria Alacoque had a private apparition of Jesus in 1673, while she was in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In 1765 Pope St. Clement 13th declared this as a national Feast and in 1836 Pope St. Pius 1 proclaimed this as a global Feast of the Catholic Church.

FR JOSEPH XAVIER
MANAGING EDITOR

Celebrating the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we are invited to contemplate the depths of divine love that flows from the heart of Christ. This feast invites us to ponder the immeasurable compassion and mercy that emanate from the Sacred Heart, reminding us of the boundless love that God has for each one of us. It is a celebration that beckons us to open our hearts and receive the transformative power of Christ's love, allowing it to permeate every aspect of our lives. Thus, we are called to encounter the heart of God Himself, a heart that beats with a love so profound that it can heal, restore, and bring us into communion with Jesus. The heart of Jesus beats with boundless love for each one of us, regardless of our flaws, failures, or sins. We are chosen and cherished by Him, not because we are deserving, but because His love knows no bounds. The Sacred Heart of Jesus embodies these divine attributes. It is in His heart that we find solace, healing, and forgiveness. Jesus' heart is open wide to receive us, embrace us, and pour out His love upon us. He desires to heal our wounded hearts and bring us into communion with His merciful and loving heart. His heart is the sanctuary where we find refuge and peace, the place where our worries and anxieties find relief. In the heart of Jesus, we find the perfect model of humility and gentleness, qualities we are called to cultivate in our own lives.

Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to St. Margaret Mary between 1673-1675. Among the words spoken to her, she heard Jesus make 12 promises to those who would respond to the pleading of His Heart and make an effort to return His Love.

The Promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary

- 1) I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.
- 2) I will establish peace in their homes.
- 3) I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
- 4) I will be their secure refuge during life, and above all, in death.
- 5) I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
- 6) Sinners will find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
- 7) Lukewarm souls shall become fervent.
- 8) Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
- 9) I will bless every place in which an image of my Heart is exposed and honored.

10) I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.

11) Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart.

12) I promise you in the excessive mercy of my Heart that my all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in my disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

The teaching of Sacred Heart of Jesus is that. In the burning and wounded Sacred Heart, we see that God's heart is consumed with love for us—so much so that he was willing to suffer and die for us in the most gruesome manner. The Sacred Heart teaches us that true love is always costly, but that it always gives life. The Values of Sacred Heart of Jesus is that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is devotion to Jesus Christ Himself, but in the particular ways of meditating on His interior life and on His three-fold love – His divine love, His burning love that fed His human will, and His sensible love that affects His interior life.

The purpose of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to focus our hearts on receiving and returning His love with gratitude — with all of our heart, soul, and strength — that He may be glorified. The Prayer of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a Roman Catholic prayer composed by Pope Leo XIII.

There are 8 ways to grow in devotion to the most Sacred Heart

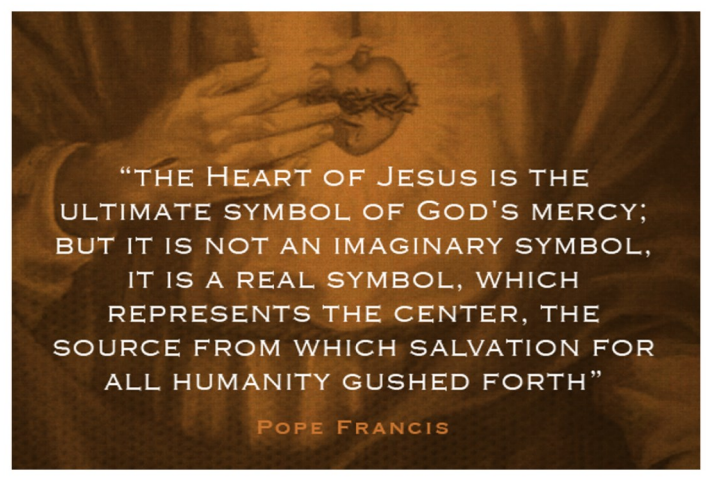
(1) Morning Offering, (2) Images of the Sacred Heart, (3) Eucharistic Adoration & Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, (4) First Friday Devotion, (5) Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (6) Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart (7) Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (8) Novena to the most sacred Heart.

Dear friends, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the font of love and the wellspring of Mercy. Therefore, being the emblem of love, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is naturally defined. The Sacred Heart is often depicted in Christian art as a flaming heart shining with divine light, pierced by the lance-wound, encircled by the crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross, and bleeding. Sometimes the image is shown shining within the bosom of Christ with his wounded hands pointing at the heart. The wounds and crown of thorns allude to the manner of Jesus' death, while the fire represents the transformative power of divine love. Therefore, it is pertinent to note that the love that flows from the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not a mere sentiment or emotion. It is a love that is sacrificial, self-giving, and transformative. It is a love that calls us to love one another as Jesus has loved us. It is a love that challenges us to extend ourselves beyond our comfort zones, to reach out to the marginalized, the forgotten, and the broken. It is a love that compels us to forgive, reconcile, and build bridges of unity. As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us take a moment to reflect on the immense love that flows from His heart. Let us open our hearts to receive this love and allow it to transform us.

I conclude this Editorial submitting our ministry to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let all members of our ministry enjoy seeking solace, inspiration and consolation from the sacred Heart of Jesus. May our hearts become more like His, reflecting the love that He has poured out for us. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be our source of inspiration, comfort, and strength as we strive to love one another and live as disciples of Christ, and to live in union with Jesus.

God bless you

Fr. Joseph Xavier.





AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL PRECEPTS AND PRACTICES IN LIFE



H.G. Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios **Metropolitan & President, Catholicos of the East & Malankara Metropolitan**

His Grace was Born on 18-12-1952 as the son of Palamoottil Mathews and Mercy. Home parish is St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral, Kollam Diocese. After completing the formal education, Joined the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam secured GST and BD degrees. His Grace took his Ph. D - Fordam University and M. R. E - Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, America. His Grace is well versed in different languages such as Malayalam, English, Greek, Hebrew, Amharic, Syriac and also took several key positions of the church. He is elected as the Metropolitan candidate on 17th February at the Malankara Association held at Sasthamkotta. He is consecrated as Metropolitan on 12th May 2010 at Mar Elia Cathedral, Kottayam. His Grace is serving the Delhi Diocese as its Metropolitan.

In an Orthodox believer's life, the Sacrament of Baptism (the preferred term is Mystery but sacrament is the common term in usage) is the rite by which she/he is initiated into the mystical life of the Holy Church. By the term "mystical" we mean the hidden aspect of God's salvific plan revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, with special emphasis on His redemptive sacrifice on Calvary and transforming resurrection (Col 1:26). Therefore, the Sacrament of Baptism has a foundational role and significance for the believer, becoming the optic through which life is viewed, interpreted and lived. Created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28), man and woman are grafted into the Body of Christ, the Church (Rom 11:17ff) so as to follow the life-giving paradigm of the prototype, the Saviour Jesus. In fact, St. Paul states that this is precisely what baptism implies: the believer dies to the old self in being immersed in the water, just as Christ died, and as He rose from the dead, so also the baptizand is endowed with new life of the resurrection (Rom 6:1-4). Thus, one can appreciate how the Sacrament of Baptism becomes the bedrock of a believer's life and existence.

But it is here that the problems arise. As the Orthodox Church generally adheres to infant baptism, the entire service is experienced as a proxy, as the child is unable to fathom the depth-dimensions of what the sacrament of baptism entails. The exor-



cism of Satan and the acceptance of the faith in Christ, transmitted by the Prophets, Apostles and Holy Church Fathers, are expressed by the godparent. The child is, of course, oblivious to the deeper dimensions of the sacramental rite, such as the immersion and Chrismation; what intensifies this problem is that there is no formalized procedure by which she/he witnesses this rite so as to grasp its meaning at some later moment. Perhaps the single most issue that aggravates the significance of this sacrament is that neither the parents nor the godparent are involved in teaching the child the meaning and significance of baptism at home and its implications for life. So, the situation encountered in the Church is one where the *sacramental act* is conducted, but the *sacramental meaning and experience* is totally lost to the baptizand.

Antecedents of Christian Baptism

Ritual lustrations were a part of early Israel's religious observances, especially in terms of maintaining a person's purity and the requirements for purification from sin. Not only were priests obligated to undertake washings after certain polluting situations (Lev 16: 4,24), but daily life itself involved such washings, depending on certain conditions (Lev 15:1ff). Certain Jewish sects, such as the Essene members of the Qumran community, also adopted such washings in pursuance of their observances of purity regulations. But it was St. John the Baptist, whose ministry was characterized by baptism as a sign of repentance and renewal, that provided the grounds for the Christian initiatory rite (Mk 1:1-8; Mt 3:1-11; Lk 3: 16, 21; Jn 1:19-28). What set apart the practice of St. John was that he baptized all who came to him, both Jews and Gentiles, a feature that was reportedly reserved for proselytes alone. It would appear from the scanty traces in the Gospels that Jesus Himself had been a follower of St. John the Baptist for a while before He began His own ministry (cf. Jn 3:26). It would appear also that Jesus had no initiatory rite for those who chose to follow Him, except for His calling. And it was only after His resurrection that baptism was mandated as the act by which one was admitted into the Christian community (Mt 28: 19; Mk 16: 16' cf. also Jn 3: 5). There can be no doubt, then, that this command by the resurrected Christ provided the basis for the Apostles to baptize all who con-

fessed faith in Jesus and were accepted into the Christian Church. The Acts of the Apostles provides ample attestation that this rite soon became the distinguishing hallmark of the Christian community (Acts 2:41; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16: 33). St. Paul supposes that all Christians had undergone baptism, for he exhorts them to follow the implications of what had transpired in this initiatory rite (Rom 6:1-4), a point of view also implied by St. Peter (I Pt 3: 21).

The Baptism of Jesus as the Model for Christian Baptism



All the four gospels narrate the baptism of Jesus at the hands of St. John the Baptist (Mk 1: 9-11; Mt 13-17; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:31-34). While they contain minor variations, they all specify three facts: 1) Jesus was baptized by St. John the Baptist, 2) The Baptism is accompanied by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove upon Jesus, and 3) A voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus as the Beloved Son. There can be no room for doubt that the Evangelists did not envisage a mere narration of Jesus' baptism, but conveyed the latent idea that this was to serve as the model for all Christian baptismal experiences. So, what exactly do the narratives convey? Summarising the many encapsulated concepts, one can arrive at the following: a) the baptism of Jesus was in accordance with the will of the Heavenly Father and was seen as the installation of Jesus as the King of the heavenly Kingdom, b) the descent of the Holy Spirit was seen as empowering Jesus to fulfill His ministry, and c) the heavenly proclamation pointing to the benign rule of this newly-installed king as being radically different from all earthly reigns. From this condensed interpretation, the Gospel writers convey the message that all baptisms should be an outward symbol of the acceptance of God's will in one's life, that all who undergo such a Christian baptism are endowed with the Holy Spirit to accomplish his/her calling in life, and finally, that all such lives should be able to elicit a divine approval.

The Service of Holy Baptism

A detailed study of the Service of Baptism is not within our purview, and so for the purposes of this article, it can be condensed into three major sections:

1. **Introductory Prayers, Exorcism and Confession**
2. **Baptism**
3. **Chrismation**

1. Introductory Prayers, Exorcism and Confession of Faith

As in all services of the various sacraments, in the case of Baptism too, it commences with prefatory prayers, a Proemion and Sedro, followed by the reading of a section of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (5:20-6:4) and a Gospel Reading (Lk 3: 15-16; Jn 3:5-6), interspersed with hymns. The prayers ask God to enlighten the baptizand's mind so that she/he can reject all the forces and actions of evil and darkness and be a child of light. All life-giving salvific works are the work of the Holy Spirit, here indicated by the celebrant blowing on the child's face to symbolising the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then follows the prayer exorcising Satan and the blessing the child with the sign of the Cross. It is in this section that the godparent holds the child's hands, first the left to renounce Satan and his works, and then the right to signal faith in Christ and belief in the Faith transmitted by the Prophets, Apostles and the Holy Church Fathers. The Nicene Creed is recited here to express the basic faith of the Church. The note of joy of the casting out of evil and acceptance of Christ is completed with the child blessed with the sign of the Cross and then anointed with holy oil.



Exposure to the beliefs of other denominations, especially those that practise believer's baptism, have raised doubts about infant baptism. The major criticism is that there is no actual involvement of the child being baptised in confessing the faith of the Church. Here, it is important to bear in mind that the nature of faith is far more dynamic than a rational experience and is intrinsically connected to the faith of the parents and the believing community. Notice that in Acts 2:39 the promise of the forgiveness of sins and endowment of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the Jews who come to faith but also to their children: "For the promise is to you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord God calls to him." It is pertinent to note that St. John the Baptist is imbued with the Holy Spirit even while he was in his mother's womb (St. Lk 1:41). Not only this, but St. Paul categorically asserts that as the believing parents are holy, so are their children (I Cor 7:14). Thus, the faith of

the parents has an organic connection with that of the children, especially when we note the cohesiveness of the family in ancient times. This can be illustrated by the case of the jailer at Philippi, who confessed his faith and how his entire household was baptised (Acts 16: 33). Therefore, the faith dynamics involved in the Holy Church's practise of infant baptism goes far beyond a mere intellectual exercise, as illustrated by the evidence from the Holy Scriptures. Important instructions are provided by the Holy Church to the parents and the godparent concerning the child's baptism. All of them are enjoined to fast and pray prior to the Service of Baptism, a requirement flowing out of the above statements. And the confession of faith in Christ and renunciation of evil by the

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Galatians 3:27

godparent for the child, is to be a feature of the child's rearing, underscoring the importance of the family in establishing the Orthodox faith as a process in the baptised person's life. The parents, and the godparent, are in effect, promising before God that they assume the responsibility of ensuring that the baptised child will be taught the Orthodox faith traditions, so that she/he will grow into a likeness of Jesus Christ. Of course, the entailment of this is that the parents and the godparent become the role models of the Orthodox faith, confirming that faith is not only taught, but also caught! This renunciation of evil (Satan) and the confession of faith in Christ is sealed with the oil of gladness {holy oil}, a particular feature of the Syrian tradition, marking the joy of another soul's salvation.

2. Baptism

The second part of the Service is the immersion of the child in the water of the baptismal font into which Holy Muron has been added. The temperature of the water is moderated by using both hot and cold water, to indicate the flowing waters of the R. Jordan, in which Jesus had been baptised by St. John. The use of both these elements is important, for it is through sanctified matter that God effects the transformation. The water here is does not have the inimical and destructive character seen in the Old Testament (Gen 6: 17; Ex 14: 27-28; cf. also Jonah 2: 3); rather it has been transformed by Jesus' descent into the waters so that instead of death, the water is now a life-giving force. Similarly, the Holy Muron has been specially prepared (read Ex 30:22-25 where God commands Moses to prepare the special oil), and in this instance it is to indicate the descent of the Holy Spirit to transform the baptismal water into a life-giving element. St. Paul in Rom 6: 3-11, recalling the baptism of Christians, narrates how it is a verita-

ble identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The sanctified water is poured over the child, pointing to the death of a mere physical life, and as it is taken out of the baptismal font the idea is that it has now been raised to a new life in Christ Jesus. Observe that the baptised child is not handed to its parents, but to the god-parent to underscore the fact that it is into the community of faith that the child is now transferred. It is also important to note that the child is wrapped in white clothes, pointing to the new life received. In the early Church, all those who were baptised were so clothed in white garments to mark the new life into which they had now entered.

Even though the Nicene Creed states that there is only “one baptism for the remission of sins”, the Church Fathers insist that the cleansing effects of the baptismal waters have to be replicated in a believer’s life by tears of repentance. In fact, while St. Paul does not enumerate this in his catalogue of gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. for instance I Cor 13:1-3), nonetheless, for the spiritual giants of the Church this gift was of paramount importance. For the Syrian Church Fathers, nothing could be greater than this gift of repentance:

*The sinner is loved when his face is bathed in tears
And his mouth is closed by mourning full of sorrow
The tears which flow from the eyes of him who repents
Are cherished and loved much more than precious gems*

*If you wish to paint a picture of repentance
Do not use splendid colours, but take your tears
Tears are a feast of repentance. Come and bring them,
Come and enjoy forgiveness for your debts and sins.*

(Soutoro of Tuesday-Shehimo, Book of Common Prayers)

Thus, every believer is enjoined to experience these tears of repentance on a daily basis as a part of reliving a person’s baptismal dying to oneself and being raised to a new life with Christ Jesus. How far this is realised in a believer’s life is anybody’s guess, pointing to the deep gulf between precept and practise in a person’s life!

3.Chrismation

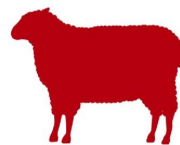
Following baptism, the child is anointed with Holy Muron, symbolising the gift of the Holy Spirit (II Cor 1: 21- 22; 5:5). Through this anointing, the baptised person is raised to three offices: a) *Prophet/Prophetess*, b) *Priest*, and c) *King/Queen*. It should be recalled that in the Old Testament, when a person was installed in any one of these positions, he was anointed with oil. A brief analysis of these three offices is required here:

a) Prophet/Prophetess: In the oft-repeated terms of scholars, prophets were more forthtellers than foretellers. In other words, they were more social analysts that predictors

of the future. They were co-opted into God’s heavenly council and given a preview of what would eventually transpire if the people did not repent and follow God’s commands (Jer 23:18). Every baptised person is to keenly listen to the voice of God, even as the young lad Samuel was able to hear it, even in the dead of night. It is so necessary to shut out the world’s tumult so that in the ensuing silence we can hear what are God’s directions for our life. It is in this listening that a believer not only hears, but also begins to understand God’s mind. After all, for the Christian life is not obedience to a set or rules and regulations, but living the way God intends for each person.

b) Priest/Priestess: Every baptised person has been conferred with Priesthood, a sign of God’s chosen community both in the Old and New Testaments. Even as the people of Israel were called to be a royal priesthood (Ex 19:6), so also the Christian community is termed a “holy priesthood” (I Pet 2:5; cf. also Rev 1:6), which forms the basis of the specialised priesthood in both Testaments. Both the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament and the Priesthood according to Melchizedek in Christ in the New Testament presuppose this fact. Just as a priest takes the bread and wine, offers (Syriac *qurbono*) it to God and receives it back as the transformed Body and Blood of Christ, so also all Christians are to offer their lives to God and to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit so that each person is able to go out into the world and radiate this transforming power, to participate in realising a new heaven and new earth.

JESUS



PRIEST



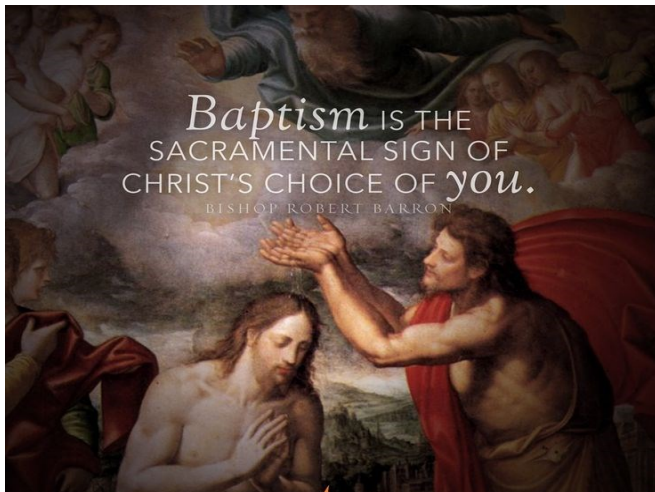
PROPHET



KING

c) King/Queen: There can be no isolated existence for the Orthodox believer, for the locus of his/her work is the larger society. If creation was considered “good” by God, then it must be His intention to finally transform it according to His original design. It follows that if God had entrusted the stewardship of creation to Adam and Eve, then Christians are now mandated to care for it and participate in God’s intention to bring about a new earth and new heaven. The Orthodox Church, therefore, believes that all creation is ultimately good and so to experience a transformation along with humankind (Rom 8:20ff). As the resurrected Jesus commissions the disciples (“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” St. Jn 20:21), so also all believers are now mandated through the power of

the Holy Spirit to make real the values of the Kingdom of God in the larger society. One has only to attentively listen to the words of St. Mary in the Magnificat (St. Luke 1:46- 55) and the Beatitudes (St. Mt 5:3-12) to understand how different are the values God has in contrast of what the world practises. It is so much easier to join the crowd, with its evil and corrupt ways of life than to take a stand for Christian principles and values. And this is where each person has to follow Jesus is making real what is the Kingdom of God/ Heaven in this world. This installation is indicated by the crowning of the child by the celebrant, so that the she/he is now seen as a sister/brother of Christ and incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church. The crowning also indicates the filial relationship that has now been bestowed upon the baptizand by the Father in recognition of being incorporated into the Body of Christ. It is for this reason that in all Orthodox Churches, the baptised person is given Holy Eucharist as the befitting conclusion to the service of Baptism. Even a brief study as this makes evident how much we have failed in carrying forward our baptismal vows. Right from our



homes and families we have consigned to oblivion what are the implications of our baptism. Is it any wonder, then, that generation after generation, lacking adequate anchoring in the Orthodox faith and experience, find other greener pastures for their spiritual nourishment? If the Orthodox faith is to become a deep rooted reality in the lives of believers and faithful, then it must begin with the family, with the parents, with godparents, all as role models who inculcate the Orthodox beliefs and practices in their children so they begin to understand and experience what is accomplished at baptism.

To revive once again the early Church's profound experience of baptism, one may suggest three measures:

1. Reiterating in the Church and the Sunday School the Importance of Family Prayers. Most of the time such an appeal falls on deaf ears, much like water off a duck's back. Perhaps, a constant repeating of the importance of retrieving the Orthodox family traditions of reading the Holy Scriptures and

prayers would be of invaluable help in laying a strong foundation for lively Orthodox faith. Now that the intensity of the epidemic has worn off, house visits by vicars could be resumed during which time emphasis on family prayers can be shared. A resolution had been taken at one of the annual OKR Sunday School Teacher's meetings to utilise the Sunday School to restore this practise of family prayers. Children were to be encouraged to ask their parents to have family prayers, at least once a day, as a means to regain the lost family spirituality. Even though this was not acted upon, this could be one avenue to ensure that future generations are deeply rooted in the Orthodox faith traditions.

2. Practise of Family Prayers: There can never be a substitute for homework, something that every student and teacher knows. This is no less true of what a family has to do to reinforce what is taught and caught in the Church. Once again, the old adage holds true- the family that prays together, stays together. Not only will the family integrity be strengthened, but it would provide the platform for children to imbibe the spirit of Orthodox faith and practise. A small time in the evening before dinner would provide a very congenial time for the family to engage in reading of the Holy Scriptures and a brief prayer, as suggested by the readily available handbooks.

3. Making the SS Students to Witness a Baptism: Viewing a baptism would create an indelible impression in the minds of the children about what happened to each one. Arrangements could be made to have either one class or more to stand in meditative silence as the celebrant conducts the baptism. This could be followed by a brief explanation of the significant aspects of baptism and its import for the believer. True, the new Sunday School curriculum does provide substantial improvement over the old in teaching the children about the sacraments. But this could be supplemented by the viewing of the Service itself, something that the child would never forget in his or her life! This study concludes with a fervent prayer that readers of this article will commit themselves to acting on the suggestions presented above. The noted liturgical theologian, Fr. Alexander Schmemman ends his book *Of Water and The Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* with these words that are most apposite: **"And above all we need a deepening of Church consciousness, of the very mind [emphasis author's] of the Church, truly a thirst and hunger for 'living water.' But I am absolutely convinced that such a recovery is not only desirable and possible, but that indeed only in it, only by a common 'rediscovery' of the true meaning of Baptism, of its fullness, beauty, power and joy, can we again make our faith 'the victory that overcomes the world' (I Jn 5:4)."**

Met.Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios

Amen



MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST



Rev Henry Avemaria (Ph.D)

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE CENTRE OF THE SHRINE OF MARY
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The Spirit of God reveals beauty, truth and goodness in every encounter without fail. This is one reason the Apostles so deeply desired the accompaniment of Mary as they waited in the Upper Room. Mary, filled with the Spirit, had a quiet attraction that drew them, interiorly, closer to God. They gathered around her for strength and insight as they pondered the full impact of Jesus' resurrection. *The first disciples knew, intuitively, that Mary dispels darkness and confusion by her presence.* She brings those around her to the Lord and to the Spirit of the Father.

According to Pope St. John Paul II in Dec. 1998 said that Mary “does not compete with the role of

the Holy Spirit” but “is called by the same Spirit to co-operate in a maternal way with him.” The Holy Spirit “continually revives the Church’s memory of Jesus’ words to the beloved disciple: ‘Behold, your mother!’ and invites believers to love Mary as Christ loved her’.

After the Ascension, the Apostles returned to the Upper Room to await the coming of the Paraclete, as we read in Acts 1:13-14: When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some

women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

MARY IN THE SPIRIT LIVING AS APOSTLES



Kathleen Beckman
Evangelist

"Mary is our sure path to a closer friendship with the Third Person of the Holy Trinity."

Mary joins the Apostles in the Cenacle. She provides a model of prayer, and encourages the Apostles to wait and pray for the Holy Spirit and pray for the Holy Spirit. She models how to be active in preparing for the Holy Spirit.

Evangelist Kathleen Beckman says that "Mary is our sure path to a closer friendship with the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. At Pentecost the Blessed Virgin Mary received the Holy Spirit with unique fullness because hers is the freest human heart. The Lord promised to those who love Him: we will come to him and make our home with him (Jn 14:23). In Our Lady this promise is most fulfilled since she, the masterpiece of God is most prepared to be the living tabernacle of the Son of God and temple of the Holy Spirit. When the Angel greeted Mary: Hail, full of grace (Lk 1:28), she was already possessed by the Holy Spirit and filled with His grace. Yet, at Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary and filled her soul in a new way. With God there is always more and ever-new grace for souls and the work of the Church."

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you (Lk 1:35). Redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all creatures, both in Heaven and on earth. (Lumen gentium 53)

In the Acts of the Apostles Mary is as one of those taking part in the preparation for Pentecost as a member of the first community of the Church which was coming into being. On the basis of Luke's Gospel and of other New Testament texts a Christian tradition on Mary's presence in the Church was formed, which the Second Vatican Council summed up by hailing her as a preeminent

and wholly unique member of the Church (cf. LG 53), in as much as she is the mother of Christ, the Man-God, and therefore the mother of God. The Council Fathers recalled in the introductory message the words of the Acts of the Apostles which we have reread. It was as though they wished to emphasize that just as Mary was present at the beginning of the Church, so likewise they desired her presence in the assembly of the apostles' successors gathered together in the second half of the twentieth century in continuity with the community of the upper room. In coming together for the work of the Council, the Fathers also wished "to devote themselves with one accord to prayer with Mary the mother of Jesus" (cf. Acts 1:14).

But in the previous catechesis we entered the upper room and saw that the apostles, in obedience to Jesus' command prior to his departure to the Father, were assembled and "with one accord devoted themselves" to prayer. They were not alone, for other disciples, both men and women, were present with them. Among these persons pertaining to the original Jerusalem community, St. Luke, the author of Acts, also names Mary, Christ's mother. He names her among those present without adding anything special in her regard. We know, however, that Luke in his Gospel wrote at length about Mary's divine and virginal motherhood, on the basis of the information obtained by him in the Christian communities for a precise methodological motive (cf. Lk 1:1 ff.: Acts 1:1 ff.). This information was traced back at least



Pope Leo XIII

Head of the Catholic Church from Feb 1878 until his death in July 1903.

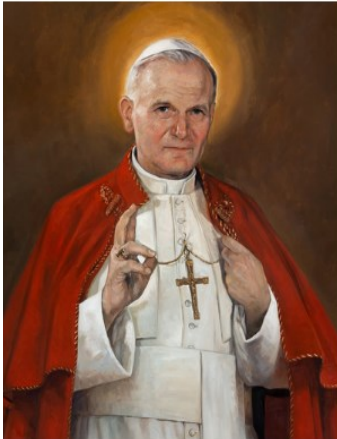
It is in her role in the Cenacle that she was endowed with one of the oldest titles, Queen of Apostles. Mary leads all men to the Truth, and to Christ, just as she brought forth the Light of the World. (From *Adiutricem Populi*)

indirectly to the earliest source of all data about Mary, namely, the mother of Jesus herself. Consequently, in Luke's twofold narrative, just as the coming into the world of God's Son is set in close relationship with the person of Mary, so now the birth of the Church is likewise linked with her. The simple statement that she was present in the upper room at Pentecost is sufficient to indicate to us the great importance attributed by Luke to this detail.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit invites us to gaze upon Mary, to know her and to love her. Those are powerful words. Surely, in some way, this drawing near to Mary was also part of setting the stage for Pentecost in the lives of the Apostles.

As John Paul II said, “As the bond with Mary grows deeper, so the action of the Spirit in the life of the Church becomes more fruitful.” (Dec. 9, 1998)



“Without doubt, she was present at the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit who already dwelt in Mary, working marvels of grace in her, now comes down again into her heart, communicating the gifts and charisms necessary for the exercise of her spiritual motherhood.” (Dec. 9, 1998)

Pope John Paul II

Head of the Catholic Church from Oct 1978 until his death in Apr 2005.

Mary not only leads us to a Christian way of life that bears fruit, but she also models for us a continual reliance on the Holy Spirit for the carrying out of our personal mission. Mary, even though she is full of grace, also received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Even Mary had more room for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost! How much more do we need to make room for the Holy Spirit?

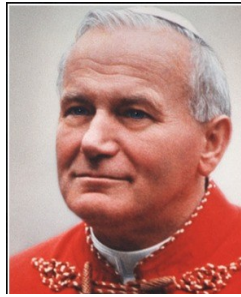
John Paul II recounts how Mary’s “new motherhood” brought a mission that “demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit.” It is worth recounting here:

“Having already had a unique experience of the effectiveness of such a gift, the Blessed Virgin was in a condition to appreciate it more than anyone; indeed, she owed her motherhood to the mysterious intervention of the Spirit, who had made her the way by which the Saviour came into the world.

“Thus, while her unique experience made her ardently long for the Spirit’s coming, it also involved her in preparing the minds and hearts of those around her.

“During that prayer in the Upper Room, in an attitude of deep communion with the Apostles, with some women and with Jesus’ ‘brethren,’ the Mother of the Lord prays for the gift of the Spirit for herself and for the community.

“It was appropriate that the first outpouring of the



Mary is the sure path to our meeting with Christ. Devotion to the Mother of the Lord, when it is genuine, is always an impetus to a life guided by the spirit and values of the Gospel.

— Pope John Paul II —

Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of her divine motherhood, should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at the foot of the Cross Mary was entrusted with a new motherhood, which concerned Jesus’ disciples.

It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit. The Blessed Virgin therefore wanted it for the fruitfulness of her spiritual motherhood.” (May 28, 1997)

In sum, if Mary needed the Holy Spirit to carry out her personal mission, how much more do we?



Mary gave welcome to God, physically and spiritually. This is a task for Christians – to give God welcome. We give God welcome by reading His word, receiving His sacraments and by living a life of charity as a gift of self for others. We welcome God in our neighbour through works of mercy.

We especially give God welcome by asking for the Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, come through Mary.

Fr Henry Avemaria.

Amen

THE EVER-LIVING MOTHER

Fr. Pious Malliar

Oh . . . Loving Mother Theresa
You haven't left us for good
And you will never, either.
In the ever-fresh dawns of our Missionary Zeal
You are ever alive amongst us.

The abbey with the room you dwelt in
Where history sleeps only to unfold into future
The paths you trod
The words you wrote and spoke
This holy land where your sacred feet
Kissed it's pristine soil
The inimitable life you led
Which made its tryst with the spirit of prayer
Everything remains fresh in this holy land.

Oh . . . Mother, in a mundane world
Where the spirits of poverty and simplicity
Are buried deep in the abyss of oblivion
Mother's tender heart writhes in pain
And eyes get teary.

Oh . . . Mother, this is now a land
Where only the privileged is privy
To the experience of knowledge
Where the interests of a selfish few
Forms the basis of state policies
Your benign presence we long for now
And you still live among us
In the dawn of our Missionary Zeal.

*Oh . . . loving Mother,
As the perennial fountain of solace
With the wings of your selfless service
Spread over to cool our burning hearts
You live amongst us
Kindling in our minds
Memories of your sacrificial life.*

*Oh . . . Mother, you haven't left us for good
You are alive amongst us
In the ever-fresh dawn of our Missionary Zeal.*

*In this sacred land
Where streams of holiness flow in plenty
Oh . . . Mother, you continue to sojourn with us
At times taking a stand
At the heart of our mundane pleasures.
Mother lives for ever
As mother to the destitute
And as the forte of weak falling to shambles.*





PATIENCE LEADS TO SUCCESS

RANI THOMAS, ABU DHABI , UAE

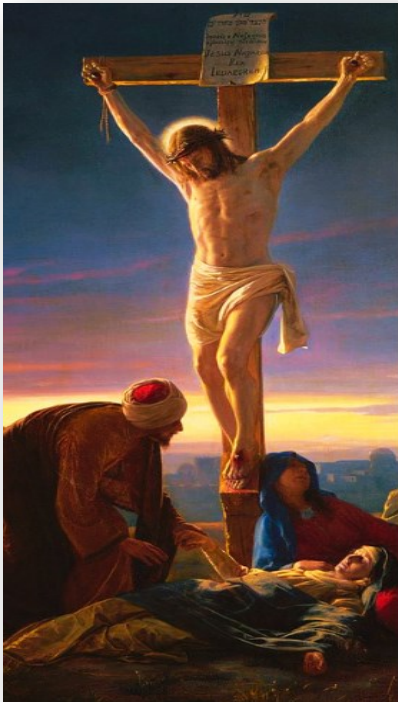
You've probably heard of the saying 'Patience is the key to success,' and it holds true regardless of social, religious, ethnic, or gender differences. Patience is an essential quality for achieving success in life, as it helps you stay on track despite struggles and challenges. Patience is especially crucial when pursuing significant goals.

It's important to note that the test of our patience will be significant on the road to success. There are no shortcuts or easy paths. The accomplishments we seek may take months or even years to materialize. During this time, we will face constant thoughts of giving up and questioning whether it's worth it. We may doubt if the path we're on will lead us to your desired destination. While we may need to continuously improve and find better approaches along the way, **one thing we must never do is give up**. The moment we decide to quit is the moment we fail to achieve success. Patience truly is the key to success, even if it takes a long time. As long as you persevere and keep trying, sooner or later you will achieve your goals.

Patience is a virtue that is highly valued in many cultures and religions around the world. Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is produced in the lives of believers as they grow in their faith. The Bible has many verses that encourage patience and teach us about its importance in our lives. One of the most well-known verses about patience is found in the book of James in the New Testament. **James 1:2-4** says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." This verse teaches us that patience is developed through difficult times and that it is essential for our spiritual growth and maturity.

Another important verse about patience is found in **Galatians 5:22-23**, which lists patience as one of the fruits of the Spirit. This means that patience is not something that we can manufacture on our own, but rather it is a gift from God that is produced in us as we yield to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. As we grow in our relationship with God, we can trust that He will develop patience in us.

Jesus demonstrated patience in various ways throughout his life and teachings. Here are a few notable examples:



Temptation in the Wilderness: After being baptized, Jesus spent 40 days and nights fasting in the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan. Despite facing intense physical and spiritual challenges, Jesus remained patient and steadfast in his faith, resisting the temptations presented to him.

Teaching and Healing: Jesus displayed great patience in his interactions with his disciples, the crowds, and individuals seeking his guidance or healing. He took the time to teach them, answer their questions, and provide them with spiritual nourishment. He also showed patience and compassion when healing the sick, often taking the time to listen to their stories and demonstrate care for their individual needs.

Dealing with Opposition: Throughout his ministry, Jesus encountered opposition from religious leaders and others who questioned or rejected his teachings. Despite facing hostility and resistance, Jesus remained patient and continued to share his message of love, forgiveness, and salvation. He engaged in respectful dialogue, offered explanations, and demonstrated a steadfast commitment to his mission.

Last Supper and Betrayal: During the Last Supper, Jesus displayed remarkable patience and grace in dealing with his disciples, even knowing that one of them, Judas Iscariot, would betray him. He patiently washed their feet, shared a meal with them, and imparted important teachings while demonstrating love and forgiveness.

Crucifixion: The ultimate display of patience and endurance is seen in Jesus' crucifixion. Despite immense physical and emotional suffering, he remained patient, forgiving those who crucified him and praying for their forgiveness. He endured the pain and humiliation, demonstrating his commitment to fulfilling his divine purpose and offering salvation to humanity.

Overall, Jesus exemplified patience through his teachings, interactions with others, endurance during trials, and willingness to sacrifice himself for the well-being of others. His patience serves as an inspiration for believers to cultivate patience in their own lives and to extend grace and understanding to others.

Several Biblical characters besides Jesus demonstrated patience in their actions and attitudes. Here are a few examples:

Job: Job is known for his extraordinary patience in the face of immense suffering and loss. Despite losing his wealth, his children, and his health, Job refused to curse God or lose faith. He endured his trials with patience, waiting for God's purposes to be revealed. In the end, God restored Job's fortunes and blessed him abundantly.

Abraham: Abraham displayed patience as he waited for the fulfillment of God's promise to give him a son. Despite his advanced age and the apparent impossibility of the situation, Abraham remained patient and trusted in God's faithfulness. Eventually, Isaac, the promised son, was born.



Joseph: Joseph demonstrated patience during his time of slavery and imprisonment in Egypt. Despite facing unjust circumstances, he remained patient and steadfast in his faith, ultimately rising to a position of power and authority. He forgave his brothers who had betrayed him and saved his family during a time of famine.

David: David, before becoming king, showed patience in waiting for God's timing and plan to be fulfilled. He was anointed as the future king of Israel, but he had to endure years of persecution and challenges, avoiding Saul's attempts to kill him. David trusted in God's faithfulness and patiently waited for God to establish him as king in due time.

The Apostle Paul: Paul, in his missionary journeys and ministry, demonstrated patience in the face of opposition, persecution, and hardships. He endured beatings, imprisonments, and other forms of suffering, all while spreading the message of Christ. Paul consistently showed patience and perseverance, never losing sight of his mission.

These Biblical characters serve as examples of patience in different circumstances, highlighting the importance of trusting in God's timing, enduring trials with faith, and remaining steadfast in the face of challenges. Their stories inspire believers to cultivate patience in their own lives and to rely on God's faithfulness.

To overcome impatience, here are some strategies:

In **Colossians 3:12-13**, we are encouraged to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." This verse reminds us that patience is not just about waiting for things to happen, but it also involves how we practice ourselves and treat others. We are called to be patient with one another, to bear with each other's faults and weaknesses, and to forgive one another just as God has forgiven us. Here, there are some guidelines for cultivating patience:

Recognize triggers & seek God's guidance: Identify situations, circumstances, or people that tend to test your patience. By understanding your triggers, you can be more prepared and develop strategies to manage them effectively. Most importantly, turn to God in prayer and seek His guidance in developing patience. Ask for His help in cultivating this virtue in your life and surrender your impatience to Him.

Trust in God's timing & practice self-awareness: Trust that God has a perfect plan and timing for everything. Understand that His ways are higher than ours, and He works all things together for our good. Trusting in God's timing can help alleviate impatience and foster a sense of peace and contentment. Moreover, pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations when you feel impatience arising. This self-awareness can help you recognize the early signs of impatience and allow you to respond more calmly and rationally.

Meditate on God's promises & cultivate hope: Immerse yourself in the promises and teachings found in the Bible. Reflect on passages that emphasize patience, endurance, and trusting in God's faithfulness. Allow these truths to shape your perspective and provide strength during challenging times. Jesus is the

source of hope, and by fixing our eyes on Him, we can find the strength to endure and be patient.

Manage stress & practice humility: Impatience often arises when we are stressed or overwhelmed. Implement stress-management techniques such as deep breathing exercises, meditation, regular physical exercise, or engaging in activities that promote relaxation and self-care. Managing stress can help reduce impatience and improve overall well-being. Cultivate humility by recognizing that you are not in control of everything. Acknowledge your limitations and surrender your desires and expectations to God. Embrace the truth that God's plans are greater and wiser than our own, and humbly submit to His will.

Practice mindfulness & desire the fruits of the Spirit: The fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). As you grow in your relationship with God, these qualities will naturally develop within you, including patience. Cultivating mindfulness can enhance patience by helping you stay present and focused. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment without judgment. By practicing mindfulness, you can reduce impatience by avoiding rumination about the past or excessive anticipation of the future.

Perceive the situation from a different angle and learn from Biblical characters: Try to see things from a different point of view. Study the lives of biblical characters who demonstrated patience in challenging circumstances. Their stories can provide inspiration and practical lessons on how to overcome impatience.

Practice forgiveness: Impatience can sometimes be rooted in harbouring grudges or holding onto anger. Cultivate a heart of forgiveness, just as Christ has forgiven us. Release any bitterness or resentment, and extend grace and forgiveness to others.

Be realistic: Impatience can arise when our expectations are unrealistic or when we want immediate results. Take time to evaluate and adjust your expectations to align with reality. Break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps, and acknowledge that some things take time.

Develop problem-solving skills: Impatience can be linked to feeling stuck or encountering obstacles. Enhancing your problem-solving skills can help you find solutions more efficiently, reducing frustration and impatience. Break down challenges into manageable steps and seek alternative strategies when faced with obstacles.

Seek support & lean on God's strength: Recognize that developing patience requires supernatural strength. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within believers, to help you overcome impatience. Pray for God's strength and guidance daily. If impatience becomes a recurring issue and significantly impacts your well-being or relationships, consider seeking support from a trusted spiritual mentor or counselor. They can help you explore underlying factors, provide coping strategies, and guide you towards healthier patterns of thinking and behavior.

Remember, developing patience is a gradual and lifelong process, and setbacks may occur along the way. Be patient with yourself as you work towards cultivating this virtue and celebrate the progress you make. Be patient with yourself as you grow and learn, leaning on God's grace and guidance. The Bible provides a rich source of wisdom and encouragement to help you overcome impatience and cultivate a patient and trusting heart.

Finally, in **Hebrews 12:1-3**, we are reminded to *“run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”* This verse teaches us that patience is not just about enduring trials and difficult times, but it is also about keeping our focus on Jesus and the hope that we have in Him.

In summary, patience is a virtue that can lead to success. It involves having the ability to remain calm and persevere in the face of challenges, delays, or setbacks. Patient individuals understand that things take time and are willing to wait for the desired outcome. By practicing patience, one can make better decisions, maintain healthier relationships, and achieve long-term goals. Patience is often accompanied by trust in God's timing and a willingness to learn from difficult situations. As we strive to live a patient and faithful life, let us remember the words of **Psalm 27:14**, *“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord”* Ultimately, patience can contribute to personal growth, resilience, and the fulfilment of God's purposes in one's life.

BOLD PRAYERS



Eva Thompson

BEng, MSc, LL.M, Dip, MAPM, MTA
(Associate Editor, Kadosh Marian Voice)

Prayer is a concept that is usually introduced from childhood, often so early that it is difficult to recall the first spiritual encounter. As one embarks upon the journey of life, the stubborn challenges presented by adulthood has the potential to cause the very act of praying to either powerfully augment or hopelessly diminish. Prayer may be at the centre of our lives or loom on the periphery of our fading existence. Nevertheless, the hierarchy of prayer in our life remains our prerogative and very much a personal choice.

BUT ON REFLECTION, WHAT EXACTLY IS PRAYER?

We pray when we wake up. We pray before sleep. We pray grace over our meals. We pray to find our lost possessions. We pray the Rosary. The list is endless. But are these prayers recited as a mere habitual chant or have we used the act of prayer as a medium to truly connect with God?

The scripture provides clear direction on *how* to pray - a brief representation is referenced below:

- **Philippians 4:6** advises us not to be anxious about anything but with thanksgiving make our request known to God.
- **Matthew 6:6** and **Luke 11:9** in both, Jesus encourages us to ask, and we shall receive.
- **Ephesians 6:8** we are advised to pray on all occasions
- **Colossians 4:2** asks us to continue steadfast in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving
- **Thessalonians 5:16** asks us to pray without ceasing giving thanks in all circumstances

The above of course is not a comprehensive list from the scriptures but nevertheless reflects God's expectations of us. But through these ordinary prayers, what exactly, are we asking from God? To bless our meals - to protect us day and night - to help us through inflation – and rest assured, these prayers are all ok, but remember: Ordinary prayers get ordinary results. These are all small prayers, for a big God.

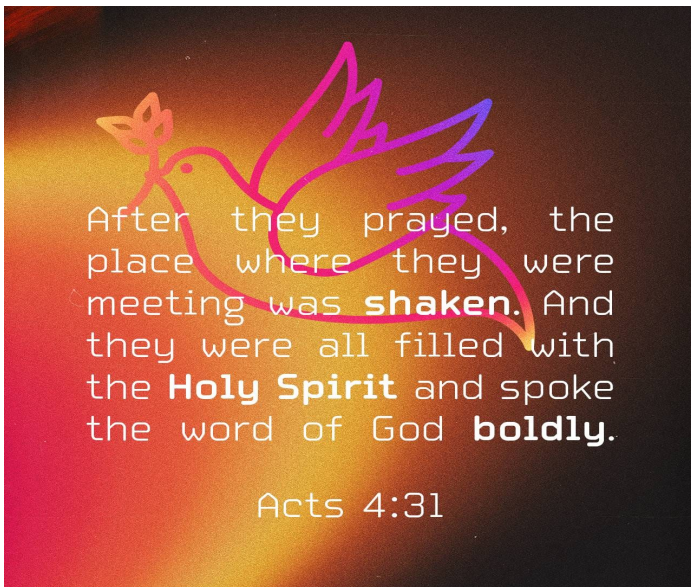
When you are praying, you are not talking to a God who is puzzled on *how* to make your requests a reality.

You are not talking to a God who is overwhelmed by the magnitude of your request. You are not talking to a God who is going to find excuses because He can't deliver.

When you are praying, you are tapping in with the most powerful force in the universe. Mundane, habitual prayers are nothing but a mere waste of an opportunity that conceals the greatness of our God. He is the God who through one simple plea, parted the Red Sea - closed the mouths of lions - held the sun and moon in place - changed water into wine - calmed the wind and waves - fed the multitude - healed the sick - walked on the sea. When you know who our God is, you won't ask him for water, but for 'living water' (John 4.)

With this concept in mind, should we not reflect & perhaps refine our petitions? Instead of praying to have enough to meet the mortgage payment, perhaps pray to have abundance to clear the mortgage and have overflow to clear someone else's! Instead of praying for our child to be kept out of harm's way, pray for our child to be invisible to the enemy and achieve their full destiny to make a difference in the world! Instead of praying for the sickness to get better, claim healing & restoration of good health.

These are bold prayers, but our God is not intimidated by bold prayers. Bold prayers are an acknowledgement & acceptance on the power of God. Bold prayers get God's attention. Bold pray-



ers make angels get to work. Bold prayers get bold results. The scriptures are booming with narratives to reflect this. Joshua, as the leader of the Israelites, took a bold leap of faith and asks God to stop the sun and moon, so that his army could continue to fight in daylight to ensure that the enemies were defeated. Joshua could have prayed for strength to get through that day in battle. He could have prayed to keep the Israelites safe from the enemies. He could have prayed for a safe journey home. But Joshua knew the enemies had to be defeated in that

very battle but more importantly Joshua knew the power of our God. Now God didn't question Joshua on the audacity of his prayer. He didn't explain to Joshua that this prayer was impossible since planets need to rotate as a rudimentary function of the solar system. God heard Joshua's prayer and saw that it was bold. In return for his faith-filled prayer, God conceded to his request, holding the sun and moon in place till the battle was won.

You would expect the next several verses to be an explanation of this great supernatural occurrence. But none, other than that there has never been a day like it before or since. The act in itself was no big feat for our God! And it is to this almighty God, that we are reciting a simple grace over our meals & for strength to endure a challenging day. Through these weak prayers, how much are we limiting God and limiting ourselves and what *could* we receive if it were not for these weak limited prayers!

Now this concept of bold prayers is all very inspiring and encouraging, however there is a prerequisite. The non-negotiable criterion is nothing other than the phenomenon of **faith**. The Bible is clear in conveying the message that we must have blind faith and a wholehearted belief that God **will** bring our prayer to pass. The importance of faith is a repetitive theme throughout the Bible and accordingly our faith must be sufficiently deep-rooted so that we thank God and praise Him, **before** receiving the answers to our prayers

In the Book of Hebrews, the entire chapter 11 is dedicated to the concept of faith, supported with reassuring enactments of our forefather such as Abraham. However, **Marks 11:24** gives a conclusive yet subtle statement on prayer and faith: **'Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and you will receive it.'** Now notice the change in tense:

Believe that you **have** received it – *past tense*
And you **will** receive it – *future tense*

So wait - we have to believe something is so, even though it's not so, so that it'll become so? YES! And we have to believe that we have **got** it in order to **get** it? YES!

This phenomenon is the ultimate act that will lead us to supernatural experiences in this natural world thus revealing the power and magnanimity of our God. This mystery is not a casual statement made in passing.

Instead it is strengthened with numerous practical

examples of those who achieved nothing other than wonders through blind faith:

- The lady with haemorrhage in Mark 5:25, who merely touches Jesus for healing.
- The leper in Mark 1:40, who says ‘If you are willing, you can clean me’
- Martha’s faith, belief and acknowledgement that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God in John 11, leads to the resurrection of her brother Lazarus.
- And in Mark 10:46, Bartimaeus, shouts for healing over large crowds and has his sight restored, with Jesus saying, “Your faith has made you well.”

These are examples of ordinary people who encountered extraordinary experiences. They had bold faith-filled intentions, which paved way to hu-

manly impossible outcomes. Through the avenue of bold prayers, we admit that He is in control & has absolute power over the entire universe and to this faith-filled recognition, our God will respond with favour.

Let us therefore revise our petitions and let us take the limits off our God. Dare to pray boldly and watch your test become your testimony. Praise be to God!

Eva Thompson

Amen

THE SCAPULAR – A WEAPON AGAINST THE DEVIL

Abbé Francis Trochu, in his book, *The Cure D’Ars*, relates a story of a young lady who, having decided to consecrate her life to religion, sought the holy pastor of Ars, Saint John Vianney, for a general confession.



When she finished relating her sins, St. John Vianney asked her if she was not forgetting something. The girl, upon recollecting her thoughts, could not recall anything else. The holy priest then proceeded to refresh her memory.

He asked her if she remembered a certain dance where she encountered a handsome young man with whom she desired to dance, but who, in turn, only danced with the other girls, passing her up.

Surprised, again she replied in the affirmative, that such was indeed true. The Cure D’Ars then asked her if she remembered how downcast she had felt at the snub, and how, upon leaving the ballroom, she had glanced back once more and had seen the young man dancing with a girl, but this time there were two small blue lights under his feet.

Again she agreed and confirmed that in fact she had seen the two blue lights under the youth’s feet, but that, finding them strange, she could not account for them.

Saint John Vianney then explained to her that the young man was in fact the Devil in human form, and that the only reason why he would not dance with her was because she was wearing the holy Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

OHR

GENESIS 1:3-5

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good;
and God divided the light from the darkness.
God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.
So the evening and the morning were the first day.



Adv. Lara J M
Bengaluru, India

In Hebrew, light or Ohr means

“giving order to something chaotic.”

A great lesson we can learn from our Triune God in scriptures. When the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. God as creator in Gen1.1, God as Spirit in Gen1.2, and God as the spoken Word in Gen1.3 - takes the form as the light of the world, when he says ‘LET THERE BE LIGHT’.

At this moment, In the words of William Shakespeare:

*All the world becomes a stage
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts...*

In the Bible, ‘light’ appears more than 230 times and it is a symbol of holiness, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, hope, order and God’s revelation. By contrast, darkness has been associated with evil, sin, despair and chaos. In photography, light has five characteristics: direction, intensity, color, contrast, and hardness. The word ‘light in today’s definition means illumination or an agent that makes something visible. It’s here we need to ponder, is there a way out of chaos? Let’s see how God did it.

In the beginning,
Before the earth began spinning
Before time began ticking
And our hearts began sinning
He had you and me in his hands molding
Before the universe started living
Our god became an artist, dipped his brush and began painting,
He took the heavens and earth whispering
LET THERE BE LIGHT

Planet, stars, galaxies; created by our majesty, began exploding
Our God made this universe his tapestry for furnishing
The sky became smooth and soothing
The waters began rapidly roaring
The ground was formed and the mountains began drastically rising
The planet earth was finished, but God was not done with his beautifying
He knew what missing when he said looking
LET THERE BE LIGHT.

With everything made like writing
He had one task in his planning
Our God got on his knees to acquire some ordinary sand for shaping
One final masterpiece, His hands began scooping
He made man in his image smiling
He declared we are worthy of his brightening
He marked us with his glory, saying
LET THERE BE LIGHT

But his two children were vulnerable to deceiving,
They were offered God's knowledge as borrowing,
With the words of the serpent they questioned God's instruction without following
And with one bite of the fruit the whole world swallowing
Our identity became broken with our hearts hollowing
But our God said, 'I love you I'll save you,' and showed up fighting,
LET THERE BE LIGHT

And that's when the star in the east began brightly shining.
The heavens unleashed and all the angels began singing.
All the kings wondered about this new born king and gave the calendar a new beginning
The kings, shepherds, wisemen, all marveling
They told everybody they knew, this was no silent night, without sighing.
This was a plan God had on his mind while launching
LET THERE BE LIGHT

The water became wine by swirling
 The demons became swine by hurling
 The crippled were given a brand new spine with firming
 Sinners became friends. Shame had an ending
 And every one of us were fishers of men in the becoming.
 The prisoners were set free and the blind began seeing
 The dead bodies in their grave began breathing.
 The lame got up and began leaping
 People got off their boats and on water they began walking
 Orphans found a Good father, The sick became well, the mute began yelling.
 We no longer are controlled by the powers of hell, because he took 39 stripes and spearing.
 And that baby who gave us life, gave his life up for us, when he died groaning.
 And as he looked down at the people killing.
 He looked back and said, 'Father forgive them for they don't know what they're doing.'
 And he gave a final breadth gasping
 Our God wept at his son's death. The whole earth began darkening.
 Then came an earthquake. The enemy and his angels began hiding
 They knew once and for all they could not try escaping.
 Although God's fight seemed like he was losing
 He had already won, When he said thundering

LET THERE BE LIGHT

On the third day, off his sides, his robes went rolling.
 The soldiers were afraid because the tomb was tumbling
 When his friends came and saw an empty bed and looked for a body decaying
 An angel asked them, why do you seek the living among the dead? to the fearing
 They were assured, 'He is not here, your savior is not hidden, he is among you after his rising'
 Death was defeated, hell lost its fight, sin no longer conquers, because of our king's crucifying
 And although it's true Jesus really died. I write here boasting
 Jesus is alive! And this is the plan he had from the beginning of time when he began speaking

LET THERE BE LIGHT

And now I'm a daughter; his child, even though I should have been the one killed for sinning
 He did all this for me to remove all of my guilt and shame and he still keeps a watch on me looking
 I've made you to be a light on a hill, so go on, you're mine, go shine, I have a plan for you, urging

LET THERE BE LIGHT.

God had an even greater light to give to the world from the very beginning; not just the word made text, but the word made flesh: Jesus Christ, the light of God. He is not only the lamp to our feet, but the light to the whole world; he is not only the light to our path, but is himself the very path which leads us to God!

Let us bring order, to the chaos of our lives by saying '**LET THERE BE LIGHT**'

- Lord Jesus Christ come!





“DAUGHTER OF SAIGON” (SHORT STORY)

While waiting for my friend Lisa to go for dinner at Eaton Centre in Toronto, I happened to see Diana today. It has been a long time since I have seen Diana, alias Binh Tran, my Vietnamese friend. As soon as she saw me, she ran to me and embraced me saying “Hi Sangeetha, what a surprise, you look great Sangeetha”. “You too look Fabulous Diana” I replied with a smile. She told me that she is still residing in the same apartment on Yonge Street and working part time two days a week so that she doesn’t get bored at home. After exchanging phone numbers and agreeing to meet again she left.

As Diana was walking away, Sangeetha wandered through the memory lane which brought her back to a spring day in May, five years ago, and her life story that Diana narrated while they were having lunch together in a Vietnamese restaurant. It was Diana’s Birthday that day. Diana was born and brought up in the city of Saigon (now “Ho Chi Minh”) in Vietnam. Her father was a police officer and her mother a High School Teacher. She had a younger sister as well. They had a beautiful life and lacked nothing. In 1975, by the time when the Vietnam war ended, they had lost everything including their house, which was confiscated by the communists.

In those days, after the fall of Saigon many people fled from Vietnam, risking their lives in rickety fishing boats with the help of agents to escape po-



Irene (Sheela) Daniel
Toronto, Canada

litical and economic hardships. They were paying large amounts to these agents who were exploiting the situation, on the pretext of helping those poor people. In those days, she saw the frantic faces of her parents fearing the safety of their two daughters. Because of the huge amount that they had to pay the agent, they could only afford to send Diana in the boat and her sister had to stay back in Vietnam.

On a spring day in May, 1977, the day that she turned 21, she bid goodbye to her motherland Vietnam. She started her journey in a small fishing boat crammed up with thirty others, fleeing their country in hope of a better life, without knowing what the future holds for them. Those were the days that she felt her degree from University of Can Tho seemed useless or unusable and her once promising career as a High School teacher now was just a bygone. She wondered whether she can ever fulfil her childhood dream of becoming a High School teacher. As so many questions popped up in her mind. she wondered why she had to escape and why she had to leave behind her loved ones, birthplace, friends and especially her first love Kevin alias Hung Ta, who was waiting to escape Vietnam in another boat.



As the boat floated along the river, her mind silently whispered, "My beloved country, I am saying goodbye to you against my hearts will, along with many thousands who are fleeing the country leaving all their dreams, hopes and desires never to be fulfilled, as a result of the consequences Vietnam war". As the sun set slowly across the clear blue sky, its glare reflected on the gentle surface of the river, instilling a sense of serenity... one final gift, an unforgettable scene before she casted off into worlds unknown. The scene that she still cherishes in her dream chest.

As she sat in the boat staring at the blue sky above, the thought of her parents, sister and Kevin brought tears in her eyes. She realized that she has to complete this voyage alone and reach a shore safely, so that she could give a life to her parents and her sister. As the boat sailed through the river, she cried deeply in distress. The tears that rolled down her cheeks fell on the river and became one with the water as her mind and heart sobbed along.

Life in Vietnam was horrible, while the experiences in the boat was even pitiful. They had to go through so many treacherous experiences like typhoons, tornados etc..... which was only the beginning of the suffering.

One dark night the boat's engine broke. It could not be fixed as they were on the Gulf of Thailand.

That same night they had the terrifying experience of becoming the victims of Thai pirates in the boat. Three Thai fishing boats seized them. They were all in shock and it seemed like death came closer and faster. The pirates robbed their possessions, jewelry and even threw out their food and water in the sea. All they could do was pray, asking God to protect them. Ladies in the boat used the oil and grime from the boat to stain their faces and were spared from being raped. They experienced a miracle and were lucky and safe from being raped. Their voyage continued with thanking God for saving them from those buccaneers.

Their boat was too tiny to endure the blowing winds and too fragile to fight against the rolling waves of the rough sea. They sat very hungry and thirsty in that small boat, surrounded by the sky and sea water. Their minds were not stable. When the sun rose, they knew it was a new day but only to be replaced by restless nights. They did not know how many days and nights passed, without food, without hope of ever being rescued. They sat in that boat like zombies. As the waves rolled over the tiny little boat, they sat empty stomach losing all hope of nearing a shore. Gazing at the sky above and encircled by water, her memories wandered through the happy family summer vacations spent in Wong Tov Beach, family reunions, Birthdays and other beautiful celebrations etc...etc...

While days and dreadful nights passed by, they sat with frozen mind losing all the hope, and wondering about "where will my help come from", unexpectedly, they saw a Thai fishing boat. They were horrified and believed that this time they would all be killed as they did not have any valuables left to handover to the Pirates in exchange for their lives. A miracle did however happen. The owner of the fishing boat turned out to be their saviour. He helped them through the well-known Shark Sea of the Gulf of Thailand by tying their boat to his as he navigated the Gulf.

The following day, he showed them the way to Thai shore. Unfortunately, Thai government at that time prohibited Thai fishermen to rescue "Boat People". Their boat was again drifting in the high sea moving along with the winds. After countless days and nights, they finally saw the sea shore, the real shore.... Not the illusions that they often visualized. It rained that morning. She still does not know whether it was raindrops or her tears of joy that rolled down her cheeks that day, after surviving a frightful journey of reincarnation. Fifteen days and nights had passed since they started the

journey on the unforgiving sea. With the determination to live, the prayers of her parents and protection from God, they all reached safely and alive to the “Sembawang Vietnam refugee camp” in Singapore. They were the lucky ones who made it to refugee camps.

One week after reaching the refugee camp in Singapore, she came to know the tragic news of the capsizing boat in gulf of Thailand ... The boat that Kevin was travelling and there were no survivors. He became one of the countless thousands died at sea who were victims of pirates or overcrowded makeshift boats. She felt shattered, as if hot coal has been thrown into her heart. Dear Kevin, Dear Kevin, she screamed. She longed to see that sweet magical smile and to be in his arms and to hear a consolation word from him one more time.

It took some time to overcome the grief from her shattered dream and accept the reality. She not only prepared in her mind, the sepulcher for Kevin but also for their unborn children that they both have dreamt together. “Kevin, you were my first love, my prince and no one can gain that place in my heart”. As she said those words, the emptiness in her eyes and the pain in her bosom, still lingers in me as a bitter pain. Sangeetha thought to herself.

Diana was fortunate to come to Canada from Singapore Within two months, under the sponsorship



of Mrs. Thompson from Toronto. When she arrived at Toronto Pearson International Airport, Mrs. Thompson was waiting for her with warmth of love and outstretched arms. That great hug, she felt as if she was under her mother’s arms, which she was missing for a long time. The life in Mrs. Thompsons house was a big change for her. Each time when she had doubts on how she will survive the new environment, new language, the climate with extreme weather conditions, cultural shock and new challenges in this new country, she regained her strength by being optimistic about the

good times ahead after her family comes to Canada.

Mrs. Thompson was always there for her to lead and guide her and give moral support. Learning the English language was a great challenge for her. she was getting adapted to the changes in new language, customs, new life styles, weather etc. She started to love and enjoy the beauty of each season which she experienced after coming to Canada. During spring, the new lives that appear in plants and trees bring a new a life to the environment as well as the humans. Summer with its blue sky and sun shine wakes up each mind and heart. Nature is adorned with beauty all around and makes it feel like a festival season. The earth becomes so colourful during Fall (Autumn) season with trees and colourful leaves. As Winter slowly enters the stage, all the trees become bald, temperature to freezing levels with snowfalls, freezing rains, snow squalls and grey skies and looks like the pomp and glory of the land has disappeared.



As days and months passed by life became so busy and hectic, working different part time jobs and eventually shifting to full time jobs. She was able to sponsor her parents and her sister to Canada; life became beautiful once again with happiness and continued without any complaints. Even in the midst of that happiness, sweet and painful memories of Kevin who faded away in darkness, came into her mind. She cherished those beautiful memories and found solace in walking down the memory lane with her one and only Kevin.

As she was wandering through this panoramic view of the life of Diana, the words of Lisa “Hi Sangeetha, sorry I am late” brought her out of the dreamworld. They both walked towards the restaurant to have a delicious dinner, to listen to more stories and create new stories.



HARDENED HEART



Nisha Jacob
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In Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, which is a listing of primary words contained in the King James version, the brain is not mentioned once, whereas the heart is cited 826 times. In the Scriptures, '**HEART**' is portrayed as

- * ONE'S EMOTIONS (Prov 14:10 ; Isa 66:14 ; John 14:1),
- * ONE'S MORALITY (Psalm 58:2 ; Rom 1:24)
- * ONE'S FREE WILL (Deut 8:2 ; Luke 21:34 ; Acts 11:23),
- * ONE'S RELIGIOUS LIFE (Deut 6:5; Jer 31:33; Rom 10:9-).

The heart, in effect, represents the whole person in all of his or her distinctive actions - thinking, planning, willing, feeling, worshiping, socially inter-

acting being. And, of course, when the person is not living according to God's will, it is the heart that is described as darkened, rebellious, callous, unfeeling, or idolatrous. It is within the heart that God works; hence the human heart may be tender and soft or as hard as stone (Eze 11:19). It is in this context that hardening or hardness of the heart must be understood. The heart represents the total response of a person to life around him or her and to the religious and moral demands of God. Hardness of heart thus describes a negative condition in

A heart of stone is inflexible. A stone will not bend. Just so, the hard heart will not comply with God's command. It will not stoop to Christ's scepter. A heart of stone will sooner break, than bend by repentance. It is so far from yielding to God, that like the anvil—it beats back the hammer. A heart of stone will "always resist the Holy Spirit."

(Thomas Watson, "The Beatitudes" 1660)

which the person ignores, spurns, or rejects the gracious offer of God to be a part of his or her life.

Let us take some examples from the Bible on persons with hardened heart. Pharaoh, the hard-hearted king of Egypt (Exod 9:34), Sihon king of Heshbon (Deut 2:30), King Zedekiah 2Chr.36:10-12), Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah all started out well but later hardened their hearts. We also may have started well, but at some points due to our sins may have hardened our hearts and turned away from God. So let us do a litmus test to understand whether our hearts are hardened or not. The characteristics of a person with hardened heart can be recognized by the following:

(1) **DOES NOT OBEY GOD (ARROGANT/PRIDE)** (Ex. 7:13, 22): It is the first and most obvious sign of a

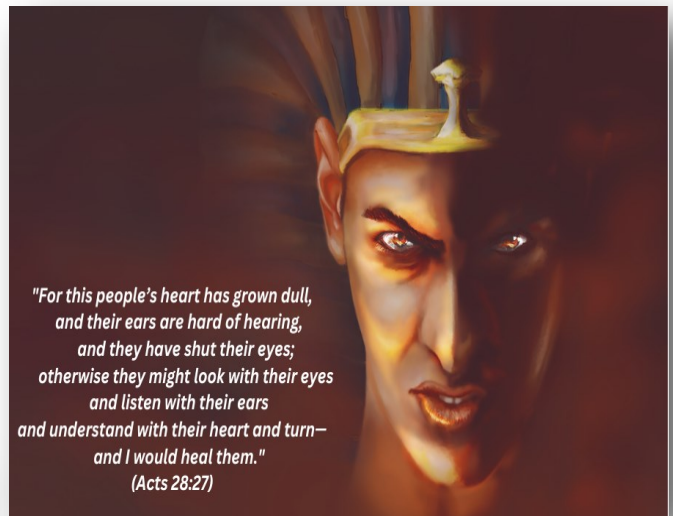


person with hardened heart. Just as Pharaoh did not obey God in letting the people go from Egypt, a counselee with a hardened heart refuses to follow God's Word. He will not recognize the strength and power of God instead will always will be arrogant and pride.

(2) **DOES NOT CHANGE (INSENSITIVITY TO SIN)** (Ex. 8:15): A Hardened Heart Does Not Change After Some Relief in Tough Circumstances. Immediately following the second plague, Pharaoh demonstrates the typical pattern of a hardened heart. After relief from tough circumstances, a counselee with a hardened heart does not change and insists in the same way. They are not looking for an inner change, but outer relief. The person will be insensitivity to sin, sinfulness.

(3) **DOES NOT RECOGNIZE OR REMEMBER THE SIGNS OF GOD** (Ex. 8:19): Even the Egyptian magicians recognized the signs from God, but not Pharaoh. A person with a hardened heart does not recognize or remember the spiritual realities around him. A hard-hearted person cannot see the way God is working in their situation, even though close family, relatives & friends are telling him so.

(4) **DOES NOT HEAR GOD, BUT STILL SEEKS HIS HELP** (Ex. 8:28): At the end of the fourth plague, Pharaoh seems receptive to something different: "Plead for me." However, his persistent denial of letting the people go reveals that while he might



want something from God (relief?), he is not willing to hear God.

(5) **EXPECTS THE WORD OF GOD TO FAIL** (Ex. 9:7): Pharaoh did not believe that the livestock of Israel would not die from the plague. He sent people to check in anticipation to see the failure of the Word of God. Counselees with a hardened heart expect the Word of God to fail. A hard-hearted counselee despises the warnings of Scripture as if the Word of God was not true.

(6) **WILL NOT SOFTEN DESPITE SEVERE PAIN** (Ex. 9:8-12): Halfway through the plagues, Pharaoh is miserable and yet is still hardened. Hard-hearted counselees will not soften despite severe pain. Expect to see your counselee under severe pain and still stubborn in his sin.

(7) **WILL SAY THE RIGHT WORDS WITH NO INTENTION TO CHANGE** (Ex. 9:27): Just like Saul (1 Sam. 15:24, 30), Pharaoh said the right words: "I have sinned." These are the first words that every counselor dealing with stubborn sinners wants to hear. Is this the first step towards real change? It could be! But counselees with hardened hearts say the right words with no true intention to change.

(8) **DOES NOT RECOGNIZE ITS CHAOS** (Ex. 10:7): It is quite interesting that Pharaoh's servants were ready to let the people of Israel go. They recognize that Egypt is ruined, but Pharaoh does not.

(9) **WILL REVOLT AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE AND CHURCH (UNFORGIVENESS)** (Ex. 10:28): Pharaoh gets angry. Not with his sin, but with Moses and



with God. A hardened heart blames the messenger and God instead of recognizing its own condition. Hardened heart's person is a gate for Satan to enter and act against God. (Joh 13:21-30). One is easily offended, resentful, lacks ability to forgive.

(10) **WILL BE BROKEN BEYOND HEALING** (Prov. 29:11): For how long will the hard-hearted counselee continue in his sin? We do not know. But just as God broke Pharaoh after ten warnings, God has a limited (yet merciful) patience. Judgment is not immediate because God is merciful and gracious. However, judgment will come because God is holy and righteous. Judgment came for Pharaoh and will come for your hard-hearted counselee.

HOW CAN WE SOFTEN OUR HEARTS?

Ultimately the hardness of the human heart can only be repaired by the grace of God. It is He who can restore us, by taking away our heart of stone and giving us a heart of flesh (Eze 11:18-21). So, the point in Scriptures is that God must do the decisive, miraculous heart transplant, heart replacement. If we are going to escape the hardness and deadness of that heart, the old heart has to be taken out, a new heart has to be put in — and we can't do that surgery on ourselves. That is the point. This is God's sovereign, gracious, saving work, and the effect of it is new, tender, obedient love toward God. And Deuteronomy puts it a little differently: "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30:6). So, if we are going to ever turn around, stop hating God and start loving God, he has to do that heart transplant and that heart circumcision.

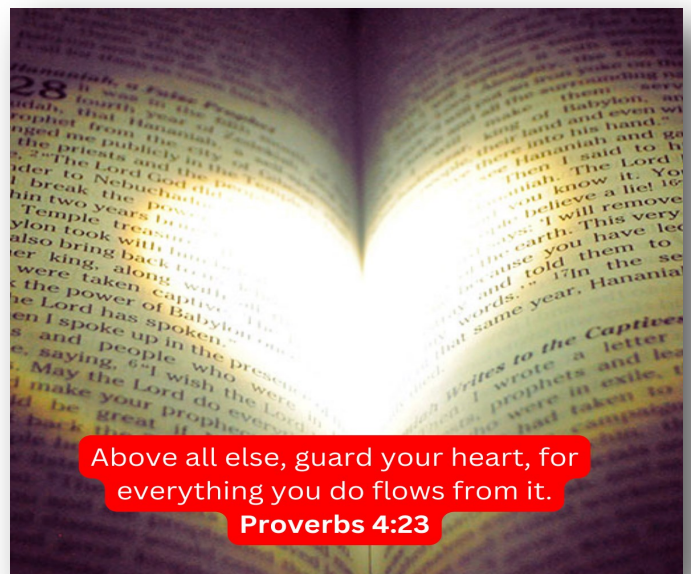
Having said this, we still can take part or do at least three things or prepare ourselves in acting this miracle that God is performing:

1) **SEEING:** 2 Corinthians 3:18, "Beholding the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image [of God] from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." So, what do we do? We look to Jesus. *We look to Jesus.*

2) **HEARING:** And if you ask, "Where and how does that happen?" Paul says, secondly, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). So, faith is the tender, dependent opposite of rebellion and resistance and self-reliance, and faith comes by hearing. We are looking to Jesus with our ears. We look with our ears. The eyes of the heart look through the ears of the mind as the word of God is read or preached or presented to us in some way and, thus, being drawn by this sight to be conformed to him, we trust him.

3) **TRUSTING:** Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." So, what comes alive when the old, hard heart is crucified and dead and taken out and circumcised away and cut off, what comes alive is the new, tender heart of faith. "I live by faith."

So, my final word to paraphrase Paul is: Work out your tenderness of heart. Be about the miraculous unhardening of your heart. For God is the one who is at work in you to remove the hardness of heart and give you a tender heart of seeing and hearing and trusting.



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