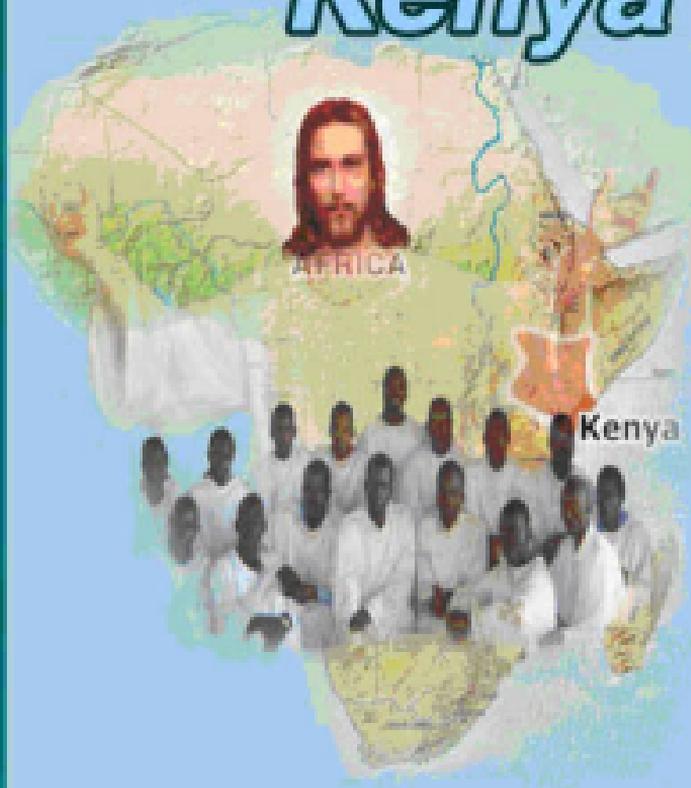




The First Journey to Kenya



FR. Tadros Y. Malaty

Talk I: The Pastoral Care of God and How We Share in it

Ezekiel 34:11-13

'For thus says the Lord God: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country."

Ezekiel 34:22-24

"Therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them-My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. "And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken."

Jesus said I am the good shepherd in John Chapter 10. He alone is the good shepherd and when we enjoy him and are united with him, we serve others through him and in him. There are four stages of his pastoral care of man.

First Stage: The Pastoral Care of God in the Garden of Eden

God created man. Before he created man, he established everything for him. An illustration of his feelings towards man is found in the story of a woman who for many years could not have a child. After twenty years of waiting, she discovered she was pregnant. Can you imagine her feelings? She began to prepare a special place for her child, to care for her health and dream constantly about being a mother. These feelings are in fact a very light shadow of the divine care. God is interested in man. He established everything for Adam and Eve before he created them, as though there was nothing else in the world in heaven and earth but them. He created the sun, the moon, the stars and he created and beautified the world with animals, birds, fish and billions of creatures which we see and don't see, which we have discovered and which we have not yet discovered.

It is difficult to imagine how involved God is in you and me. He created the whole world as a palace, then created Adam and Eve as a king and queen and gave them authority over the world, but not authority over other men. As St. Gregory of Nicea used to say, God created men not to have authority over other men, but to have authority over the world. Every human being is to be a king or queen, free and with authority over his own self and over the world. One of the great fathers, Jacob of Syrouge, a Syrian father, said *"God created the whole world. Then the sun, the moon, the stars, the animals and the birds all said to God: What can we do for you because you loved us and created us from nothing? God replied, I will establish a living statue in the land and when you want to serve me, serve this living statue- Adam, and afterwards, Eve."* Hebrews chapter 1 states even the angels are ministers to men, who are elected to be saved and enjoy and share the glory of Jesus.

It is hard for us to realize how precious mankind is in the eyes of God. In chapter 3 of Genesis we read that God used to walk in the Garden of Eden. One can not express the feelings of Adam and Eve when they saw the word of God, the voice of God, the wisdom of God, the

second hypostasis, person, who was incarnate afterwards and became the Lord Jesus, walking to meet them. It is difficult to imagine the dialogue between them. Adam was not in need of anything, he had everything; even the wild animals served him. He had authority over land, oceans, seas, rivers, birds...everything. When the Lord used to see him, God would ask *“Are you in need anything? I prepared this palace for you”*. Adam would reply, *“Nothing! You are my joy, my satisfaction and my life. Your gift to me isn’t this world but your love”*. God presented and offered himself to Adam and Eve, and it was the height of divine pastoral care and shepherding of man in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve were excited and full of joy.

Second Stage: The Pastoral Care of God after the Sin of Man

Adam and Eve turned their backs on God, believing they no longer needed his pastoral care. They thought, as the serpent had told them, they could become gods and it was ^شGod who was preventing them. They put their faith in Satan, accepting to be adopted by Satan rather than God. Yet God still loved the sinners, and he granted himself for them. It is important for us to observe how God cared for man so that in our interactions with men we not only imitate him, but work through him and in him in the same spirit. After turning their backs on God, God didn’t say *“They have become corrupted and are now my enemies; they rejected my love so I will punish them”*. Rather, he came to save man, devising a divine plan for thousands of years to prepare for the pinnacle of his love which was revealed on the cross.

In the Garden of Eden, man said of God, *“You are everything to us”*. After mankind sinned and became God’s enemy by his own will, God, the lover of sinners, still loved and wanted to reconcile man. He prepared for the cross, the height of his pastoral care, for thousands of years, until the second person, the incarnate Logos- the word of God, became man and was crucified. In the first stage God worked by himself; he was the only pastor. In the second stage, he gave man the honor of serving with him. He decided to care for his people by sending them Abraham as a father and through the fatherhood of Abraham they would discover his fatherhood. Through the motherhood of Sarah, they would discover the motherhood of heaven. He sent Jacob and revealed heaven to him while he was suffering to tell us, I am working; although Jacob deceived his father, I want to purify him and beautify his inner man and prepare him to ascend to heaven through the cross, the ladder, and enjoy what I have prepared for him. Instead of being in the Garden of Eden, I am preparing more than Eden, paradise, and afterward heaven itself for mankind.

Through the early fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we see the pastoral care of God and how he cares for man. He gave them the honor to work in his name and for his kingdom to prepare the world to accept the kingdom of God. After the patriarchs, the early fathers, we hear about Moses the great leader. Moses wanted to shepherd his people and save them from the slavery of the Egyptians by his own hand, but failed. For forty years his heart burned like fire with the knowledge that his people lived as slaves. Moses had insisted on saving his people, even if it cost him his life. Unfortunately, he discovered he couldn’t from his first attempt, when he killed the Egyptian, and as a result, he escaped. For forty years he cared for sheep, forgetting what he had learned in the palace of Pharaoh, the wisdom of the Egyptians, and all his dreams for the freedom of his people.

God appeared to Moses while he was eighty years old and told him he would send him to save his people. It is difficult to imagine in our time a bishop looking for an eighty year old man to become a priest. The people would be concerned with whether the man had the energy, time,

or ability to serve. Moses wrote in Psalm ninety that the age of a man is seventy, and if he is very strong, eighty. Yet he himself began to serve at that age, when he considered himself dead and believed he did not have the ability to do the work. It was then that God reminded him that it was he and not Moses who would do the work. It was he who would give him the words and work in the heart of Pharaoh and all his people. Although Moses appeared to be the leader from the outside, in reality, God was the leader. Moses could not have made a path in the Red Sea, nor sent manna from heaven nor granted victory to his people who were shepherds all their lives and were unskilled in battle, it was all the work of God. Only when Moses discovered he was very weak, almost dead, he became alive and God became transfigured in his life. God had revealed to Moses that it was he who was the shepherd and would care of his sheep.

Third Stage: The Pastoral Care of God at the Cross

Unfortunately many of the leaders God choose to work through after Moses, corrupted the work of God and instead of shepherding or taking care of the sheep, they destroyed the kingdom of God. They deceived the people, as we read in chapter 34 in the book of Ezekiel, and in the book Jeremiah, who spoke of false prophets. In the historical books, like Kings II, the priests and the high priests were at times very corrupt, but God still continued to work in his church. The third stage was the height of his pastoral care. He himself would shepherd his flock. In John 10 we read about the good shepherd who sacrificed himself. He became the high priest and at the same time, the victim. He stretched his hands to embrace the whole world, Jew and Gentile, to grant them to ascend by his Holy Spirit to enjoy fellowship with God, and unity with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Through the cross, Christ sought to covert men into angels, and earth into heaven. To grant mankind his Holy Spirit so that they may be renewed, beautified, and prepared as a heavenly bride to enjoy him forever in heaven. He granted his church and his people to trample the devil and all his angels under their feet, to become victorious, and members of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ also granted us the new and true knowledge of the Father, Son and Holy Trinity. We see in the father, his fatherhood; we see in the Lord Jesus Christ our membership in the holy body, and we see in the Holy Spirit his work in us so that we may become real members of the body of Christ and be prepared for the heavenly glory.

Fourth Stage: Pastoral Care in Paradise, then in Heaven

Our Lord Jesus' pastoral care will not stop when we get to heaven. He will not say, "*I brought them to heaven and that is enough*". St. John looked to Jesus as a sacrificed lamb, meaning although the church will be with the Lord here, he is still taking care of her there. We know on the last day there is no sun, moon or time, and we also know we will be constantly looking at the Holy Trinity and enjoying God as though we are seeing him for the first time. Once a lady in Los Angeles asked if in heaven all we would do would be to pray and sing songs. Is heaven boring? The answer is no because the pastoral care of the Lord will increase and he will reveal more and more of his glory to us. If a woman has a child after waiting for many years, is she going to get bored of seeing her child after six months, or even after six years? No. A mother will never tire of seeing her child. Likewise, in heaven, we will never tire of seeing God, and his unimaginable glory will be revealed to us. When St. Paul saw what was in heaven, he

couldn't speak. He wrote we will see what cannot be seen, hear what cannot be heard by ears, and discover what our minds cannot even think of.

Our Role as Ministers of God Today

We need to consider our work as ministers of God and make any necessary changes in order to truly be in fellowship with God, enjoy the life with the Holy Trinity and accept the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in us and our people. We ought not only discuss but live and enjoy the Holy Trinity. Once in a meeting in Cyprus concerning preaching in the Middle East, the speakers spoke for two days about the Holy Spirit, and imagined they would revive the whole world. I realized they had spoken much about the Holy Spirit, but hadn't mentioned the Father. I asked them where the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus, were in their lives. For thirty or forty years they had spoken about Jesus and ignored the Father and the Spirit, now they spoke of a charismatic movement of the Holy Spirit, without the Father or the Son. A Bishop who heard these words realized he had always preached about Jesus, but never about the Father or the Spirit and he realized he had to change that. Another one of the missionaries present was also thankful for the revision, realizing there was a lack in his preaching because he was not concerned with the Father of the whole world, and also ignored Christ. He sent a letter from Houston thanking me for correcting his preaching. I hope all of us consider the work of our ministry, and ask ourselves if we preaching through the Holy Trinity or are only working as social workers and teachers of sin in the church. We are not meant to be teachers or workers, but believers in the Holy Trinity and we want every human being to taste and share our experience in the Holy Trinity so that we can truly say that the kingdom of God is within us and within them.

Although one can have a practical and theoretical understanding of pastoral care, none can be a shepherd without unity with the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. In every liturgy whenever the bishop or the priest gives a benediction or blessing to the people, he focuses their eyes on the love of his Father, the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Let us keep our eyes on the Holy Trinity and may the Lord Jesus Christ grant us all to enjoy his pastoral care and guide us also to the right way to care not only of our congregations but the whole world. We ought never to feel satisfied unless every human being in the whole world, in the east or west, north or south, enjoys the work of the Holy Spirit. St. John Chrysostom used to say, *"I will never be joyful until very person in my country enjoys Jesus Christ. I do not feel proud that the cathedral is crowded with people if there is even one person at home who doesn't care about his salvation. I will feel upset and never stop praying or working hard for his salvation"*. May God grant all of us to work in his divine field according to his Spirit.

Talk II: The Risen Life and *Pastoral Care through Unity with the Trinity*

An important and commonly read chapter in the Bible is chapter 17 from the Gospel of John, which is also known as the farewell prayer. This is the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Father before he was betrayed, and after his speech with his disciples. As mentioned previously, we can't practice pastoral care and shepherd the flock of Christ unless we are united with the Father, enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus and accept the work of the Spirit in us. Service according to St. Paul was practicing the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and experiencing the risen life. St. Paul discovered he was dead, even when he was trying to practice the law. The law couldn't give him new life. He practiced the formalities from the outside but it was impossible for him to live in righteousness. The aim of his service was to see all mankind raised. Likewise, we don't only want men to believe in some dogmas, some teachings and practice some behaviors, but we look to all of mankind as though they are dead and in need of the resurrection. To them, we offer the Lord Jesus Christ who called himself the resurrection, and through the Lord Jesus they are raised. None has the power to raise a dead person; no man, angel or heavenly host, only God himself grants life and grants the resurrection. If we want to shepherd his people, we have to be united with him in the resurrection and offer him to those who are dead in order to practice the new life. It is impossible for us to preach by ourselves, yet when we have practical fellowship with the Holy Trinity, we succeed in our preaching because they will enjoy the risen life.

The Work of the Trinity in Pastoral Care

John 17:1-5

Jesus said these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you; even as you gave him authority over all flesh, that to all whom you have given him, he will give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on the earth. I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do. Now, Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world existed.

John 17:11

I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are.

After these words, he began to pray to the Father. He had given them the main guidelines of pastoral care, and now he wanted them to focus their eyes on the Holy Trinity, to enter into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was not by chance that after the speech of the Lord Jesus Christ to the disciples, the Bible tells us he lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed to the Father. He had just spoken to the disciples about pastoral care. In his farewell speech, before his betrayal, he gave them the commission to preach, but not by themselves. Jesus told them he would ascend to heaven and send to them the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father so that they may be strengthened and be witnesses to him. The Lord Christ is involved and interested in sending his Holy Spirit. It is also the pleasure of the Father to send his Holy Spirit, who is at the same time the Spirit of the Son. It is also the pleasure of the Spirit to dwell in us, work in us and guide us until we enjoy the bosom of the Father.

The Trinity as the Divine Model of Pastoral Care in the Body of Christ

No Member is Greater than Another

We can't separate the work of the Father from the Son, from the Spirit. The Father, Son and Spirit are one in divinity and they have one nature. They work together without separation and we can not make any comparison between the work of the Father, Son and Spirit. St. Cyril of Alexandria used to say, "Every divine work is in fact realized by the Holy Trinity, and every gift is from the Father, but also from the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We can not separate in any work the role of the Father from the role of the Son from the role of the Spirit if it is concerning the Holy Trinity". As the members of the Trinity are equal so are the members of the body. If I believe then that I can work harder than all the others in the body of Christ, I am on the wrong track. Can the eye say I am more important than the ear? What would be the feeling of a mother who has a child with a hundred eyes and no ears, or hands, or feet? Not only will the child be ugly, but he cannot live. Unfortunately we do the same today. We all want to be the eyes of the church and no one wants to be the ears, the hands, the fingers and so on. The beauty of the body is in the variety of its members. If a person has ten hands without legs, he can't live. Every member has its own role. We can't say the eye is more important than the toe. The beauty and role of every member in fact cannot be separated from the beauty of the whole body and the work of all the members. If we want to work, and want God to work with us and in us and through us, we have to love each other and honor each other. Then we are working through God himself and the grace of God grants us success.

Our Duty to Love and Respect Each Member

Sometimes we feel the other servants corrupt our work, and we turn our faces away from them and give them our backs, but when we when we turn our back on our bothers or sisters, we can never see the face of God. In heaven, you will not find any Cherubim with a back because they are full of eyes and they can not hate each other, but rather everyone looks to the other joyfully. Like the Cherubim, it is very important to love and respect each other, giving priority to others rather than ourselves. A few months after I was ordained, a Sunday school teacher from Cairo came to visit our church. I asked him about his service and how many people he served, and his response was if he served just one person, it would be enough; perhaps this one person would change the life of many people. He didn't care about the numbers, but the work of God in him and others. One day St. Alexander of Egypt, a Pope, was looking out of his window and saw a child baptizing his friends in the Mediterranean Sea. He didn't look to it as a fun game but rather asked his disciple to call the children to him. When he asked them what they had been doing, they were scared, but he spoke to them gently and they replied that they had been pretending that Athanasius, one of the children, was the bishop, and was baptizing them, his congregation. At this point, St. Alexander did not dismiss it as child play, but he took the children, especially Athanasius, in his care. He could not have imagined at the time that this child would be St. Athanasius, who defended the divinity of the Lord Jesus all over the world. He cared for a child and this child became a hero in the church. We can not despise any of our fellow servants, deacons, or children. We all have to work together, and with the congregation.

Each Member has a Unique Role

Once while I was visiting L.A. I asked the youth a question. Who is the bishop of the church? When they responded with the name of their bishop, I told them it was the wrong answer. The correct answer was them, the young people. John Crysostom used to say to his congregation, “*You are the bishops*”. A bishop cannot enter into a primary school and be a witness for Jesus among the children; only another child can do that. A bishop cannot enter into the market and interact with the people there for a long time; only another person at the market can be a witness to Christ there. A bishop cannot call all the women of the church and speak to them of Christ; only the other women of the church can speak to them, and so on. Every person in the church can be a witness for Jesus Christ. We ought to have respect for a child who can realize and fulfill a role of a servant. Many children have attracted their families to Christ through love, obedience and joy. A servant can’t do what a child can within the family; preach by smiling, obedience and prayer. Our role isn’t only to work, but also to respect each other. We can’t think of ourselves as gifted and talented preachers with great influence, experience and so on, but as servants of God, we only direct people to preach in their lives.

Monotheism and the Holy Trinity

When we ask those who believe in one God to tell us something about him, they might say something like, God is unique in love, no one shares his love, or, God is unique in peace, no one has peace like him, or even, God is absolutely pure, no one is pure like God, and so on. When they speak of God, they see one God, and all other beings are belittled. Without that, God is not absolute in everything. When we believe in the Trinity, we believe in communion between the three hypostasis, persons. We believe that God the Father is perfect, but this does not make the other persons imperfect. God is perfect yet at the same time his perfection is the same as the Son, and the Spirit. God the Father is also almighty, but that does not make the other persons less almighty because they are one. Although they are three persons, the perfection of the Father is in the perfection of the Son and Spirit, the glorification of the Son is in the Father and Spirit, the holiness of the Spirit is in the Son and Father. If I want to be unique and refuse to believe in the Trinity, I deny my faith God.

Pastoral Care for those who Believe in the Trinity

Pastoral care for those who believe in the trinity is to feel my perfection in the perfection of others, my purity is in the purity of others, my glory in the glory of others and so on. I can not say I am a priest and he is only a deacon; I am one of the clergy, the other person is only a layman. Our perfection is in the perfection of the congregation and the perfection of the other servants of God. St. Paul said, “*You are my crown*”, he did not mean to say that when he goes to heaven he will be proud that he brought thousands of saved to Christ, and he will receive a huge crown for his achievements. St. Paul meant that when he sees others crowned on the last day, he will not be absorbed in his own crowning, but he will be satisfied to see them crowned and rejoicing. When another is rejoicing, it should be our joy, when another is suffering, it should be our suffering.

Unity in the Body of Christ

When another priest or deacon becomes successful and his service is stronger and more successful than my own, do I pray with thanksgiving for his success? This is the pastoral care according to the Holy Trinity, believing, when we look to the Trinity, there is a mutual love between the Father, Son and Spirit. The Lord Jesus wants us to have the same thing, as we read in John 17:11. Jesus said, “*Holy Father keep them through your name so that they may be one as we are*”. It should be our great joy that the church becomes one. No one can become successful in the eyes of God without enjoying the spirit of unity, not only among the clergy, but also among our congregation. When we deal with a sinner, we don’t say he is terrible. He is a part of me, and we are members of the same body. If while a person is walking, a nail pierces his foot, will the foot stop to take permission from the hand to reach out and remove the nail? It is no credit to the hand to pull out the nail because it is a part of the same body. When a nail enters the foot, all the body starts to work and the nerves immediately send a signal to the brain, and the brain sends a signal to the rest of the body; the back bows, the hands grasp, the eyes look to the nail all at once. Does the body of Christ work in the same way? If a person is far from God, do we become involved only to punish, condemn, or insult, or do we in the same moment feel as though it is we who fell in the sin?

Once a young Sunday school servant came to see Fr. Bishoy and began to weep bitterly. He told Father Bishoy it was difficult for him to confess because he had committed adultery. Fr. Bishoy was surprised and asked him if he had done so by his thought, but the young man responded he had sinned physically also. Fr. Bishoy was astonished; the young man was a good person and servant, living in a house of Christian students. Still weeping bitterly, the young man continued to confess saying he had become drunk often, lied many times and had done many evil things. Fr. Bishoy didn’t know what to say; he tried to calm him down, prayed the absolution for him, and asked him to return the next day to take communion. After a few days he found him in church and asked him when he had done all these sins. The young man responded he was living with someone who had done these sins and he himself felt guilty, saying he was repentant because when the other man sinned, it was like he had committed the sins.

It is shameful for us who believe in the Trinity to serve and also condemn, while someone like this youth weeps as though he himself committed the sin of another. The Lord asked the Father, “*May they become one as we are one*” do we have the same feeling? Are we only interested in condemning, punishing and despising others, or are our hearts open wide for all mankind and we practice our unity with others in Christ? Jesus asked for us to become holy and sanctified like himself so that we may be sanctified in him. When he spoke of the Father he called him the Holy Father, and he himself is the Holy Son who consecrated all his time devoting everything in him for our holiness. He is interested in our holiness and he brings it about in us not by rebuking us, but by sacrificing himself on our behalf. We should practice our beliefs in the Holy Trinity, not only as a theoretical dogma or philosophy we believe in, but as a life, being in touch with the Father, the Son and Spirit in our inner lives, service, and relationships with others.

We look to the Father and call him ‘our Father’ in our prayers. We don’t say ‘my’ Father, we say ‘our’ Father; we speak on behalf of the whole world. He is the Father of the Son, and Christ is his Son eternally. There was no moment in which there was a Father without a Son, or a Son without a Father. As there can not be a sun without rays, or light without brightness, there is no brightness if there is no light. I see the sun and its rays the moment it was created, the moment there were rays there was a sun. Just like the moment I light a candle there is brightness and light, where there is the Father there is the Son.

The Love of the Father for us and in us

God wants to adopt all mankind and he extends his love to us all so that we may enjoy adoption by him through baptism and the work of the Spirit. The price is the precious blood of Christ and it is the pleasure of the Father to be the Father of all mankind. St. John Chrysostom used to say to his priest, *“You are the father of the world; you don’t say this person is coming from another parish or this one comes from another country”*. All mankind are very precious and have a special place in our hearts, and our hearts are an icon of the heart of the Lord. We call God the Father, the lover of mankind, in every benediction, in the writings of St. Paul, and in the liturgy of the church. Do we share his love for others as though they were our sons and daughters, even if they are older than us? We should love them as we would our own children.

Once an old man came to see me and asked to speak with me after I had finished with the others in the church. It was his first time to see me, and my first time to see him, but he had a complaint against me. He told me I was the father of confession of his grandson, who prayed every day for three hours in the morning, then evening. He had no time to speak to his family, and the young man believed there was still a shortage in his prayer. I asked the man if his grandson was doing well in his studies, and the man replied he was always the first in his class. When I asked him how his grandson’s relationship was with his family, he replied, excellent. I told him I would speak to his grandson, and the man left. A year later, I saw him and remembered I had forgotten to speak to his grandson. I imagined he would be upset with me, but he came to me and said, *“Today, my grandson became my father and I, his son”*. The man had been on the wrong track and now he had returned to Christ. He had come to love Christ through his grandson and was indebted to him for his life. That day would be the first time in his life to come to confess and the man was over seventy years old! This young man had gained his grandfather as his own Son. It was not by age, but by love. We must strive to possess this love, and practice it in our service.

Talk III: The Work of the Father in the Ministry and How the Father is a Divine Model of our Ministry

In order for us to enjoy our Christianity, fatherhood and ministry, we have to be in close contact with the Trinity. When we speak of the Father, we remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the son being in the bosom of the Father who reveals to us the knowledge of the divine nature through the ministry of heaven. Christ is in the bosom of the Father. He is never separated from the Father, and wants us to follow him always and be united with him so that we might also find a special place in the bosom of the Father. When we look to the bosom of the Father, we see that all mankind have a special place there. Any person who wants to serve must imitate God the Father by having a very wide bosom, an open gate through which every person finds a special place in this world.

Once while Fr. Bishoy Kamel was praying during a wedding at his church, a troubled man came in and began to insult him in a loud voice in front of everyone. All of Alexandria loved Fr. Bishoy so when I heard the commotion, I took the man to a room and asked him to be very quiet. After some time the man admitted he had been wrong, so I set up an appointment for him with Fr. Bishoy to apologize and discuss the issue. I told the man I would also remain with him until he left the church so that no one spoke harshly to him. By the time Fr. Bishoy had finished praying the vespers and taking confessions it was eleven at night. I approached him and informed him that the man had been upset because of the marriage and would like to apologize to him for the words he had spoken. Fr. Bishoy went to the man, who watched in disbelief as he approached him with a smile on his face at that late hour. The man couldn't believe that the person who he had insulted was coming to reconcile with him. He tried to kiss Fr. Bishoy's feet but Fr. Bishoy lifted him up and told him he could not go home and sleep when one of his children was troubled. That is what the bosom of the Christian person, especially the priest, deacon or servant, should be like, open to everyone, even those who insult them.

Once I found myself in a critical situation which I felt would decline my spiritual life, so I lifted it up in prayer to God. Many people would approach me and praise me, and even though it would make me happy, I asked God to send somebody in my life who was difficult to love so that I would still love him or her and in that way, know I am on the right path. God answered my prayer and sent someone like that so I could enjoy the joy of loving those who hate me. We are not to avoid those who condemn us or even insult us, but rather see them as an opportunity to love our enemies. Without these people, how can we love our enemies or even our colleagues or anyone else? There is no other way by which I will be glorified except by carrying the cross. Once an old widow said to St. Athanasius the great that she was a widow and in need of any person to help and serve her. St. Athanasius who was very kind, especially with the needy and poor, agreed to her request and sent her a widow who was very quiet and nice to help her. After a week he met her in the church and asked her about the widow he had sent her. She replied that she was very upset from her. She had asked him for someone to help her, but rather the widow he had sent her complimented her all day, telling her she was a saint, virtuous and so on. That was not the way to her salvation she reminded him. St. Athanasius then looked for a very mean and unpleasant widow and sent her to the old widow. Again after one week he went to her and asked about the new widow he had sent to her. The old

widow thanked St. Athanasius, telling him that he had sent her the person who could truly let her enjoy Christianity and fellowship with Christ.

Why do we escape from loving those who are against us? We have to love them because these difficult individuals are a gift from God who he puts in our lives in order to teach us how to love. When we look to the bosom of the Father, we see that it is open to us through the work of the cross and through the love we have in Christ by this work, we don't only imitate him, but we also share in his love. I was astonished to find that the Bible mentions the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in both the Old and the New Testaments as though they were the kingdom of God. The Bible spoke of how many of those who were not Jews would enjoy their bosom. This means that Abraham is in fact a shadow of God the Father who has a bosom for all mankind. Abraham loved God, he enjoyed all the shadow of his glory. The Jews spoke of him as their father, the gentiles also claimed he was their father, and every believer in the whole world, including us today, say he is our father.

When we pray the 'Our Father' do we believe we are a copy of the Father and like him have a bosom open to all mankind including children, servants and even violent persons? Once a friend in Toronto decided that he wanted to serve among the senior citizens, so he approached a society of seniors and asked them how he could serve. They told him of a very old woman who had many broken things in her home and needed someone to help her. When the man went to visit her, he told me that indeed he had found everything in her home broken, and her ground was covered in things. When he asked her what she would like him to do for her, she had asked him to help her clean up, arranging the house, taking out the trash and so on. He began to work hard and while he worked, he asked her if she had any children. She told him she had only one son. When he asked her where he was, she told him that he was in his room. Her son had a mental illness and had been the one who had broken everything and left a mess on the floor. The man asked the elderly woman if he could speak with her son and she agreed, so he entered his room and spoke to him until the boy became calm. He then asked him if he would like to help clean up, and the two worked together to arrange everything. At the end of the day the man was very happy with his service and when he had finished, he asked the woman again if the boy was her son since he had noticed that she was very old, and her son was very young. The woman responded that physically he was not her son, but she had adopted him. When she had gone to adopt him, she had approached a group home that cared for those with mental diseases and told them her only condition to adopt was that they give her a person no one wanted; a child who nobody would accept as a son, and they had chosen him for her. When she had adopted him, she had made out a will leaving all her house, her accounts in the bank and everything she owned to him and the person who would care for him after her death. The man seemed surprised and he asked her if she had any other children physically. She told him she had a son and a daughter who had both finished their studies and were now married and living well. When the man asked the woman whether she would leave anything for them, she told him she wouldn't since they both were well-educated and had jobs to provide for themselves. She had completed her responsibility towards them, and both her children were in fact happy that she would leave everything to the son she had adopted. I asked myself if I was in their situation, would be easy for me to accept a decision like hers? it would be difficult and not many would be able to accept it, yet this is the bosom of one like Christ, and one which will put

us to shame on the last day. We will find those like this woman who were old and weak physically but who choose to accept a destructive and mentally diseased person to give everything to joyfully.

When we enjoy fellowship or unity with the Father, we will find that it will become easy for us to sacrifice on behalf of others, and to suffer while others are blessed, to die while others live, and to be last while others are first and superior to us. How can we preach of the Father while we do not have a bosom like his which accepts all others? Who do we have in our bosoms? Our physical children or special friends? King Solomon wrote in Proverbs that anger is in the bosom of the ignorant people. Those who become ignorant open their bosoms to anger rather than wisdom, yet how many times do we become angry? It is shameful for us to be angry even when we are defending ourselves or the church. Once, Fr. Mikhail Ibrahim, an elderly spiritual father, was about to baptize a child. When he entered the baptistery he found a woman drinking from the water. He became angry and spoke to her firmly, telling her no one, not even the deacons were allowed to do that. The woman drew back in embarrassment and apologized explaining to Fr. Mikhail that that for many years she had been unable to conceive and then she had heard someone say that if she drank just a little of the water, her womb would be opened and she would be able to have the child she longed for. At that point, Fr. Mikail realized that he had allowed himself to become angry at this woman, believing he was defending the church while the woman was in fact committing an act of faith towards God which was acceptable to him. He then apologized to her and prayed that God would grant her a child.

We must learn to control our anger, believing firmly in God who grants us love, communion with himself and a wide bosom, because he is the Father of all mankind, and likewise, we must also be as a shadow of God. When I pray in the liturgy I feel a personal connection between my heart and God's, and even though the church is crowded with people, I feel as though it is totally empty because I do not pray for men to enjoy the prayer, but I pray because my heart is lifted up to heaven. In these moments, I enjoy my Lord of all mankind, and this is my worship. I also experience this personal contact with God when I am in my private room, and although I pray alone, I am not alone, all the church is in my heart and all mankind has a special place in my prayer and I pray on behalf of all men. The two are always together, I cannot worship without my personal prayers in my room, yet I can not pray alone without presenting the whole world to God. Many of the monks did not see another living person for years, sometimes forty, seventy or even eighty years, like St. Paul, but even in there solitude in the desert, they were not separated from the church because they were praying on behalf of the whole world. When St. Paul was in jail, he didn't feel separated from the church. He taught among the captains, the soldiers, those who visited him and never once did he complain in his letters to the churches that he felt secluded in jail, but rather he spoke to them about heaven, even while in chains and surrounded by soldiers. He felt as though he was in heaven and offered all the churches before God in his prayers. Even though a Bishop is responsible for his parish, his heart is not limited to his parish but is open to the whole world, even those in the future generations. When we pray, we not only mention those who are alive now but those who are yet to come as well.

When St. Athanasius was a deacon he went to Alexandria and when the people saw a man of God, many were attracted to the right way. He encouraged the confessors

until they were martyred, he cared for the philosophers and he opened his heart to all. I hope that we can truly enjoy unity with the Father in our worship, our ministry, and our lives. We know there was no time where there was a father without the son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is the source of joy, and if this is the atmosphere of the divine community, we should ask ourselves if our church, our priests, our deacons are also a source of joy. The church should be a community of joy. When we ascend to heaven on the last day, we will not see Archangel Michael upset with Archangel Gabriel, or one heavenly host turning his back on another. If this is the heavenly environment, why then do we not rejoice in all our circumstances because we possess this joy that is not from the outside, but rather from the inside? When we preach heaven, we preach joy.

Talk IV: The Work of Christ in our Lives while we are Serving him and Witnessing to the Holy Trinity

St. Paul wrote in his epistle, Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Because our Lord Jesus Christ took human form and became man, we feel a special closeness in our relationship with him. The Father did not incarnate nor did the Holy Spirit. We do not experience them through our physical senses. We don't see them with our eyes or touch them with our hands, but the Lord Jesus Christ came to us and we saw him through the disciples, the apostles and all those who lived in his time and related to us what happened. We cannot ignore thought, that we pray to the Father in the Lord's Prayer, and address our prayers to him in the liturgy of St. Basil. We also address our prayers to the Son in the liturgy of St. Gregory, and in the third hour we address our prayers to the Holy Spirit. As many of the church fathers have said, when we pray to any of the three hypostasis, or persons, we in fact address our prayer to all the three because they are one in divinity and can't be separated from each other.

Christ as a model through his ministry, dwelling in our hearts and working in our ministry

We do not only look to Christ so that we can imitate him, we enjoy his dwelling in our hearts and through the grace of God he works in us and we enjoy his work in our spiritual work and in serving others. St. Paul focuses our eyes on the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we speak about humility, we ought to remember that we are, in fact, dust and ashes as Abraham our father said, but it's not about what we do or say when we want to be humble. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated true humility when he humbled himself and became man. He was never separated from the Father, but he left his glory and appeared in our humanity. St. John Chrysostm says, God looked to mankind and saw her like an adulterous woman, who couldn't speak with him directly, face to face. She hid herself from his face because the adulterous being can not speak to the Holy One. Then the logos of God, the word of God, the wisdom of God, became man and clothed himself in humanity so the adulterous woman would not be afraid of him. When she discovered the sweetness of the fellowship with him, his kindness, and how he forgives sins, he revealed himself to her and asked her not to be troubled because he came especially for her because he loved her and wanted to share his holiness and glory with her.

Christ became a man so that men would not turn away from him but accept fellowship with him. Unfortunately, we often want to appear as righteous men, as though we are gods, and cover our infirmities. Humbling ourselves doesn't mean we step down, but rather feeling we are already down on the ground. I have to reveal or declare myself and discover myself and not to take the garment of hypocrisy, thinking I am a priest, theologian, deacon, or church man, and feel happy when others praise us. If we want to serve others successfully, we have to discover

ourselves, and this is the meaning of true humility. For example, when we teach little children, we speak about parents, priests, or bishops, as though they never do anything wrong and aren't sinners, which is wrong, because when the child commits a sin, he says I am not elected by God, I am not like my parents, my father of confession or a monk, so I am not a child of God and he separates himself from Christ. The Bible insisted to relate the infirmities of great men like Abraham who left his wife in the hands of pharaoh and lied when he said she is my sister. She was his sister, but not from his Father and mother together, but he didn't say the truth completely, he hid the reality that she was his wife. It is a kind of infirmity. Also we hear about David, the king and the prophet, god himself witnesses that the heart of David looks like the heart of god, at the same time he spoke about many fatal mistakes and sins, why? Peter, he denied the Lord Christ three times, although god himself told him about what would happen St. Mark while he was young escaped when they seized Christ.

The bible clearly delineated the infirmities of men in the Old and New Testament so that when we teach, preach or educate, we do not appear as righteous men without sin. If the great men have sinned, then we also have to be honest/humble serious in revealing we are sinners. Once a lady decided to convert from Christianity and abandon her faith in the Trinity. I took a deacon with me and went to an unrespectable hotel to meet her. I didn't care what people would say because she was precious to me. When I got there I tried to speak with her but she refused and insulted both Christ and the church. She insisted on going through with her conversion and deny her faith in Christ. I tried with all my might to speak with her, but her mind was made up and she continued to refuse to speak with me. The deacon then spoke and asked her if she thought I had come from heaven. He told her that just as she had sins, I had sins also, and that he himself had loved a woman when he was young from a different religion and wanted to deny his faith. She asked him what he had done, and he replied that he had studied Christianity and discovered the sweetness of Christ. From that point on, she began to open up to us and as we spoke to her, she came to love the Lord Christ. She packed her belongings and returned with us to the church. Today she is happily married with children, and all is well in her life. All she had needed to realize was that she wasn't a bad person and the others in the church saints. We are all sinners.

It is wrong for me to put on a mask before a child, making myself to appear as an angel of God from heaven. When a young person approaches me and confesses he or she has many sins, I find it hard to speak. I always respond to them by letting them know I often had many bad thoughts as they did when I was young like them. This makes the person feel that his father of confession is not alienated and far from him or her. He is, in fact, in touch with my inner man. Don't put yourself in a special place as a great teacher but rather be humble. Humility means revealing ourselves, not saying I was an adulterer or drug addict and so on unless it is true. Don't lie for the sake of putting yourself down, but rather admit your weaknesses and that it is by the grace of God only you are in the church today and if the grace of God were taken from you, you would fall in all sin. People are in need of men who truly enter in their word, not distinguish themselves and create a special world for themselves apart from the sinners. Jesus Christ spoke with the children as though he was one of them, and he spoke with the sinners as a lover of sinners, even though he himself was not a sinner. He didn't condemn any adulterous person or tax collector and his rebukes were very gentle and kind. He said to the adulterous woman, no one condemns you I will not condemn you, don't commit sin again. Although he is the judge and has the right to condemn her when he said who condemns you, and surely she looked to his eyes and said I know none except you has the right to condemn me because you are the judge and he said

even me I did not come to condemn but to save. Don't create the impression that you are from another world or you have another nature and are a righteous person in a higher rank spiritually than others. Even among each other, if a deacon speaks with another deacon and says I am in trouble, don't say to him how can you be a deacon and be in trouble, or complaining or worrying, but rather tell him you can help him, he can help you, and pray together, and take advice from any priest or bishop, together you are in need of this advice.

Once, a monk was tempted with bad thoughts for a long time and he thought to himself there was no hope for his salvation. He decided to leave the monastery and marry instead of thinking bad thoughts. His face became filled with worry and he was very upset. He went to one of the elders of the monks and told him he had been struggling with bad thoughts for a long time. The elderly monk responded that he had to leave the monastery. As he was leaving, he met another elderly monk who asked him why he was upset. The monk told him he was tempted with bad thoughts, so the elder monk said to him, I am an elder and I am very weak, can we go together to any of the counselors in the monastery of the abbots and ask for advice. He spoke to the monk until he calmed down and became hopeful and not in despair. The second monk he had spoken to was an angel of God. The first elderly monk had made a monk despair and was not in touch with the nature of men, so the temptation was transferred from the young monk to the elder and he became very troubled and his mind was corrupted with many thoughts. He left his cell and began to leave the monastery and the angel who had met the younger monk met him, and asked him where he was going. He replied he could not live in the monastery any longer and when the angel asked him why, he told him his mind was corrupted with bad thoughts. Then the angel asked him if he knew why that was happening to him and the elderly monk replied no. The angel told him it was because he made the young monk despair so his temptation had been transferred to him. He told him to be kind with people and prayed for him, and the monk's thoughts returned to being pure.

When we condemn others, we put ourselves in their situation and do not enjoy fellowship with Christ. Be kind with sinners but at the same time, be very firm with yourself. Those who are very firm with themselves are kind to others, while those who are kind to themselves are very severe with others. If you find a person who is severe with others, expect that he or she is not serious in their life. We have to share in the Lord's humility by understanding ourselves and sharing in his love for sinners. We read in the epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians that Christ became obedient to the point of death on the cross. When we ask children about obedience, they say their parents make them do it and it is hard to obey. When priests or deacons give orders it is also hard for us to obey, not only children find it difficult to obey, but also adults cannot accept obedience and look to it as a kind of slavery, yet the Lord Jesus Christ became obedient when he obeyed the Father. His obedience did not belittle him or make him any lower than the Father. To understand this point we can ask ourselves who is greater, Jesus or St. Mary and St. Joseph. There is no comparison between creator and creature. St. Luke says Christ obeyed them, so then when we obey it doesn't mean we are in a lower rank or are obliged to obey. We should look to obedience as sharing in Christ's obedience. It is an honor to become like our Lord, obedient, not opposing others or being disobedient. We ought to struggle to obey more than others so that we may become as close as we can to the obedience of Jesus Christ. St. Bakhomios, the father of the syncope system of monastic life, was well organized and his monasteries were very well organized. According to St. Jerome, in the fifth century there were fifty thousand monks following the Bakhomios system in Upper Egypt. Perhaps he exaggerated, but at least we can say about twenty-five thousand were monks in the order. In his monastery in Bavo, in Upper

Egypt, the monastery's capacity was about two thousand monks and it was difficult to keep order for all the two thousand and everything else in the monastery. His disciple was responsible for the clothes and once some hermits who lived alone in caves and cells outside the monastery came to take advice from St. Bakhomios or enjoy his spiritual words. St. Bakhomios' disciple said to him, your clothes are very worn out, how can you meet the hermits wearing them? And he begged him to change into a new outfit he had brought for him. St. Bakhomios refused to wear it and met the hermits with his old worn out garment. Later, he realized that he had disobeyed the disciple, and even though he was his son, St. Bakhomios began to weep and he apologized to his disciple. He wept for a long time and confessed before all the monks that he had committed a sin because he had disobeyed his disciple. We ought to ask ourselves if we have that same spirit as St. Bakhomios the great. We should not demand obedience of our congregation, but rather, it should be our pleasure to obey them when they speak in truth. When a person asks for something I feel I can do or tells me in truth the right thing to do, I should obey and feel joyful that I share in my Lord's obedience. We must follow new a new concept of virtue through the Lord Jesus Christ, as we live in him. Virtue is to attain the Lord Jesus Christ, because if our Lord is in our hearts, we can not lie, be lazy, hate, or have bad thoughts. Not because we are righteous, but because our Lord is in fact within us. He is our glory and he surrounds us with a fiery wall, as it is written in the book of Zachariah, I will be a wall surrounding Jerusalem and a glory with her. We are hidden in Christ, as St Paul used to say. He protects us and glorifies our inner man; he creates the kingdom of God within us, then in Jesus Christ we have a new concept concerning all the virtues. Thus, virtue means to be in fellowship with the Lord, and sin is to turn our back on the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one knows the Father except the Son and those whom the Son chooses to reveal the father to. He is a unique teacher. Any human teacher gives some lectures, and explains the divine commandments, as we do, but when Christ teaches, he not only speaks with us, but he carries us in him and grants us to exercise this new life. We cannot carry our congregations nor can we grant them purity, humility obedience, struggle against sin and so on, only our Lord Christ has this power and authority. He dwells in us and we are hidden in him. A story is told of a lady who was attacked by bad thoughts and when she felt that she was very weak she knelt down and lifted her inner eyes to Christ saying my heart is yours, Satan wants to attack it, he entices me to do something wrong and live in impurity. I can't defend my inner man, it is yours, can you defend my inner man? and she saw a vision of herself in a room with a closed door. Behind the door, the demon of adultery knocked, so she asked the Lord to open the door and face this demon, when he opened the door, the demon looked at Christ and said to him, I have the wrong address and escaped. He escaped because he couldn't face the Lord. Christ is unlike any other teacher because he has the power and authority not only to teach but change and convert all our inner man and all our behavior. If we imagine that by our speech we can change the lives of men, we are deceived. It is not us, it is the Word of Christ. We should not begin to serve unless we are hidden in Christ. Many times while St. John Chrysostom preached, he would ask the people to pray in the midst of the sermon so that the Lord may grant them understanding and help them to put them into practice. The life of the servant of God is to be hidden in Christ.

The Lord is revealed and declared, as St. John said in his first epistle, the life was manifested to us. Our Lord is a teacher and we are called teachers if we share in his love, are hidden in him, and he works in us and through us and by us. He reveals himself and the mystery of the Father and Spirit and heaven. It is very important for us to enjoy the heavenly life so that everyone who is in touch with us discovers heaven. It is not our job only to deliver a

commentary on the bible or explain some verses, our job is to be lifted with our people to heaven itself. St. John Chrysostom used to say to his people, say to your parents that you were in heaven and were accompanied by the cherubim, seraphim and the heavenly hosts. Manifest to your husbands and wives that you were in heaven. We aren't coming to the church just to fulfill some rites that are good but to see heaven and to practice heaven. Every time we speak, we ask God to lift up our hearts, even the bishops and priests ask the people in the liturgy to lift up their hearts and all the people say they are with the Lord.

Finally, if we are hidden in Christ, we don't want to create direct friendship with the people or our congregation but rather, we want them to enjoy the friendship of Christ himself. I should feel that he is very close to me and everyone should feel as though he or she is the closest person to Christ creating a continuous feast. St. Athanasius the great used to say that the Lord Christ is the lamb who was sacrificed on the feast of the Passover. The Lord is our feast, we want to create the atmosphere of joy and feasting in our congregation continuously even while they are sleeping, eating, drinking, at work or in whatever they do. They should feel as though they are celebrating because they are with the Lord. I hope all of us truly enjoy the work of Christ so that we may serve him according to his will, through his strength, authority, and love.

Talk V: The Role of the Holy Spirit

John 16:13

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come .He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you .All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

These verses are very important to understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our witness to Christ, and in our service. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and at the same time is the Spirit of the Son. The Father and the Son are our heavenly models and we hope to attain their Spirit of love and sacrificing on behalf of others. The Father is a model of Fatherhood. Through unity with him, we have the same Spirit of Fatherhood and love. Every human being in the world should have a special place in our hearts. The Son fulfilled the redeeming word and accepted to die on our behalf, sacrificing himself for the whole world. It is difficult to imagine us human beings, imitating and sharing in the love of the Father, the heavenly one, love himself, or in the Son, who through his love accepted to die and to sacrifice himself. The Lord Jesus Christ in his farewell speech, before he was betrayed and crucified, told his disciples they should rejoice for it was to their advantage that he would ascend and send them the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 tells us the Spirit of truth will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will tell us things to come. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ said the Spirit will not speak on his own authority because he wanted us not to separate Christ and the Spirit. There is no separation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are distinguished but are not separate. As what is the Father's is Christ's, what is Christ's is the Father's. There is no separation between the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit guides us from earth to heaven. One might ask why Christ didn't send the Spirit to the church while he was on earth in his humanity. If Christ was dwelling on earth and didn't ascend, then the Spirit would attract us to Christ on earth, but he wanted us to be attracted to heaven. As we see in the book of Acts, the work of the Spirit is to guide the church in all details, even trivial things, and in every aspect so that the church might ascend and be with the heavenly groom.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in our Ministry

The Son and the Father are models for us in pastoral care, and the Spirit works to unite us with them. Through this unity, we can share with the Father and the Son their love and their work. The Lord promised us that he and the Father would abide in us and we abide in them. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to ensure this. Again, in his farewell speech, Christ said to his disciples, he who loves me obeys my commandments, and my Father and I will come and dwell in him. It is the work of the Spirit to grant us love because love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that we obey the commandments and fulfill them joyfully. It is the work of the Spirit that we are united with the Father and in Christ. It is impossible for us who are sinners and weak

human beings, to imitate the Father and the Son by ourselves. We want to love, but we can't; we want to obey, but we have all broken the commandments and the law. Although we long to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible. All these things can only be realized by the Holy Spirit. Thank God for the gift of the Spirit which he, the giver of all good things, granted us. Through him we have divine love, we can fulfill the law and the commandments, and we can abide in the Father and Son and have them dwell in us.

Words cannot express the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our service. Sometimes we look to the Holy Spirit as though he is only a divine energy, which he is, but he is also a divine person. In the book of Acts, we see how the Spirit spoke with the apostles, guided them, and granted them joy. There was a close relationship between the apostles, the church as a whole, and the Holy Spirit. It is often easier for us to speak with the Son because he became man, and we are man, but it is harder to speak with the Father because he is hidden and even harder to speak with the Holy Spirit. It is crucial to remember that we are in fact close to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. We love the Father and he loves us, we love the Lord Jesus Christ for he redeemed us, and we love the Spirit because he guides us. We then take the love, the redeeming work, and the guidance- all the divine work, thought the Holy Trinity.

To preach, as the Lord Christ said, we sanctify ourselves so that we may become holy. God is holy, but how do we become sanctified? God is interested in man as though there is no other living creature and has made a plan for our salvation. What was the purpose of all this divine work? That we may become holy. In the book of Leviticus, God says, be holy as I am holy. How can we become holy to serve? The Lord Christ by nature is holy. Who then can grant us holiness, righteousness, and purity? That is the work of the Spirit who sanctifies our soul, our mind, our emotions, our energies, our senses, our body, and everything. He also sanctifies our time; every second becomes very precious because the Holy Spirit sanctifies it. As the Holy Spirit dwells in us and unites us with the Father and the Son, we become holy in the Lord Christ and enjoy sanctification. It is the source of witnessing through the gospel because when we are sanctified, we can speak about heaven. When we taste the heavenly life, we feel like we are not of this world.

Once, I went to visit a man from our church who had just had an operation in a university hospital, and I met a professor who told me he was a friend of the late Pope Kyrillos, even though he himself was not a Christian. I asked him how he could have been his friend when he was so young and the Pope had died in 1970. The professor replied that when he was a child in old Cairo, all the children would gather every day and go to see Father Mina the hermit, who later became Pope Kyrillos the VI. The children, both Christian and non-Christian, enjoyed being with him, and all loved him. The professor's parents used to say about Father Mina that he was not of this world. The non-Christian parents had witnessed about father Mina, Pope Kyrillos the VI. That is the work of the Spirit, he beautifies our inner man, grants us a heavenly touch and we become as angels of God, and the world can witness that we are not of this world, but rather we come from heaven, and are angels of God. To serve others, we need a very big heart and a very broad mind. To embrace all mankind and to put them in our heart is not our work. We cannot attain it by hearing a sermon. No one can grant us this gift; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace and so on. The Holy Spirit supports us to work through his Spiritual gifts.

To witness to Christ, the heavenly groom, we are in need of one who can be in contact with the groom and with others. According to ancient Jewish tradition, a person called the friend of the groom would serve as a link between the engaged couple, who were not allowed to see each other. The friend of the groom, who would be a brother, or a close friend, would go to the bride-to-be and tell her about the groom, then return her messages to him. When the couple would marry, the friend of the groom would still serve as a link between them, taking a room near them. If there were any problems between them, they would not go to the parents, but rather turn to him and he would work with them to solve them. We are the friends of the groom like St. John the Baptist who spoke to people about the groom. It is impossible to do that though unless we know the groom very well and we can pass from this world to receive messages to give to the bride and take a message from bride to the groom. Our role as servants of God is to work between the two. Christ, the groom, is close to us. We know him very well and can describe him. We can speak practically about all he has, and also open our hearts and become close to the bride which is mankind, and speak to them about the groom and so on. Can we say we are the friends of the groom? If we believe we are, we should ask ourselves if we are in contact with the heavenly one and if heaven is far way from us or inside us. The work of the Spirit is to create this friendship. I am the friend of Christ and my role is to introduce him to men and to pray to him concerning men like John the Baptist, friend of the groom who rejoiced because he found the bride became close to the groom. My pleasure is not that the church is crowded, or I can speak well or serve well, but like John the Baptist, I should rejoice even when the people leave me to go to the groom. It is the work of the Spirit to grant me and you friendship with the heavenly groom and grant us to practice the heavenly life as St. Paul, who said he was in fact in heaven itself and was proud of his citizenship there.

Who sent the prophets, the Holy Spirit, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac Jacob? It was the Spirit, who also guided the apostles and disciples after Christ's ascension. The Holy Spirit would instruct St. Paul to settle in a town, or leave, and to speak or to be silent, as he also guided the apostles and disciples of the Lord Christ. The Holy Spirit who sent the prophets, the patriarchs, and guided the apostles and disciples, is the only one who can guide us. When there is a problem, we ought not trust in men or ourselves, in our experience, power, abilities, or energies, but rather, we should ask the Holy Spirit who guided the patriarchs, prophets, the disciples, apostles and all the church through the generations to guide us so that we might witness to the Lord, God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ. We need to feel that thorough the Spirit we receive our responsibilities.

Who wrote the Bible? The Holy Spirit, who left each to write through his culture and style, but guided the words of the writers of the books of the Bible, and only the spirit who wrote it can explain it. We sometimes refer to the books and writings of the Fathers because they enjoyed fellowship with the trinity, but we also have to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who opens the Bible before our inner eyes and grants us illumination. We call baptism the sacrament of illumination it opens our inner sight so that we understand the Bible and understand the mystery of God though the Bible. Once a person came and said to Bishop Abram of Fayoum, the lover of the poor men and women, that he didn't understand a verse in the Bible, and wanted him to explain it. The Bishop agreed, and asked the man to follow him to his room. There the man expected he would take him to the library to read some volumes, but the room was empty. The Bishop told him they

would pray, and he began to ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate his eyes so that he may understand the verse. After a short time the man told the Bishop that he had understood the verse.

Are we trying trust? Do we trust in the Holy Spirit to grants us illumination and understanding of the mystery of God? Every time we read in the Bible, the Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding more and more. David the king and prophet said for every perfection there is limit, but when we are in unity or receive the work of the Spirit, we enjoy more and more of the Holy Scriptures or Bible more and more. These are only some aspects of the work of the Spirit in the preaching and witnessing to the gospel of God. May God grant all of us to enjoy the work of the Father, Son and Spirit, so that we may witnesses to them.