



Sunday Servants Preparation Class

Patrology II: Going Deeper Spiritually with the Church Fathers

GO DEEP...



Mark's first few weeks of medical school ...



Same Faith Throughout All Generations

- Passed by our Lord Jesus Christ → Holy Apostles → **Holy Successors**
- **Same faith** remains preserved and unchanged throughout all the generations of Coptic Christianity
- Without the Apostolic Fathers and the holy Fathers who followed in their footsteps we would not have the blessings of **the authentic and unchanged faith** which we have today

Council of Nicea (325 AD)

Who is this saint?



Council of Nicea (325 AD)

Pre-Nicene Church Fathers

- A.k.a. “Apostolic Fathers”
- First 3 centuries
- Writings were simple, non-scientific
- Main themes:
 - Unity of the church
 - Preservation of the pure faith



Ante/Post-Nicene Church Fathers

- 4th and 5th centuries
- More complicated writings
- Covered a range of themes
- Often highly intellectual, philosophical

Three Characteristics of the Church Fathers

1. Correct Orthodox doctrine
 - a. E.g. Regarding the Holy Trinity, nature of Christ, and all the Holy Divine Mysteries
2. A holy and saintly life
3. Their acceptance as “Fathers” by the Church



Examples of Church Fathers according to the faith of our Coptic Orthodox Church



- From the East (writing in the Greek Language) are:
 - St. Athanasius the Apostolic, 20th Pope of Alexandria
 - St. Basil the Great
 - St. Gregory the Theologian
 - St. John Chrysostom
 - St. Cyril the Great 24th Pope of Alexandria
 - St. Dioscorus 25th Pope of Alexandria
 - St. Severus of Antioch
- From the West (writing in Latin Language) are:
 - St. Cyabrianous
 - St. Ambrose
 - St. Jerome

Lessons we learn from the Church Fathers (1)

- Examples of Practical Christianity
- Daily Behaviour of Individuals
- Accurate Interpretation of the Word of God



Lessons we learn from the Church Fathers (2)

- Orthodox Spirituality
 - Objective of Christian life is to be **one with God**
 - **Grace** is needed to partake of the spiritual nature
 - There is no spiritual life without **prayer**
 - Participation in the **sacraments** is necessary
 - Partnership with the **saints** is needed





St. John
Chrysostom
(of the Golden Mouth)

UKCopticIcons

Saint John Chrysostom (347 – 407 AD)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzLkFOZYH-0>

(end at 2:26)



Saint John Chrysostom (347 – 407 AD)

- Born in Antioch
- Studied as an orator and law
- Became a monk at a young age
- When his father departed, he gave all of his inheritance to the poor & needy
- Wrote many homilies at a young age
- Ordained a deacon and then a priest in Antioch

Saint John Chrysostom (347 – 407 AD)

- Ordained Patriarch of Constantinople against his will
- Things he did were:
 - Emptied the episcopal palace of the costly furniture and sold the newly purchased marble columns to build a hospital
 - Excommunicated a few bishops who were not following the correct way
 - Reformed the life of the clergy
- Admonished all the congregation against living in wealth and lust
- Admonished emperor's wife (Queen Eudoxia) for taking a widow's garden
 - Exiled for one night ... earthquake occurs ... he returns
- Exiled a second time ... treated harshly during exile ... health deteriorates ... departs in peace

Lessons from St. John's Life



- True Example of Practical Christianity
- Start young
- Daily Behaviour of Individuals
- Lessons in Orthodox Spirituality
 - Grace
 - Prayer
 - Sacraments is necessary

Start Young

- 1. Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew
- 2. Homilies on Acts
- 3. Homilies on Romans
- 4. Homilies on First Corinthians
- 5. Homilies on Second Corinthians
- 6. Homilies on Ephesians
- 7. Homilies on Philippians
- 8. Homilies on Colossians
- 9. Homilies on First Thessalonians
- 10. Homilies on Second Thessalonians
- 11. Homilies on First Timothy
- 12. Homilies on Second Timothy
- 13. Homilies on Titus
- 14. Homilies on Philemon
- 15. Commentary on Galatians
- 16. Homilies on the Gospel of John
- 17. Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews
- 18. Homilies on the Statues
- 19. No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself
- 20. Two Letters to Theodore After His Fall
- 21. Letter to a Young Widow
- 22. Homily on St. Ignatius
- 23. Homily on St. Babylas
- 24. Homily Concerning "Lowliness of Mind"
- 25. Instructions to Catechumens
- 26. Three Homilies on the Power of Satan
- 27. Homily on the Passage "Father, if it be possible . . ."
- 28. Homily on the Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof
- 29. Homily on the Passage "If your enemy hunger, feed him."
- 30. Homily Against Publishing the Errors of the Brethren
- 31. First Homily on Eutropius
- 32. Second Homily on Eutropius (After His Captivity)
- 33. Four Letters to Olympias
- 34. Letter to Some Priests of Antioch
- 35. Correspondence with Pope Innocent I
- 36. On the Priesthood

- Trained with best orator alive
 - But not led astray by vanities of the world
 - Best orator alive thought St. John was his best student – except that he “belonged to the Christians”
- Forsook worldly success & riches, and became a monk
- Did most of his writing as a Deacon
- Strenuous ascetic worship



Writings from St. John Chrysostom



Daily Behaviour of Individuals



WORK HARD!

- God helps those who work, not those who are idle. No one helps an inactive person, but one who joins in the labor. The good God himself will bring ... work to perfection.

DON'T HAVE ENEMIES

- We are commanded to have only one enemy, the devil. With him never be reconciled! But with a brother, never be at enmity in thy heart.



Daily Behaviour of Individuals

AVOID ANGER

- No matter how just your words may be, you ruin everything when you speak with anger.

Daily Behaviour of Individuals

LOVE OF THE POOR & DISADVANTAGED

- What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger. Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.
- Every family should have a room where Christ is welcome in the person of the hungry and thirsty stranger.
- Do you fast? Then feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick, do not forget the imprisoned, have pity on the tortured, comfort those who grieve and who weep, be merciful, humble, kind, calm, patient, sympathetic, forgiving, reverent, truthful and pious, so that God might accept your fasting and might plentifully grant you the fruits of repentance.



Orthodox Spirituality – Grace

- God doesn't work beyond our will to preserve our freedom, otherwise our freedom will be destroyed.
- For it cannot, it cannot be, that a man should enjoy the benefit of grace except he watch.

A silhouette of a person in a prayerful pose, with hands clasped and head bowed, set against a warm, golden sunset background. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, partially enclosed by a white curved border.

Orthodox Spirituality – Need for Prayer

YOU MUST PRAY

- It is simply impossible to lead, without the aid of prayer, a virtuous life.
- The words of deep pure prayer are like the fire you ignite before God.
- Prayer is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished ... It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings.



Orthodox Spirituality – Need for Prayer

PRAY EVERYWHERE & ANYWHERE

- You can set up an altar to God in your minds by means of prayer. And so it is fitting to pray at your trade, on a journey, standing at a counter or sitting at your handiwork.

THE SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEMS

- Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness.

Orthodox Spirituality – Need for Sacraments

GREATNESS OF THE EUCHARIST

- The Eucharist is a fire that inflames us, that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar being made terrible to the devil.



Glory be to God
forever, Amen.

