



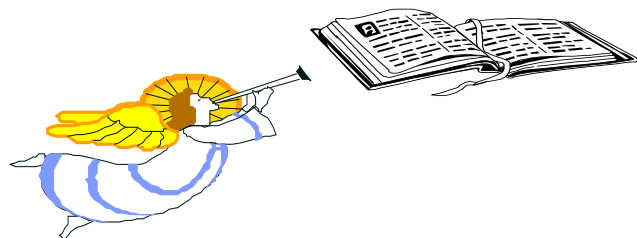
Schedule of Church Services

Sunday	7:00 – 7:30 AM	Matin Prayers
	7:30-10:00 AM	Divine Liturgy (Arabic)
	8:00-10:30 AM	Divine Liturgy (English)
	11:00AM-12:00 Noon	Sermon in Arabic
	11:15AM-12:00 Noon	Sunday School
	12:15-1:00PM	Servants Meeting
	6:00 – 7:00 PM	Bible Study N.T. (Arabic)
Wednesday	8:00-10:00 AM	Divine Liturgy
Thursday	5:30AM-7:30 AM	Divine Liturgy
Friday	7:30–9:00 PM	Youth meeting (H. S. & College)
Saturday	8:00 – 10:00 AM	Divine Liturgy
	5:00 – 6:30 PM	Advanced Hymn class
	6:30 – 7:00 PM	Beginners Hymn class
	5:30 – 7:00 PM	Bible Study O.T. (Arabic)
	7:00 -- 8:00 PM	Vesper Prayers
8:00–10:00 PM	Midnight Praises	
The Priests receive confession by appointment & during midnight praises		

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THE PAPAL MESSAGE

(H.H. pope shenouda III)

The feast of the Resurrection, April 2001

My beloved children, the clergy and congregation in the lands of immigration,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on the Feast of the Resurrection. I ask that the blessing of this Feast and its effectiveness be in your lives.

It is through the resurrection that the Lord conquered death, a conquest that has never been achieved before by anyone. Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, by His will and authority, as He previously said, "I lay down my life that I may take it again...I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." (John 10:17-18)

Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead at the time He wanted. He came out of the sealed tomb, as the life that was in Him was stronger than death, and stronger than the tomb, as it is said in the Bible "In Him was life" (John 1:4). He also said about Himself "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). As long as Our Lord Jesus Christ is the life, therefore death cannot overcome Him. Christ only temporarily accepted death to redeem the world and save it from death.

It was possible for Our Lord Jesus Christ to rise, for it was Christ Who previously restored life to many. He raised the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:41-42); He also raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15); and it was Our Lord Jesus Christ Who raised Lazarus from the dead, although he had been dead for four days (John 11:43-44).

Our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection was clear to Him, before He accepted death. Christ told His disciples that He will "suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised the third day." (Matthew 16:21) Therefore, His resurrection was a fulfillment of His prophecy. Also, Christ's resurrection was a realization of prophecies in the Old Testament "which were written." (Luke 24:44-46) Also,

among the symbols of the resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament is the story of Jonah the Prophet (Matthew 12:39-40).

It was inevitable that the Lord Jesus Christ would rise from the dead, as His divinity never departed of His humanity, even for a single instant nor a twinkle of an eye. Christ was physically dead with regard to the separation of His human spirit from His body, but His divinity never departed from His spirit nor from His body. Therefore, it was essential for this body that is united with the divinity, to rise after the spirit descended into the lower parts of the earth (Ephesians 4:9), and preached to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19). The spirit moved those fallen asleep to paradise, and then united with the body that was united with the divinity.

It was inevitable that Our Lord Jesus Christ would rise from the dead, in order to respond to those who rejoiced at His death, and who thought that they had destroyed and removed Him.

By His resurrection, He proved that He is the living One Who never dies, as the angel of the resurrection said about Him to the women, "Why do you seek the Living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5)

Our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection was also a necessity to console His disciples, to encourage them, to eliminate the doubts that occupied their minds, to deliver them from fear and to grant them the power to preach openly, and to withstand the persecution of the Jews.

His resurrection was also essential to prove that He is not a normal being who dies like others and then His story ends, but Christ's resurrection proved His divinity, as He rose by Himself without anyone raising Him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection was a necessity, in order that He becomes the first-fruit, through which all faithful will rise in a similar manner. By this Saint Paul taught saying, "But now, Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruit of those who have fallen asleep...For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But

each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15: 20 - 23)

The resurrection of Christ was a necessity through which He established Christianity. The power of His resurrection proved the divinity of Christ, and showed that His death was not a weakness but a sacrifice. After His resurrection and appearance to His disciples, Our Lord Jesus Christ stayed with them forty days speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3); teaching them the tenets of faith; delivering to them the sacraments and the rites; and expounding to them all the prophecies concerning Him in the Old Testament (Luke 24:27; 44-47).

In His resurrection, Christ granted the disciples the sacrament of Priesthood. He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:22-23) Christ entrusted them with the preaching of the Gospel to the whole universe and said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

He commanded them saying, "you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) With the faith of His disciples in the power of the resurrection, they preached everywhere and grace was upon them all (Acts 4:33).

Let us all have such grace and such power, in order to witness to the Lord Christ, and preach the Gospel to every creature, as He commanded and ordered us, doing what we say in our prayers: "Thy Kingdom come."

May you all be well, abiding in the Lord, continuing His work.

Signed:
Shenouda III
April 2001

Christ is Risen!

HALLELUJAH

OUR FATHER'S PASTORAL MESSAGE

(H.G. Bishop Serapion)

The feast of the Resurrection, April 2001

"Old things have passed away; Behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17)

My Beloved, Sons and Daughters of the Diocese of Los Angeles,

Christ is Risen Truly He is Risen. Our souls rejoice and our hearts are full of joy, because of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Together, we praise God in the hymn of the Resurrection saying, "Come all of you faithful, let us worship Christ's Resurrection for through His Cross, joy entered into the whole world."

Indeed, through Christ's Resurrection, joy has entered into the whole world, since Christ arose for our sake. "And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him Who died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:15) Christ died for us and arose from the dead so that He may put to death our old man, and raise us as a new creation. He died for us, and we died with Him; "if One died for all, then all died." (2 Cor. 5:14) He arose for our sake and we rose with Him, "and raised us up together, and made us sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6)

My Beloved, today, we rejoice because of Christ's Resurrection, and because we have been raised with Him. We rejoice because through Christ's death and our death with Him, our old person has died, and by being raised with Him, we became a new creation. We are joyful and glad that the old things have passed away and all things have become new.

But, what are the old things and how have all things become new?!

The old thing is man's bitter slavery to the devil. When man disobeyed God, he became a slave to the devil. Satan imprisoned man and clothed him with the forces of darkness. Man, who was originally created in the image and likeness of God, has become, "carnal, sold under sin...in my flesh nothing good dwells...for the good that I will to do, I do

not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice...it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." (Rom. 7:14,18,19,20)

Man's body, spirit, and soul were corrupted and sin lived within him, directing and leading his actions. Man had become as St. Macarius the Great said, "He hears with evil ears, has feet that hurry to walk in sin, hands that do evil, and a heart that invents evil." Thus man was no longer the original creature God created him to be. Therefore, he was called "the old man". The problem was not just that man sinned, but that he sinned, corrupted, and polluted his nature making it corruptible and degenerative. Christ came to renew man's nature, to remove from him the old man, and clothe him with the new man by His Holy Spirit. He came to reunite the human nature to His Holy Spirit. He came to give man a new mind, a new will, a new soul, new eyes, new ears, a new tongue, and a new spirit. In other words, to make him a new man. He came to make man a new vessel to pour in him the new wine, which is His Spirit. Only Christ, by His death and resurrection, is able to renew man, for He is "the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Before Christ's resurrection, the whole world was like the valley, which Ezekiel the Prophet saw (Ezekiel: 37). It was a valley full of bones that were very dry. Sin ruled over man and cast down many dead, and all those it cast down dead were strong. The question is: will these bones become alive?! This is a recurring question, which the bitter soul wonders about when she is subjected to the power of sin, and when she sees sin destroying the world.

Will these bones become alive? Will these souls become alive? Do I have salvation? Is my repentance accepted? How will these very dry bones become alive? By listening to God's word. "Again He said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you, and bring flesh upon you, cover you with

skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 37:4-6). The very dry bones stood upon their feet, and became an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37:10). The very dry bones heard the word of the Lord; they became alive and an exceedingly great army. Likewise, we, who have become dry bones because of sin, will become alive when we hear and believe in the Word of God, Who was incarnate, became man, died for us, and rose to give us life. The Word of God made us alive by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within us, and gave us new flesh and sinew. In other words, He changed us into a new man, with new mind, new will, and a new form in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

The old things have passed away; all things have become new. The gloomy valley has become a very delightful sight. Joy has entered into the sad valley, just as it has entered into the whole world.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

The Lord told Ezekiel to prophesy to these bones and say to them, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" (Ezekiel 37:4) Christ died and rose for our sake. Are we responding to His actions? Do we hear His voice and rise from the death of our sins? Now, is the hour, which our Good Lord said of it, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live." (John 5:25) If we respond to Christ's voice, we move from death to life, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:24). The resurrection of Christ does not give life to every one, but only to those who hear His voice, believe in Him, and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

The Grace of God works in man depending on man's response to Grace. St. Macarius the Great said, "Although Grace has the power to purify and perfect man in an hour, yet it comes to him gradually. It comes slowly to test the motive of man, and see if he keeps perfectly his love for God." Then

he adds, "When the soul succeeds one time after another, and doesn't grieve Grace in any matter, then man receives increasing help, and Grace finds a pasture for itself in the soul, and places its roots deep inside the soul and in all its thoughts, because the soul is found after many trials to be acceptable and in accordance to Grace."

The new life, which we receive, by the Spirit of the Risen Christ working within us, makes us worthy of the glorious life, for Christ has raised us with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Therefore, our resurrection with Christ makes us set our minds on things above, not on earthly things (Col. 3:2) .

Let us reflect on our concerns and ask ourselves, "where are our hearts and our minds?" "Towards which direction are our prayers?" During the Holy Fifty Days, as we rejoice in Christ's resurrection, let us remember St. Paul's saying, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1)

Let us pray that our Good Lord may grant us the joy of His glorious resurrection, and our resurrection with Him, and the new life, which we live, confirmed in Him by the work of His Holy Spirit. Let us pray that our Living Christ keep safe His Holy Church and grant His struggling people power, peace, and victory. We pray for the life of our beloved father, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, and we look forward to his upcoming pastoral visit to consecrate St. Mark Church in Los Angeles on Sunday, May 6th, 2001. We thank our Lord, Who gave this church a new form, after it was dry bones as a result of the fire. We pray that the grace of His Holy Spirit may continue to work in this church and in all the churches in this diocese, in her servants, and people, so that we all may become an exceedingly great army doing God's will and witnessing to His love and His glorious resurrection.

Wishing you many happy returns,

Signed

Bishop Serapion

Symbols:

The Number “153”

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ showed Himself to His disciples on many occasions. One night Simon Peter and some other disciples went fishing. But “That night they caught nothing” (John 21: 3). In the morning, Jesus stood on the shore and asked them to “cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some” (John 21: 6). “When Peter dragged the net to the land, it was full of large fish, one hundred and fifty three fishes” (John 21: 11).

+ Saint Kyrilos, the pope of Alexandria (A.D. 412 – A.D. 444) says that 100 represents the fullness of the Gentiles who will gather under the reign (rule) of Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. “And there were loud voices in heaven saying, ‘the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever’” (Revelations 11: 15). Also 100 represents the full number of the shepherd’s flock: Jesus says, “If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray ... He will go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying” (Matthew 18: 12). The Number hundred is also mentioned by Jesus Christ in the parable of the sower (the person who plants and scatters seeds) to represent the best crop of the land. “The seed that fell on good ground yielded a crop of hundred-fold” (Matthew 13: 8).

+ There is the number 50. This fifty stands for the remnant of Israel who will join Jesus Christ on His Second Coming. “The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God” (Isaiah 10: 21). “Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Romans 11: 25).

+ There is the number 3. Three also indicates completeness: the creation order has three parts: heaven, earth and underworld. It also stands for the Holy Trinity (The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), in one Godhead.



Christ is Risen! - Truly He is Risen!

"Still He Walked"

He could hear the crowds screaming "crucify," "crucify" . . .
He could hear the hatred in their voices,
These were His chosen people. He loved them,
And they were going to crucify Him.
He was beaten, bleeding and weakened . . . His heart was
broken,
But still He walked.

He could see the crowd as He came from the palace.
He knew each of the faces so well. He had created them.
He knew every smile, laugh, and shed tear,
But now they were contorted with rage and anger . . . His heart
broke,
But still He walked.

His disciples had left, denied, and even betrayed Him.
He searched the crowd for a loving face and He saw very few.
Then He turned His eyes to the only One that mattered
And He knew that He would never be alone.
He looked back at the crowd,
At the people who were spitting at Him,
Throwing rocks at Him and mocking Him, and He knew
That because of Him, they would never be alone.
So for them, He walked.

The sounds of the hammer striking the spikes echoed through
the crowd.
The sounds of His cries echoed even louder,
The cheers of the crowd, as His hands and feet
Were nailed to the cross, intensified with each blow.
Loudest of all was the still small voice
Inside His heart that whispered "I am with You, My Son",
And God's heart broke.

He had let His Son walk.

Jesus could have asked God to end His suffering,
But instead He asked God to forgive;
Not to forgive Him,
But to forgive the ones who were persecuting Him.
As He hung on that cross, dying an unimaginable death,
He looked out and saw, not only the faces in the crowd,
But also, the face of every person yet to be,
And His heart filled with love.
As His body was dying, His heart was alive.
Alive with the limitless, unconditional love He feels for each
of us.
That is why He walked.

When I forget how much my God loves me,
I remember His walk.
When I wonder if I can be forgiven,
I remember His walk.
When I need reminder of how to live like Christ,
I think of His walk.
And to show Him how much I love Him,
I wake up each morning, turn my eyes to Him,
And I walk.

(By Carrie McCutcheon)

AMEN

God's Holy Day Plan

By: Isaiah Berlin

Adapted from excerpts by St George Church in Bellflower, CA

The Feast of Pentecost: The Firstfruits of God's Harvest

In the process of revealing His plan of salvation for mankind, God established His annual Holy Days around the harvest seasons in the Middle East (Leviticus 23:9-16; Exodus 23:14-16). Just as His people harvested their crops around these three festival seasons, God's Holy Days show us how He is harvesting people for eternal life in His Kingdom.

The Holy Days have meanings that build upon each other. Together they progressively reveal how God works with humanity.

Earlier we saw Passover symbolizing Christ's giving of Himself for us so our sins could be forgiven. We also learned how the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that we must remove and avoid sin, whether in actions or attitudes. The next Holy Day, Pentecost, builds on this important foundation.

This festival is known by several names, which derive from its meaning and timing. Also known as the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), it represents the firstfruits (Numbers 28:26) gathered as the result of the labor of those who completed the spring grain harvests in ancient Israel (Exodus 23:16).

It is also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), with this name coming from the seven weeks plus one day (50 days in all) that are counted to determine when to celebrate this festival (Leviticus

23:16). Similarly, in the New Testament, which was written in Greek, this festival is known as Pentecost (Pentekostos in the original), which means "fiftieth" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, "Pentecost").

Among Jews the most popular name for this festival is the Feast of Weeks, or shavuot, in Hebrew. When celebrating this festival, many Jewish people recall one of the greatest events in history, God's revealing of the law at Mount Sinai.

But Pentecost doesn't just picture the giving of the law; it also shows-through a great miracle that occurred on the first Pentecost in the early Church-how to keep the spiritual intent of God's laws.

The gift of Pentecost: the Holy Spirit

God chose the first Pentecost after Jesus Christ's resurrection to pour out the Holy Spirit on 120 believers (Acts 1:15). "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

The speaking in various languages occurred as a crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem, with each visitor hearing the speech of the disciples in his own native tongue (verses 6-11). These astounding events demonstrated the presence of the Holy Spirit.

At first the people of Jerusalem who witnessed this miraculous phenomenon were astonished, with some attributing the actions of the Christians to drunkenness (Acts 2:12-13). The apostle Peter, now filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly explained the event to the crowd as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28).

Peter explained how his listeners could also receive this Spirit: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

God used these miracles and Peter's preaching to add 3,000 people to His Church in one day. These converts were all baptized and received the Holy Spirit (verses 40-41). From this pivotal point, God's Spirit has been available to all who truly repent and are properly baptized. The Day of Pentecost is an annual reminder that God poured out His Spirit to establish His Church, the group of believers who are led by His Spirit.

Why we need God's Spirit

Humanly speaking, no matter how hard we try not to, we still sin (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23). Acknowledging this inherent weakness of humanity, God lamented in Deuteronomy 5:29, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments that it

might be well with them and with their children forever!"

Here God explains that humankind has a heart problem. Academic knowledge of the law does not enable us to think like God. Becoming godly in our thoughts, attitudes and actions is beyond the comprehension and ability of men and women without an additional ingredient: God's Spirit.

God's way of thinking produces peace, happiness and concern for others. Jesus complimented a lawyer who correctly quoted the essence of God's law: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind" and "[love] your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). This man cited Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, from two books of the Pentateuch. Jesus here confirmed that the Old Testament scriptures are based on these two great principles of love (Matthew 22:40).

The essence of God's law is love (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9). God gave His commandments because He loves us. Writing to brethren who had God's Spirit, John said, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3).

Because God's Spirit was now residing in the Church, its members could express genuine love. "A new commandment I give to you," Jesus had said, "that you love one another; as I have loved you ... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

God's gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost made it possible for the Church to fully express God's commandments of love.

Jesus Christ: the firstfruits of eternal life

Firstfruits are the first agricultural products to mature and ripen. Throughout the Bible, God uses the analogy of the harvest-and, particularly on Pentecost, firstfruits-to illustrate aspects of His plan of salvation. Israel observed this day in the late spring after the barley and wheat harvests. A special offering of the first ripe grain during the Days of Unleavened Bread, called the wave-sheaf offering, marked the beginning of these harvests, which continued during the next 50 days and led up to Pentecost (Leviticus 23:11). This spring harvest was the firstfruits of the yearly agricultural cycle.

One of the first harvest lessons of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ "is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The wave-sheaf offering represented Jesus Christ, who was the "firstborn over all creation" and the "firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:15, 18). He presented Himself to God the Father as a type, or example, of firstfruits on the Sunday after His resurrection, the same day during the Days of Unleavened Bread on which the first sheaf of grain of the spring harvest was waved before God.

Early on the first day of the week (Sunday morning), while it was still dark and Jesus had already been resurrected (John 20:1), Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and discovered that the rock in

front of it had already been rolled away. She ran to notify Peter and John that Jesus was no longer in His grave. The two men hurried to the tomb and verified that Jesus was gone (John 20:2-10). After Peter and John left for their homes, Mary Magdalene stood outside Jesus' place of interment (verse 11). As she wept, Jesus appeared to her but would not allow her to touch Him because He had "not yet ascended" to the Father (John 20:17).

Later that same day Jesus appeared again. This time He allowed certain women to touch Him (Matthew 28:9). His own words show that, between the time Mary Magdalene saw Him and the time He allowed the women to touch Him, Christ had ascended to, and had been accepted by, the Father.

The wave-sheaf ceremony God gave to ancient Israel thus represents Jesus Christ's acceptance by His Father as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Church as firstfruits

Romans 8:29 speaks of Jesus Christ as "the firstborn of many brethren." Yet the New Testament Church is also considered to be firstfruits. In speaking of the Father, James said, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

God's Spirit within us identifies us and sanctifies us-sets us apart as Christians. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ," wrote Paul, "he is not His," and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God,

these are sons of God" (Romans 8:9, 14).

Paul also referred to the brethren as those "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit" (verse 23). He alluded to several first-century Christians as the firstfruits of God's calling (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15).

The significance of the Bible writers calling these people of God firstfruits becomes evident when we consider John 14:6. Here Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

How many, throughout the centuries, have really accepted and practiced the way of life Jesus taught? Even today many people have simply never heard much, if anything, about Jesus Christ. How will God offer them salvation?

Few people understand that God follows a systematic plan, symbolized by His Holy Days, to save all humanity by offering all people eternal life in His Kingdom. In this world we are simply at the beginning of the harvest for the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul understood this: "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 22-23). Anyone who is now called and chosen by God is included with Christ as God's firstfruits (James 1:18).

The Bible teaches us that God must call people (John 6:44; 6:63). Our Creator, therefore, controls the timing of His harvest. When God founded His Church by imparting His Spirit to certain believers on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, He was expanding His spiritual harvest. It was the beginning of what Joel prophesied, that God will ultimately pour out His Spirit on "all flesh" (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-17).

The Holy Spirit at work

The coming of the Holy Spirit dramatically changed the lives of these early Christians. The book of Acts is filled with accounts of the early Church's remarkable spiritual impact on the surrounding society. A transformation was so evident that nonbelievers accused the Christians of "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Such was the dynamic, miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

To fully grasp how God's Spirit can work with us, we must comprehend what the Holy Spirit is. It is not a person who, along with God the Father and Christ the Son, forms a "Holy Trinity." In Scripture the Holy Spirit is described as the power of God at work in our lives (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13, 19), the same power that was at work in the ministry of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38).

This divine power allows us to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14). It was this same power that transformed the lives of the early Christians and is the power working in the Church today. Paul told Timothy that God's Spirit is a "spirit of ... power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

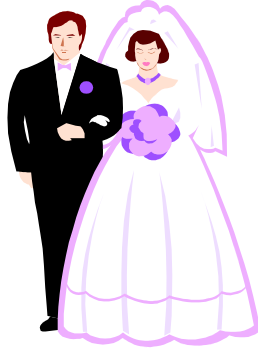
Pentecost serves as an annual reminder that our Creator still works miracles, granting His Spirit to the firstfruits of His spiritual harvest, empowering them to carry out His work in this world.

The Feast of Trumpets: A Turning Point in History

The Feast of Trumpets introduces the autumn festivals—representing the culmination of the present age of man and the beginning of an incredible time during which God will play a much more direct part in world events. The previous festivals constitute personal responses to the workings of God in the people He calls and chooses. But the Day of Trumpets heralds the intervention of God in the affairs of humanity on a global basis. This Holy Day represents a dramatic turning point in world history.

This particular festival also marks the beginning of the third and final feast season (Exodus 23:14; Deuteronomy 16:16), which includes the final four Holy Days of the year.





Congratulations *For the Holy Matrimony*

+ Rougeh Talaat Awad and Rachael Constance Thompson.
(May 6, 2001)

+ Daniel George El-Bogdadi and Beatrice Joan Boutros. (may
12, 2001)

+ Mark Girgis and Nancy Morcos (May 20, 2001)

+ Ashraf Botros and Usi Meshreky. (May 27, 2001)

Congratulations *For the Engagement*

+ Mary Saad Eskander.

