

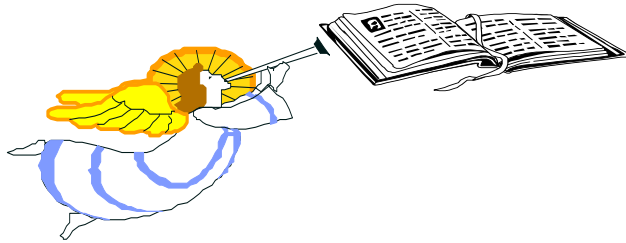


Schedule of Church Services

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 (Arabic)
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 (English)
	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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God's Holy Day Plan

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. Passover symbolizes Christ's giving of Himself for us so our sins could be forgiven. 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.

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 (Exodus 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 – (Saturdays, in English). 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.

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.

Adapted by St George Church in Bellflower, CA
From excerpts by Isaiah Berlin



LOVE GOD

How Can I be a true Christian? How Can I enjoy the eternal life with Jesus Christ in Heaven?

The answer to all these questions summed up in two words:

LOVE GOD.

“Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12: 30 and Matthew 22: 37).

When you love God:

1. You will love His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ and will follow His teachings. Consequently, the Holy Spirit will dwell in you. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (Corinthians 3: 16).
2. You will love, not only all the members of your family, your friends, your classmates, your coworkers, but also your enemies. “But I (Jesus) say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you...” (Matthew 5: 44)
3. You will be merciful to the poor, visit the sick, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and give drink to the thirsty.” (Matthew 25: 35-36)
4. You will enjoy your family life. There will be love, confidence, joy, hope and peace because husband and wife “Have become one flesh and no longer two.” (Matthew 19: 5-6). You can bring up your children in the fear of God: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24: 15).
5. You will worship God day and night especially on Sunday, “The Lord’s Day.” (Revelation 1: 10). “Greet the Church that is in their house.” (Romans 16: 5)
6. You will not commit any crime against anybody. “You will honor your parents, love and respect your neighbor,

his wife and his prosperity. You will never envy or covet anything of your neighbor's possessions." (Exodus 20: 17)

7. You will get peace on all occasions: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; For when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who loved Him." (James 1: 12)
8. And in the end, you and your family will hear Jesus' voice calling you: "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25: 34)



A Short Story

HOUSEWIFE'S PERSPECTIVE

Listen to a weary housewife

"I call my iron 'old albatross'. That's because I especially hate ironing shirts. I've tried all sorts of labor-saving tricks to take the edge off ironing shirts. Nothing worked.

One dismal afternoon, I noticed that there was not a single shirt in my husband's closet. Of course not, they were all in the ironing basket.

I dragged our old albatross and plugged her in. I began to feel rotten. In desperation, I said: 'Thank you! Lord, that I am healthy enough to stand here and hold up this iron. Thank you for the wonderful husband who wear these shirts. Thank you that I can help him to dress neatly. And thank You that he provides all these clothes for our family.'

It worked: the hate and drudgery of that menial task slithered away. I began to hum my way through the basket. Isn't it amazing what a few thank-you's can do to an unpleasant task?"

(Anthony M. Coniaris – Perspectives on Living the Orthodox Faith)

LOVE

- + When the heart is full of the love of God more than anything in the world, it is an invitation of the fullness of the Spirit.
- + Nobody can speak about the love of God, it is a gift of the Spirit which overwhelms us if we beseech it earnestly.
- + He who does not love his enemies will not taste the sweetness of the Holy Spirit.
- + Love is not a sermon, but it is washing the dirt of my brother's feet.
- + He who has decided to live for love's sake, has decided to move from death to life.
- + We mislead ourselves when we ask others to learn how to love God. By this we put the Lord in an unsuitable situation, as if he were unattractive and we try to face others to love Him. God does not need any description as his sweetness is utmost.
- + God's love does not diminish as a result of man's ingratitude.
- + Love is an ability within us that needs direction. When we direct the child to the love of the world, he will become a secular person, but if we direct him toward the love of Christ, we shall make a true Christian out of him.



GOD IS LOVE

God is Love. So he who wishes to define this tries with bleary eyes to measure the sand in the ocean. Love, by reason of its nature, is resemblance to god, as far as that is possible for mortals; in its activity it is inebriation of the soul; and by its distinctive property it is a foundation of faith, an abyss of patience, a sea of humility.

Love is essentially the banishment of every kind of contrary thought, for love thinketh no evil.

EVALUATION

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” (Isaiah 61: 1-2)

How are we to evaluate our lives in comparison to these thoughts that are expressed in Isaiah? Have we done the things that Jesus Christ has instructed us to do? In our time of taking care of our daily needs, may be taking vacations or spending time with our loved ones, how many hospitals have we visited? How many of these who are in need have we been there for? In essence, one must ask: “Where is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my own life?”

We see through the lives of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Mother and the holy Apostles, a demonstration of total and complete selfless service. St. Paul was beaten down, left for death, imprisoned, shipwrecked. Yet he continued to minister, even unto his own death. This zeal for God is something that must be awakened in the soul of each slumbering human. The psalmist says: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalm 111: 10), “And we have learned that the Lord Thy God is a consuming fire “ (Deuteronomy 4: 24). The problem that we face is that we live in a world that feeds the importance of fulfilling one’s own desires, following one’s own will, and believing in one’s own thoughts, instead of following God’s will and loving Him the way He wanted us to. It is imperative that we seek to live the heroic life that God has given us to live. It is important that we care for those who are broken and hurting. It is important that we align ourselves with God’s will on a daily basis. We must treat every moment as if we were standing at the very throne of our Lord and Savior, so that we do not let these precious opportunities to serve pass us by. Let us awake this fire in us so that we may know and experience the joy of giving in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SEEK HIS LIGHT

“That light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3: 16-19)

The modern icons of life in this world are without doubt closely related to their master. The icons of unrestrained passions, as observed daily in every imaginable way through television, movies, video games and radio, are the very icons that Satan himself seems to inspire.

Sex, drugs and violence are turning the heads, bodies and souls of young people today. When we walk out of our homes what are the images we see? Billboards, benches and buses filled with images that, instead of uplifting our sense towards God, thrust them further down, this modern way of unrestrained passions.

Professional sports teams use these passions to incite devotion to their teams. People go to movies, rent videos, and listen to music at an unprecedented rate. The entertainment industry largely markets itself by appealing to our passions and carnal desires.

We were looking for a special candle wax remover to make the job of removing the wax from the church carpets easier, so I thought of trying the internet. When I put in the engine: “candle wax remover”, three of the first ten sites had to do with pornography.

Jesus Christ expresses to us the fundamental reality of life: that we should believe in the Only-Begotten Son of God; and that we should seek His light and shun evil deeds. To seek His light is to obey His commandments and not to give our lives over to uncontrolled passions. We should also not derive our living by creating vehicles that promote uncontrolled passions. Our goals should be to create beauty in a way that enhances the life of the Church. We should remember that Christ said, that this is the condemnation: that light came into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Like Adam and Eve and all who have lived since the beginning, we have the opportunity to choose good or evil.

Let us pray that we will choose Christ and His Church;
that we will seek to find fulfillment in His Grace. May God
give us all strength in His Holy Name. Amen.

My soul, my soul – arise!
Why are you sleeping?
The end is at hand;
Destruction hangs over you.
Come again to our senses
That you may be spared
By Christ our god,
Who is everywhere,
Filling all things.

(Azza Michail)



Congratulations
For Your Engagement
George Sabry Morcos and Summer Nader.



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

Graduation Celebration – Class of 2001
For High School and College Graduates
On Sunday June 24, 2001
At 5:00 PM

Coptic Orthodox Christian Center
491 North Hewes St. Orange, CA 92869