

HOLY THURSDAY a review before the final exam

Readings appointed

1 Corinthians 11 : 23 – 34; 1Peter 2 : 11 – 25; Acts 10 : 34 – 43;
Psalm 22 : 4, 5; 40 : 9; Matthew 26 : 20 – 29; and along with these, the proper Anaphora to be celebrated on this occasion is that attributed to St. Epiphanius

Looking back at What’s Ahead

To properly commemorate Christ’s sufferings and His victory over sin and death, requires more than an emotional response. Tears are appropriate, but one should bewail sins, rather than mourning the Saviour. If one is to do it properly, what we are about to celebrate, requires preparation of the whole person. What is needed is something even more demanding than cleaning house, confessing one’s sins, having all the right clothes ready, visiting the church to do a certain number of prostrations, and still finding the money and time to prepare a variety of festal foods. I’m talking about the appointed preparations of the past fifty-something days, that should spiritually, mentally, and physically prepare a person to establish or renew a commitment. Everyone should examine his or her life and recommit to living according to Christ’s covenant. The critical areas, requiring consideration, might be condensed to just five simple questions. Whether or not one has already been baptized, each of us should be ready to answer the same five questions. Each of the questions is about one’s personal preparation for that which we commemorate.

For eight weeks, we have covered topical lessons based on 40 Bible readings. That’s the total of what had been appointed for the Sunday qidase, each week of the Great Fast.

Series’ articles in review, week by week

1st Zewerede “GETTING DOWN TO GOING THE DISTANCE” To enter God’s Kingdom in heaven one must submit to His will on earth. That starts with either repentance and baptism, or baptism and repentance.

2nd Qidist “Thematic Hymn: ‘HE WHO WOULD BE HOLY, LET HIM BOW DOWN BEFORE HIM WHO IS HOLY’” Whoever wants to be with God must strive to use what God provides to gradually become holy, as He Who IS, is holy.

3rd Mekurab “WHY DID JESUS ENTER THE TEMPLE?” He was looking for sinners. To warn them to either repent or get out.

4th Metsagu “MIND YOUR PRAYERS” Learning to pray is about learning to order one’s priorities: step by step: repent, develop a divine sense of humor, acquire virtue . . .

5th Debre Zeit “CHRIST’S SIGNS AND HIS Sermon on Mt. Olive, as the beginning of the ‘End,’” Since Christ can forgive our past and will judge us in the future, don’t let false prophets rob you of the present. Time is a very precious gift, but knowing us, as He does, to challenge our honesty, God does not allow us to control its limits.

6th Gebreher “FORMULA FOR ETERNAL REWARD of good servants” I = Principle (God’s gifts) x Rate (personal use of God’s gifts) x Time (God’s under-appreciated gift)

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7th Nigodemos “BAPTISM INTO THE SPIRIT AND THE TRUTH” Regardless of how or when you were reborn according to the Spirit, begin now, using every moment to draw closer to God

8th Hosaena THE VICTORY, FOR WHICH WE STRIVE, REQUIRES ENTERING INTO THE HISTORY THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE MYSTERY OF OUR SALVATION Christ entered history to save us from our selfish designs. To benefit we must learn to follow His lead by setting aside whatever obscures our vision of Him.

Those readings were selected to help us understand how precious is the time of our lives, with respect to all that God has done for us, and what sort of response that He expects us to render Him when He comes to judge us. Basically, He has given us everything, so that we might discover and develop His image and likeness in our own lives with His grace. We are suppose to gradually be restored to that state in which we were originally created. On our own, because human nature has been weakened, having originally been tainted by sin, all of us are incapable of such a great task. To save this fallen world the Son of God, had to do something new. In Chapter Two of every qidase the priest should proclaim that, “The Son of God has done something new in the world. No one, except for Him, has done anything like Him since the creation of the world. At His wedding He has ordained on the table, before His guests, His holy body and His precious blood as a banquet, so that they may eat thereof, and thus he who believes in Him may liver forever.” (Qidase, Chapter II : verse 9)

Perhaps, you have never heard this part of the qidase before. There are two possible explanations for that. Sadly, in many cases, both apply. The two top reasons that people do not recognize prayers from the Second Chapter of the Liturgy are: 1. Because they have gradually allowed personal priorities to distort their practice of the faith. Therefore, many imagine that they have a valid excuse not to be present for what should be the beginning of every qidase for every Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christian. 2. Because people have tried to reinvent the Orthodox Tewahido faith according to pieties that are more convenient for their life styles, few adults partake of the Holy Qurban. Therefore, priests have gradually replaced the proper prayers with pious customs that are less likely to be taken as a challenge to the comfort that people enjoy. They complacently, but mistakenly, suppose that they have kept the Apostolic faith in tact, by following traditions that they were taught; while, in fact, they have gradually corrupted it.

I realize that some people might be angry with me for writing the above. However, before acting out that anger, if they do not trust this translation, they ought to read it in either Ge’ez or Amharic. Perhaps, then they might realize that it is simply a restatement of what may also be found in the Gospel according to St. John at 6:53 & 54. Just contact the Webmaster of this site (Just punch “CONTACT US”), and he will forward your address to me, and I will be happy to let you have all the verses of that chapter in Ge’ez, Amharic, and English.

As indicated throughout this series of articles, early in the history of our church, adults who wanted to join, in order to begin living according to this new and everlasting covenant, were, first, required to train. They went through a course of rigorous instruction, and training, including the routine of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Out of compassionate love, our Orthodox Fathers also required all of the age of reason, who had already been baptized, and were therefore called “faithful,” to pass through the same obstacle course that was required of the new-comers. Keeping that wise tradition is why we continue passing through the same physical, mental, and spiritual tests, during each Great Fast. Toward the conclusion of the fast preceding one’s baptism, a trainee would have to pass a test, answering specific questions about his or her beliefs and motivations. As indicated in the first paragraph of this article, to properly enter into the celebration of this season, one should be ready to answer the five basic questions. They are:

1. Do you renounce Satan and all his lies, and all his pride?
2. Do you unite yourself unto Christ?
3. Have you united yourself unto Christ?
4. O man, if you want to receive forgiveness of your sins, why would you leave the church while another is bowing and asking for mercy on your behalf?
5. And why are you idle? At such a time, why would you let your mind wander from place to place? You who are sealed with the seal of the heavenly bridegroom, even Christ.

The first three questions are part of the rite of baptism. The last two questions are from Chapter II, verses 2-5 of every qidase. Today, the commemoration of the First Eucharistic Supper, as each of us should recognize in the rite of having our feet washed, is a reminder of our own baptism. At that point, we should ask ourselves the five questions above to determine whether or not we are taking seriously all that Christ has spent “for the life of the world?” (John 6:51)