

DEVELOPMENTAL BIBLE



I am the shepherd of the sheep

John 10:4

Psalms and other Sunday Readings

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH
DEVELOPMENT AND INTER-CHURCH AID COMMISSION (EOTC-DIAC)
HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION & CONTROL DEPARTMENT 2013



Message of His Grace

If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity (Development) and their years in pleasures.

Job. 36:11

The term Development can be defined in many ways like; increasing or Planting, Changing, Achieving, Allocating Goals, accessing basic necessities of all human beings etc...

The concept of using Holy Bible for development is not a new idea but it was the common practices of the past religious and apostolic fathers. During the Old Testament times, St. David, the prophet and his son Solomon were pillars for developmental activities around temple of God. In New Testament era, Holy apostle, St. Paul, and the apostolic fathers built theological and developmental seminaries or schools and developmental endeavors in the surroundings. In every era, the main objective of building of churches and monasteries is to bring change in the life of the society mentally, physically and spiritually.

When we say Development, we mean Physical Development and Mental Development. The development which mostly comes through education of Holy Bible is mostly related to mental development. To see physical change in this world, the change agent who is the human being should be mentally changed. The current physical development like buildings, modern transportation systems, IT, and communication skill development are the results of the day to day mental change of human beings through centuries.

The Holy Bible explains about development and its effect. For instance St. David, the King in his psalms said that "... **say shall prosper (Development) that love for you peace be with your walls and prosperity (Development) you're your places. Ps. 122:6-7**". And his son Solomon, the prophet explained the happiness of the city by the presence of hard workers and the sadness of the city by the evil works of idle people by saying " **By the blessing of righteous people the city become happy ... prov. 11:1**" On the other hand, our God the Creator of the universe said " **you shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever " Det.23:6**" And God expressed by this speech as He hated the evil works of those idle people.

In addition, As the Holy Bible says **“which indeed is the least of all seeds but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Mat. 13:32”** Development should benefit all and be centered on providing holistic security of human beings. It should also be focused on preservation of natural heritages and addressing climatic change, it should be in conformity with culture, Identity and faith that benefit the community.

Developmental Bible book prepared by the Department is very essential to fight against HIV/AIDS, FGM, and other health related problems that are communicable and non-communicable through trained clergies and evangelists all over the country.

Trained clergies are agents of positive effects through development or change= focused activities. Capacitating clergies is akin to working on the development of the church for the nation. It doesn't require big cost to capacitate clergies in various developmental aspects because clergies have their own captured knowledge. Training of clergies means simply showing direction to apply their knowledge for the developmental purposes and indicating how to teach the community in modern ways.

All the projects of the Commission especially health related projects require trained clergies in order to accomplish the intended particular project objectives. Thus, to train these clergies in the topics of prevention of HIV, FGM and other health related issues, this Developmental Bible book is very essential. Therefore, if the projects in the Department in particular & the other Departments in general use this book, they will be successful.

Finally, we would like to offer many thanks to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the financial support in the preparation and printing of this unique book, Developmental Bible book. All the staff of our Commission and our Church servants (clergies) should properly use this unique book for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, FGM and other health related problems.

Abba Samuel

Archbishop of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church- Development and Inter Church
Aid Commission (EOTC-DICAC)

DEVELOPMENTAL BIBLE

**ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH
DEVELOPMENT AND INTER-CHURCH AID
COMMISSION (EOTC-DIAC)
HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION & CONTROL
DEPARTMENT**

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Finally, we express our gratitude to all colleagues in the HIV and AIDS Prevention & Control Department for their full engagement in typing, editing of the book and in coordinating the activities related to the publish work.

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His Holiness Abune Matias I, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Archbishop of Axum and Echegue of the See of St. Tekle Haimanot

MESSAGE FROM HIS HOLINESS THE PATRIARCH

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

“The Lord shall recount to his people in the holy writings” (Psalm 87:6)

From this verse, we understand that a book is a major tool by means of which God sends his message to urge people what they should and should not do. There has never been time, since the creation of man, when God discontinued communicating with people whom he created in his image

It is very well known that God created human beings with the capacity to distinguish between good and evil. But the gift of the natural knowledge alone does not allow him to live a perfect life. Therefore in addition to natural knowledge what enabled man to live in accordance with the commandments of God is the word written in the Holy Scriptures. Although it is known that a human being is a creation having a brain that distinguishes between the good and the evil, his ability to lead life while keeping himself on the right track couldn't have been perfect with his natural knowledge alone. This ability has been supported by words of the holy book which abide man to God's words that direct him what to do and what not to do.

It is not secret to students of the Bible that man, in the period between Adam and Moses, a period which is called “the Era of the fathers,” was able to track on the right path of life by through the guidance he received from God by way of His revelation to the holy people of the time. God is not only the creator but also the preserver/sustainer and provider of the world. After the era of Moses, God commanded the man to lead life guided not only by the law of the conscience but also by the law of the Book. God did this to enable man develop knowledge of keeping himself away from wrong and sinful conducts. By having done this, God has shown how much greatly He loved human beings. Because the word of the Holy Bible is like light, a believer that is not steered by it is like a blind man who has no guide. Therefore, since living in this world would ultimately be tantamount to an insurmountable peak, the dangers this person would face would be grave. If a man lives life guided by the words of the Holy Bible, everything would become bright, and the one that travels through such light will not stumble. When David the prophet said “The lord shall recount **to his people in the holy writings**” (Psalm 87:6) he meant to that living guided by the words of God is like passing through light.

Regarding the importance of the Holy Bible, Saint Paul, the Apostle says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Timothy 3:16). Therefore, our Church became motivated to prepare this teaching material based on the word of the Holy Scriptures. Because of lack of precaution, the current generation is being victimized by HIV and AIDS. Hence, to remain silent on this issue would be negligence and must not be expected of the Church’s duty.

It has become obvious that HIV and AIDS is a hazardous and lethal pandemic that attacks particularly human beings. However, since the means of transmission and prevention of this disease are clearly known, the chances of protecting oneself from it are clear and diverse. These are discussed in a greater detail in this book. The virus is mostly transmitted from one person to another through various means; hence, the spiritual harm incurred into society is huge as it is stated in the Bible. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

The stigma and discrimination that HIV and AIDS victims are facing in the society is anti Christian and inhumane. Such a conduct is also a violation of the laws of the religion. In the Christian faith, discriminating against sick people is considered as committing against Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ has himself clearly pointed out that visiting and sympathizing with the sick are considered as being done for him; and so, failing to do them these humanitarian services for the sick is tantamount to failing to do them for Christ. (Mat. 25:31-46)

The word of the Gospel that says: “I was sick and you did not visit me” is thus stated to blame those who failed to visit and sympathize with the sick ones, particularly HIV and AIDS victims. Therefore, failing to do the social justice the HIV and AIDS victims need and discriminating against them would make us answerable to God. But, helping them would be a real Christian and humane act. It is such righteous act that makes one a practical Christian. This is one of the commitments that God desires to see of us.

Help rendered to mankind by his own fellowmen is what God requires from anyone of us. The support that the international community is giving the HIV and AIDS victims helps not only to protect but also to eliminate the virus from the world. The effort that the health experts are making in the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS, Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs), other communicable and non-communicable diseases is a

practical confirmation that human beings are, indeed, rescuers of their fellowmen. It is an endeavor that is compatible with the teaching of the Holy Bible which states **“Love your neighbor as you love yourself;”** and one that practically implements God’s intent. The participation of people in preventing the spread of the virus and in giving care to victims of HIV and AIDS is a real joy. These two responsibilities (prevention and care) are duties that the Church has also got to fulfill. A Church can never be expected of being indifferent in such responsibilities.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has published this book, which is the first of its kind, to strengthen the service it has been providing in this regard. What makes this book unique is that it is prepared on the basis of /Mäs’ hafä G s’awe/ [the book of the church’s calendar], which provides reading excerpts from the Holy Bible for three hundred sixty-five days of the year and preaching related to HIV and AIDS. This book is prepared to be distributed to every single Church so that it could reach every community, and that every member of a community could get the chance to read about the current endemic disease called HIV and AIDS as well as on HTPs and other health related problems. As the teaching is based on the Scripture readings it is believed that the intents of the verse **“The lord shall recount to his people in the holy writings”** are well met. The priests and preachers in every Church should use this manual to disseminate the information to the public so that the public could protect themselves from HIV and AIDS, and urge them to refrain from discriminating those infected by the virus. By having done this, Church personnel will have met their responsibilities of protecting the people from this lethal social problem.

This book has been prepared by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DIAC) together with its partner UNFPA. It is our daily prayer that the dissemination of the education on HIV and AIDS prevention, zero tolerance towards HTPs and other health problems would be fruitful with the effort of trained priests in collaboration with every Church.

We send a message to the administrative authorities of the churches found in every region of Ethiopia to carry out their responsibilities according to the plan in this regard.

His Holiness Abune Matias I, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Archbishop of Axum and Echegue of the See of St. Tekle Haimanot

Message of His Grace Abune Samuel

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In addition, As the Holy Bible says **“which indeed is the least of all seeds but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Mat. 13:32”** Development should benefit all and be centered on providing holistic security of human beings. It should also be focused on preservation of natural heritages and addressing climatic change, it should be in conformity with culture, Identity and faith that benefit the community.

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Abba Samuel

**Archbishop of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church- Development and Inter
Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DICAC)**

PREFACE

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

This book is called Developmental Bible. The Developmental Bible is prepared based on /Mäs' hafä G s'awe/ [the book of the church's calendar]. /Mäs' hafä G s'awe/ is a type of book which incorporates verses from the Holy Bible which are to be read every day from the 1st of Meskerem to the 5th of Pagume (the intercalary month of 1-5 days) E.C. This book contains the Sunday texts as well. The content of this book incorporates teachings, guides, praises, prayers, and different kinds of services that are extracted from the Holy Bible [and put in the book /Mäs' hafä G s'awe/ to be taught according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition.

The manual, Developmental Bible has two major parts. The first part contains preaching for the days beginning from the 1st of Meskerem to the last day of the intercalary month (E. C.). The second part includes preachings for the Sundays of the year and the so called 'le'amakone', yearly hymns for alternate commemorative days of specific Saints and/or Angels.

This book is prepared with the good will of His Holiness, Abune Matias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Archbishop of Axum and Echegue of the See of St. Tekle Haimanot. It is prepared based on /Mäs' hafä G s'awe/ by six scholars that were selected from among members of the Council of Scholars. The contents of the material were organized with the belief that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church could join forces with other organizations in teaching and supporting the society in combating and controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the religious organizations that come, without delay, at the forefront in giving response to the country's social, economic and health problems. With this manual prepared in the present manner, the Church could now tackle the problems in a better manner and in an organized way.

Currently, the major impediments of our development are malaria, tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS. Together with our poverty, these diseases and the pandemic HIV and AIDS are inflicting enormous damage upon our society. Added to these are harmful traditional practices, varieties of addictive habits such as excessive use of alcohol, *chatt* chewing, and taking stimulant drugs taken unseen and, at times, in public, are the major factors in

enhancing the spread of HIV and AIDS at an alarming speed. Among the harmful traditional practices are the circumcision of girls' genital organs, early marriage, rape, labor exploitation, and eloping. The role of religious leaders is imperative in combating these harmful traditional practices. It is, therefore, to build the capacity of church leaders in meeting these responsibilities that the preparation of such a material becomes very important. The material is also believed to enable them teach the impacts of HIV and AIDS and harmful traditional practices, integrating these together with and other social and health issues with the church's every day preachings. The major points that need be transmitted with the message of this spiritual material, (i.e. Developmental Bible) include:

- creating awareness about the impact and varying nature of HIV and AIDS among the Church community;
- raising awareness about the ways HIV and AIDS is transmitted and the mechanisms of preventing it;
- raising awareness of the society about the prevention of this pandemic;
- teaching the society to refrain from discriminating against those that live with HIV using the word of the Holy Bible;
- teaching the public about harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, gender and equality, and other health related issues relating the lessons with the daily church preachings;
- teaching the public, with love and compassion, about how to treat victims of HIV and AIDS emphasizing that love and compassion are Christian and humane; and that victims need to be obedient to the words of the Holy Bible ;
- encouraging the society to care for children that have lost their parents to HIV and AIDS; and aged parents that have lost their supporting children to HIV and AIDS;

There is also a brief discussion about mothers and newly born babies in this book. In short, the objectives of Developmental Bible are enormous. Some of these are shown below:

1. It helps preachers to teach on a topic at any time without having to dwell upon which particular points to start their teachings with;
2. It helps to keep the uniformity and consistency of the contents to be taught in the various regions, weredas and parishes of the country;
3. It helps theological institutions to have the opportunity of giving priests (in training) preliminary ideas about how they could start their teachings besides training them in the skills and method of preaching;
4. It helps preachers (once trained in various theological institutions) to be in a better position in securing and disseminating reliable information about HIV and AIDS;
5. It helps preachers to solve social problems such as the HIV and AIDS, early marriage, and other harmful traditional practices and health problems; and
6. Based on our Church's teaching practices, the book could be helpful for institutions that are interested in working with the Church in preventing and controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS. The book can also serve as a source of research linking religious, social and health issues. Moreover, the book gives a preview of the church's teaching.

As was said earlier, the material, Developmental Bible, is prepared by scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The book is in use today and has been prepared by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DIAC) together with its sponsor, the UNFPA. The implementation of the project was first tried in the regions of Amhara, Tigray, and Addis Ababa. These regions were selected for the project's trial implementation because these places are severely pervaded with the problem of HIV and AIDS. The book also has served [and is still serving] as a reference material for training priests of the various regions. For the purpose of implementing the project, members of the Church that have good will be selected or nominated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DIAC), the HIV and AIDS Prevention & Control Department, in accordance with the details in the manual. These selected

nominees/priests will be assigned to train other priests that are nominated from different localities to join these training centers which are purposefully selected for this project. These trained priests are believed to educate the society and explore solutions to problems that harm the community.

The priests are expected to teach the people in accordance with /Mäs' hafä G s'awe/ [the book of the church's calendar], a teaching material for the church, until such a time that they have effected behavioral change upon the community. These teachings can take place in the Sunday schools of the church, prayer places, and places where holidays are commemorated.

Many of the vocabularies used in discussing the topic HIV and AIDS are words that are currently used by people and organizations working in the area. Meanwhile, preachers could use new words which signify a change in time. Priests using this book for teaching can also use other publications on the same topic.

Readers of this Developmental Bible are advised to refer to the Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.) to know the dates of Sundays & feasts at which the HYMNs fall. Similarly, the Calendar for the main feasts and fasting time as well as the name of the months in Ethiopia are annexed with this book for reference. It is also understood that there is a difference in one day each month happening during the leap year.

Finally, this book has been presented in the name of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. It has also been well evaluated and edited by people that are directly and indirectly concerned with it. Though the book has been reviewed and improved several times with the view that it would display the clear picture of the church in teaching the topic HIV and AIDS and other health problems, it will still accept and incorporate scientific comments to improve its forthcoming editions.

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church development Inter-Church Aid

Commission (EOTC-DIAC)

HIV and AIDS Prevention & Control Department

1. **HYMN:** /yohan s ahad -aa/ [JOHN APPEASED] (*For the 1st Sunday of beginning of Meskerem*) - (*Sunday on or after September 11 in European Calendar*)

SCRIPTURE READING: James 2:1–13

OPENING CITATION: “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favouritism.” (Jas 2:1)

As James wrote to the Jews in Diaspora who had later accepted Christianity he did all he could to console them from their agony, and rectified many of their wrong doings. Since one of their wrong doings was favoritism, he advised them in chapter 2 of his Epistle to be cleansed of such an act. He opens his advice saying “**My brothers, as believers in our glorious Jesus Christ, do not show favouritism.**” A Christian should not favor one against the other on grounds of wealth, and he advised them to guard themselves to be free of such a mistake with this expression: “**as believers in our glorious Jesus Christ, do not show favouritism.**” Partiality is corruption, and corruption is a sin. And a Christian should be clean of such a sin. Because Lord, the Creator, is impartial; he equally shines the sun to all; equally showers the rain to all. And He does not favor one against the other on grounds of appearances and personalities. He warned them, instead, not to favor individuals saying, “this man has worn a gold ring, and is dressed in fine; but that man is clad in tattered suits, speaks in a stuttered fashion, and walks in a tottered manner.” He cautioned them not to differentiate among people for their cathedra and order of seat. He alerted them not to act as a judge who passes a fraudulent verdict on grounds of mediation, bribery and preferentialism.

Even though certain rich men, like Matthew and Zachaeus, joined his group, the Lord chose the poor, the fishermen, the tailors of horse-blankets to be his Apostles and not the wealthy ones like Hanna and Caiapha. He reproached them for their unjust partiality saying “but, ye have dishonored the poor. Is it **not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court?**” (Jas 2:6) He convinced them asking, “**Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?**”

He therefore advised them saying: “You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall **love your friend as yourself.**’” This is a command

that the Lord, King of the Heavens and Earth, has set forth as a rule. But if you commit favoritism with respect to persons, you will have committed sin; and you will have been rebuked for transgressing His rules. And let us, therefore, ask ourselves do we like being rebuffed on grounds of favoritism? We do not. And how severely do we curse a judge who passes a fraudulent verdict for bribery? Indeed, much severely. How much spiteful and backbiting do we turn out to be to leaders who hold offices to administer and safeguard the rights of their subjects equitably, but who actually end up being selective? Very much so. We hate and despise officials who favour people who are members of their ethnic group and relatives. We have the same attitude against authorities who are corrupt and do undue favors.

In as much as we dislike and hate being segregated because of favoritism, we should not segregate or commit favoritism either against our Christian fellowmen or others who need our physical and financial help while they are ailing in bed after being infected by HIV virus and other diseases. The rule of the Lord written in the Bible that states, **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (Lev 19:18) is meant to teach us to pay visit to those who are ailing in bed, to help the hungry, to assist the thirsty, and to cloth the naked. As a matter of fact, one has to be careful not to stigmatize and discriminate against HIV and AIDS victims since such an act could instigate them to take retaliatory measures against the healthy. The society should persistently discuss, condemn and avoid any act of segregating HIV victims. All should unite in tackling this problem.

2. **HYMN:** / ku:t antä/ [You Are Praised, O Lord!] (For the 2nd Sunday of Meskerem EC)

SCRIPTURE READING:- James 5:1 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “Brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.” (V. 7)

James has described the earth as precious since it pleases its tiller yielding him thirty, sixty and a hundred pieces of fruits instead of just one. (Interpretation from epistle of the Apostles, James 5:7)

As farmers patiently wait until such a time that the seed they sow blooms to flower, evolves to budding and ripens to be ready for harvest, so preachers wait with patience to confirm that the words of the Gospel that they teach believers germinate, evolve into budding and ripen to yield the fruits of faith and good deeds which would lead the believers into the kingdom of heaven. You, too, be patient with your agony. Keep up your forbearance firm for the day on which your Lord comes back, the Day of Judgment which has drawn close. The Lord, who is the righteous judge and the perfect adjudicator, is waiting for you right at your gateway. James consoles the Jews thus adding: “For the torment you experience with patience, you can take the model of the prophets to whom the Lord revealed himself as they prophesied their predictions; they will be good examples for you”

Behold, we praise the prophets who endured suffering with patience. You have heard of Job who endured his agony with patience. You have also heard about the good things done for him in return for the agony he went through with patience. You have heard that the Lord brought his torment to an end. The Lord’s bounty is abundant; and so is His forgiveness. The Lord acquits; and He grants pardon. Job did not blame the Lord when he was suffering. As a matter of fact, he left an impressive lesson to the people of the world saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return to

earth; the Lord gave, and the Lord have taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”
(Job 1:21)

All fellowmen currently exposed to the HIV and AIDS should hold patience like Job.

Since HIV and AIDS has no medical cure or inoculation, victims should be advised to wait with patience, as did Job, while taking the currently available drugs along with the Holy water in the church being faithful to the Lord.

What Is Expected of Counselors

1. Being friendly and loving
2. Giving them proper and cordial greetings
3. Being helpful and supportive
4. Avoiding prejudice (in career, culture and religion)
5. Showing great concern to them
6. Showing to them hearty acceptance
7. Being watchful
8. Being confidential

The responsibility of consoling and cheering up the HIV and AIDS victims is not and cannot be restricted to priests alone. The laity are also responsible to console and cheer up the HIV and AIDS victims. We are thus expected to take care of the ailing in our houses and neighbors by serving them with what they want without partiality or segregation.

3. **HYMN:** /z ntu wu: tu: mäsqäl/ [THIS IS THE CROSS] (For the 3rd Sunday of Meskerem EC)

SCRIPTURE READING:- Mark 8; 27 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with holy angels.” (Mk 8:38)

He who spoke the above words is Jesus Christ, the Holy Savior. The people referred to as “adulterous and sinful generation” in the words of Jesus Christ are the family of the Jews. There are two sinful deeds that make a man “adulterous”. One is when he abandons his faith in the Lord and becomes a convert to idol worship; the other is when a man abandons or divorces the woman he has married in wedlock to look for another woman for temporary desire.

The Family of the Jews is characterized as “adulterous generation” not because of separation of relationship between husband and wife, but because of the breakup of the religious bond that existed between God and the Jewish people. The reason for the damage of this bond is the abandonment of faith in the Lord by the Jewish people in favor of idol worship.

Not reprimanding and teaching people who deviate from belief in God is considered as being ashamed of the Lord. Again, not to stop and rectify folks that jeer and err on the themes of the rules of the Lord is tantamount to evading one’s duty to witness the fact of His lordship and the righteousness of His rules. Such an act can, in fact, be considered as denying the Lord in the presence of pagans. It is on this ground that our Lord Jesus Christ said, “**“Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with holy angels.”** (Mt 10:33; Lk 9:26 and 12:9)

Therefore, without being ashamed of Christ’s name, let us carry His Cross as did His disciples, saints, and martyrs who worked tirelessly to convert mankind from adoring idols to worshiping God. They also changed the behavior of mankind from being

engaged in immorality to being legally married. This could be achieved through constant and persistent preaching and counseling, which we believe would help avoid from contracting the HIV and AIDS. We should not be ashamed, or restrained, or frightened of our effort in saving and bringing this generation to the right track, to help it change from any shameful behavior. The generation needs to be controlled with the teaching of the Holy Bible as horses and mules are controlled by the rein of their bridle.

What is referred to as ‘disciplinary rein’ is this: first of all people have to realize that life in wedlock is crucial whereby a person is firmly confined to a specific woman or specific man as much as possible. A family that has made this discipline its guiding principle would be blessed by the Almighty. What is more, children borne of such a family shall be useful citizens. In contrast, people who do not lead a faithful married life, and those who, despite their being married, do not firmly stick to their spouses but be involved in any unlawful behavior bring about unexpected troubles to their family and to the society. Such people should be properly given education and counseling to change their behavior. Secondly, they should understand the importance of abstention from sex before marriage. This practice or behavior should also be passed on to others by every one of us.

The advice on abstention from sex before marriage should be given to both young boys and girls. It is necessary to teach this lesson to this section of society grouping them separately by sex and age. Teaching is better done in one’s young age. The youth should be taught and counseled both at home and in Sunday schools about the value of not being involved in sinful acts. The Amharic proverb which is described in English says, “Instead of grieving for being ill at the outcome; better to be careful at the outset”. This proverb teaches the essence of safeguarding oneself from undesirable consequences and perils.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the clergymen to teach the society at every opportunity that faithfulness to ones’ spouse is required of any person and abstention from sexual relations before and outside marriage is what is required of every person.

4. HYMN: /mäṣ qäl kä g zi-o täsäb ha/ [Oh God, Your Cross is praised.]

(The 4th Sunday of Meskerem after the beginning)

Scripture Reading: 1Peter 2:20 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” (1Pet 2:22-23)

According to what Isaiah, the Prophet, said: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases: yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities: upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth: like a lamb that is laid to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ...” (Is. 53:4-9)

Jesus Christ had lived on earth doing every thing that man did except committing sin. He himself had asked: “Which of you convicts me of sin?” (Jn 8:46) However, he was crucified for us the children of Adam and Eve.

Thus, Peter the Apostle teaches us in his Epistle to follow the example of Jesus Christ not to be engaged in sinful acts. There were no lies in his teachings, nor any deceit in his acts. St. Peter advises us to follow Jesus’ examples in our life. This Apostle teaches us that we should not commit deceit as deceit is the act of pretense, cheating, and dishonesty. The Apostle goes on that as Christ did not revile when he was reviled, we too must not revile others. Hanna, the mother of Prophet Samuel, also said, “Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth. ...” (1Sam 2:3). As Jesus did not retaliate against the acts of those who mistreated him we too should learn from

him not think of taking revenge against whoever wrongs us. As the matter fact, Jesus pleaded with his Father His for forgiveness saying, “Oh Father, they do not know what they are doing; so, please pardon them.”

Therefore, if we are Christians and accept that Christ died for us on the Cross, we should not commit sin. We rather seek his salvation and consolation. Today our society is facing many challenges one of which is the spread of HIV and AIDS. These challenges can be overcome with the help of the Almighty by taking pills provided by medical experts and by taking Holy Water and the Holy Communion in our respective Churches.

The means of transmission of the HIV and AIDS virus include common use of needle or blade or knife tainted by the virus. And, therefore, people should avoid the common use of the above objects.

On the other hand when we encounter AIDS patients it is the duty of everyone to provide them with any thing they need. Patients also should care for those who are not infected by being cautious that others are not infected.

5. HYMN: /bägizehu haläfä k räm t / [THE WINTER SEASON HAS PASSED AT ITS PROPER TIME.] (For the Sunday after 25th of Meskerem) - October 5 in Eur. Cal

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 7:1–14

OPENING CITATION: “Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulterous if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she not an adulteress.” (Rom 7:2–3)

This is the Epistle that St. Paul, the Apostle, wrote to the Christians in Rome. The Apostle presents the example of a husband and a wife shown in the opening citation to let us know that it is not a requirement for people to follow the laws of the Old Testament as they have been replaced by the laws of the New Testament.

Indeed, a woman’s marital pledge to a husband cannot be dissolved while her husband is alive even if she goes out of her husband’s house for a while. She cannot get married to a new spouse; she can only live alone. However, if her husband dies she is permitted to marry. St. Paul gave the above analogy to the Christians of Rome, who upon being converted to Christianity from Judaism argued with Christians converted from paganism saying, “The Gospel without the laws of Moses and baptism without circumcision are inadequate.” To settle the argument between the two St. Paul had to tell them that the laws of the Old Testament together with the old traditions were replaced by the laws of the New Testament. What is represented as a husband in the example is the law of the Old Testament. Before its replacement by the laws of the New Testament, the laws of the Old Testament were obeyed. What is represented as a wife in the example is the Family of Israel. This family was ruled by the laws of the Old Testament which is symbolized as its husband and to which it had pledged conjugal oath.

The Old Testament, which is replaced by the laws of the New Testament, is symbolized by a deceased husband. As a widow can be married to a new spouse upon the death of her first husband, so Christians adopt the latest rules and regulations of the New

Testament in place of the laws of the Old Testament. This is what the example illustrates. We can learn from the Epistle of St. Paul that husband and wife are duty-bound for their marriage while both are alive. It is true that occasional disagreements can occur between married couples. However, the Bible commands that they should not separate even if that occurs. The lesson we learn from the Holy Bible is that Christian marriage is sacred. And in a married life there is always peace and blessings. It also helps produce children blessed by the Lord. Despite all these a married life at times faces testing difficulties.

If, however, one of the couples passes away, the one remaining alive can marry a new spouse provided that he/she desires to have one. When this is the case, one must make sure that the newly coming spouse is free of the HIV through medical test before the two declare their new marriage. To be free of the virus after marriage, the spouse must maintain their fidelity all their life.

6. HYMN: /t wed so mär at / [THE BRIDE PRAISES HIM] (For the 1st Sunday of Tikimit EC)

SCRIPTURE READING: - St. John 3:25 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “He who has the bride is the bridegroom ...” (Jn 3:29)

The statement in the opening citation above is stated by St. John, the Baptist. The statement is about Jesus Christ. He stated this at an argument on purification debated between His disciples and the Jews. They came close to John and said, “...**the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him.**” John replied to this saying, “**No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven. You yourselves are my witness that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled.**” (Jn 3:26-29) This is an exemplary illustration. The bridegroom is Jesus Christ; and the bride is the church. The best man to the bridegroom is John, the Baptist. At a wedding ceremony, the chief attendant who carries errands between the bride and the bridegroom is the best man. In a similar way, John the Baptist came to this world at a time demarcating the Old and the New Testaments and preached the coming of Jesus Christ. He has thus served as a bridge between the Old and the New Testaments, and between Jesus Christ and the church. In a house where a wedding ceremony takes place, an ox is slaughtered for meat and wine is served for drink. In the feast that follows, a bride and a bridegroom become delighted and happy.

In this illustration the wedding house is the church, the meat of the ox symbolizes the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine signifies his blood. The union of the bride and the bridegroom symbolizes the unity of Christ, the Church and the laity. The great joy implies the emancipation and redemption people have attained by the suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

The unity of Christ and the Church is thus similar to the unity of a bride and a bridegroom. The Bible does not speak of a unity of a bridegroom with many brides, or of a bride with many bridegrooms. It only speaks of the union of one bridegroom with one

bride. Thus the society has instituted one to one marriage, and God sanctified it to lead a healthy and peaceful life. When one man is confined to one woman there is no danger of contracting HIV and AIDS virus and thus they can live save and healthy life.

Therefore, married couples should make faithfulness their guiding principle in life. To stick to this principle and keep our Christian life clean of the nasty practices of having many partners is expected of us. Priests, particularly fathers confessors should closely follow the spiritual and marital life of their spiritual children, and give them consistent counseling to their spiritual children.

Sometime husband and wife may be compelled to stay apart due to transfer of work places and field visits. In such cases the couple should reserve themselves from committing sin of unfaithfulness. To stand the temptation they should devote themselves to spiritual activities such as fasting and constant praying for the safe return of one's partner. In this way people can avoid contracting HIV and AIDS and eventually the virus could be controlled and eradicated.

7. HYMN: /kinä t' bäbu m nk r wä s'ub / [HIS WISDOM IS REMARKABLE AND WONDERFUL] (For the 2nd Sunday of Tikimit)

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalms 102/3:14-15

OPENING CITATION: “He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ” (Ps 102/3:14-15)

The speaker of the above words is David, a man of the mind of God. He spoke these words about himself. He says, “Lord knows that we are dust.” David reminds us that we are created from the soil of the earth, one of the four elements from which we are created according to the Ethiopian Church Tradition. After death we shall return to soil. David continues, “As for man, his days are as grass.” The allegory here is that both human being and grass germinate, grow and eventually die. In Ethiopia grass and perennial plants grow during the rainy season of July and August. In September and October they flourish more with flowers and decorate much of the landscape. In November and December, the grass and the plants dry out and disappear.

That is why David says, “...days of man are as a flower of the field.” Grass and flowers germinate, then generate buds, then yield seeds and finally vanish. In a like manner, a man is brought to life, grows physically, gets married, and children are born to him. He then becomes old and dies and is buried. His body decomposes and vanishes. Isaiah, the Prophet, has also said this: “... All people are grass, and all their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Is 40:6-8)

Even though the life of a person is like grass and perennial plant he is different in many respects. He is created in the image of God, and, therefore, he thinks and acts rationally. Unlike grass and plant man lives longer and takes care of his wellbeing. He takes care of himself so that he can stay healthy for a long time. He cares for his health so that he does not become sick. He feeds on nutritious foods, drinks clean water and recreates happily. In general, he leads a pleasant life to live long. He pleads to God in prayer to keep him healthy all the time and to give him long life. When he entreats God

to do him this favor, he should make sure that he has kept himself away from all sinful acts. Prayers that a man makes unto God get no acceptance if they are done while the pleading person often transgresses the laws of the Lord. Jesus Christ has himself said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Mt 7:21).

The will of the Father for us is that we should be faithful to our partner, avoid drunkenness, rape, chewing stimulant herbs and involvement in activities that are harmful to ourselves and the society. If we pray unto God keeping ourselves distant from all these sinful acts, we can be rescued from both the physical and spiritual death; and then we live longer and our health stays robust. That is to say, we shall not wither in a short period of time like the grass and flowers of the desert as stated in our text.

8. **HYMN:** /wämänu mähari zäkemakä/ [WHO IS THE MERCIFUL LIKE YOU?] (For the 3rd Sunday of Tikimit)

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalms 91/2:12-13

OPENING CITATION: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.” (Ps 91/2:12-13)

The meanings of the above citation are the following: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree” This means that the virtuous shall be conferred with the gift of grace and honor. The clause “He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,” means the righteous’s gift and honor will be plenty like the fruits of the evergreen cedar tree grown at a higher altitude of Lebanon. “Those ... planted in the house of the Lord,” means the righteous are like cedar and palm trees planted in a church courtyard. The whole text can be interpreted thus: As cedar and palm trees give grace to a church courtyard and produce plenty of fruits, the righteous are grace to the kingdom of God in heaven. People who lead the life of obedience to the laws of the Lord are considered righteous. However, the righteous sometimes commit sins but what distinguishes them from the unrighteous is that they repent and ask for God’s forgiveness.

Among the Jews many considered themselves as righteous by adhering to the rules of the Old Testament. But Jesus told them that “ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5: 20. Luke 18: 9-14. Rom. 10: 13).

Prophets of the Lord like David, and Isaiah, and Apostles of Jesus like Peter and Paul committed sins; but they all confessed and repented asking for forgiveness for their misdeeds (see Ps 50:4; Is 6:5; Lk 5:8; 1Tim 1:15). But, all those who are in Christ are righteous; and they inherit the Kingdom of God. (See Matt. 25: 46 and Rom.5: 9). Righteousness means abiding by the laws of the Lord.

God is righteous; he is pleased in righteousness (Dan. 9; 7). He does everything on the basis of righteousness. “And He shall judge the world in righteousness; he judges the people with equity.” (Ps 9:8). God shall “... without respect of persons judgeth according to everyman’s work.” (Acts 17:31; 1Pet 1:17).

Man's righteousness: Men are commanded to live guided by the rules and laws of the Lord. But as St. Paul says there is not even one who has fulfilled what the laws say. He says, "For all have sinned, (they) have come short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23). It is in God's righteousness that man prospers in wealth and honor. David says, "They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness. (Ps 88/89:16). The only perfect righteousness is with God. Only in God's goodwill do the remnants of the people of Israel become righteous. The Prophet Isaiah runs, "In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.... But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult." (Isa 45:24–25) Even though believers may not attain perfect righteousness, it is their duty to strive for it.

Man is created in the image of God; and so he should not behave like irrational animals. David said, "Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you." (Ps 32:9).

A person puts the pictures of his family members and friends in glass frames and keeps them suspended on walls or on chest of drawers where they can always be seen in clear view. What is behind such a practice is cherishing the memories of his families and friends. And so, the person who has kept such pictures at home in the manner just described does not dare to spoil them by throwing them into a sludge or dancing on them. Our image is the image of the Holy Trinity, who said, "Let us now make man in our image." For this reason our physical appearance is different from the image of all other creatures. For this reason it has to be cared for with high esteem, purity and sanctity. We have to keep ourselves away not only from acts that can harm others but also acts that can damage our own person, life and dignity. We have to keep ourselves away from such disgraceful, and humiliating conducts such as adultery, theft, sexual lust, envy, homicide, drunkenness and jealousy all of which are sinful acts. (Luke 7:20–23)

So a person has to manage his/her life with sanctity. Since a person is the temple of the Lord, keeping it clean with purity and sanctity is a crucial part of spiritual discipline. The Bible asks and answers, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (1Cor 3:16–17)

How can one keep his purity and sanctity? The following points provide some of the answers to this question.

1. What is most damaging to our person, life and dignity is drunkenness and promiscuity. These sins do expose us to the contraction of HIV and AIDS. Keeping oneself away from these sins and abstaining from sexual relation before marriage, one can avoid the said virus and be on the right track of virtuousness.
2. Another point a person should make note of is the necessity of taking a constant voluntary test for HIV. This helps to tackle the problem on time in case the test signals a positive result.
3. Still another point is staying virgin until marriage; and when the time is ripe for marriage, one can marry one's spouse under the regulations and practices of the church.
4. Another point is to make a pledge of fidelity and abide by it to be confined and be faithful one to one and to stay thus for life time with a married partner. This is the major means of protecting oneself from the HIV and AIDS.

Under all circumstances, we have to make it our duty to render every required help to those people exposed to HIV, and to those children who lost their parents because of the disease.

It is necessary not to isolate or segregate or show hatred or partiality or reflect abhorrence or abomination, and/or parade misconception or false impression to patients suffering from this virus. What is advisable is to encourage these patients take the pills for this virus and use Holy Water according to the rules of the Church.

9. HYMN: /k r s tos sär -aa sän bät / [CHRIST SET FORTH THE SABBATH]
(The 4th Sunday of Tikimit)

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 1:2–3

OPENING CITATION: “But their delight is in the law of the Lord; and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do they prosper.”
(Ps 1:2–3)

David the prophet described, in allegorical way, the person who meditates on the laws of the Lord day and night and symbolized as a tree planted near a river water and as a herb that perpetually yields fruits and as a plant that never shades off its leaves.

The laws of the Lord are the Ten Commandments that were written by Moses in the Old Testament and the Six Commandments found in the Gospel of Matthew. A person who reads, concentrates, meditates on these pronouncements is symbolized by a tree that perpetually yields fruits. Herbs that are planted near stream of water are fruit trees like orange, lemon, nut, papaya, mandarin, pine apple, tangerine, avocado, and banana. The fruits of these plants are very sweet and are much useful to the body. However, they need hoeing, weeding and watering before they mature and yield fruits. Once they become mature, they remain evergreen and productive since they get water all the time. This is a symbolic expression. The herb (plant) symbolizes the body of a human being. The streaming river water stands for the assistance provided by God to human beings. Fruits represent children; and leaves, grandchildren.

A second interpretation for ‘fruit’ is that it connotes children and grandchildren all together as one meaning, and leaves denotes relatives and fellowmen. He whose children, grandchildren, relatives and fellowmen are assisted and cared for by God is fortunate and blessed. If there is anyone who asks, “Is there a person whose children and relatives never die?”, the answer he gets is, a man whose children and relatives live being assisted and cared for by God do not die before the day assigned for them. Such a person does not lose his fortune before the time set for it. (See Gen. 5:1–32 and 47:9.)

A third interpretation of 'fruit' is wealth of the highest order (e.g. gold, jewel, horse, mule, cow, ox, etc.); 'leaf' denotes wealth of the lowest order (e.g. clothes, carpets, bed sheets etc.).

A fourth interpretation of 'fruit' is that it suggests grain given to or taken by a person or church as tithe. It also signifies the first produce of crops.

The fifth interpretation for 'fruit' is that it exemplifies functions and activities; and 'leaf' epitomizes religion. A person whose religion and conduct stay strong is fortunate. As has been stated by John Chrysostom, "Religion is foundation, and other functions and activities are walls and roofs." Although we understand that fruits have more value than leaves, the example just given does not mean that other functions and activities have more value than religion. The explanation here is that as leaves are foundation to fruits, since fruits are harvested after leaves have helped them to ripen, so religion renders assistance to other functions and activities. That is why religion is represented by leaf, and other functions and activities by fruits.

Jeremiah says, "... , there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade;" This is to mean that good function and religion have vanished even from among the twelve tribes of the people of Israel. (See Interpretation, Ps 1:2-3)

In contrast, it is known that a seedling of a tree that does not get water daily soon dries out. In a similar manner, a family that does not get hold of the assistance of the Lord will also dry out.

Resembling this is what is being observed about HIV and AIDS and Reproductive Health. God does not assist a person who does not dedicate himself to faith and good moral conduct. And a person who is deprived of the assistance of the Lord is exposed to sinful activities. These sinful activities include drunkenness, excessive dancing, adultery, sexual lust before marriage, and promiscuity after marriage. All these do expose one to HIV.

There are not enough health centers in the rural areas. Therefore, it has not been possible to provide families with health services regarding reproductive health. What is more, for reasons of poverty and meager income, insufficient food consumption and inadequate nourishment are the facts observed in these areas. And as a consequence of harmful traditional practices, people inflict needless bodily injuries to themselves.

The number of expectant mothers who undergo medical examinations is very minimal. According to some demographic and medical researches, about 73% mothers in the prenatal period never go through a medical examination of whatsoever kind. Among the 27% of expectant mothers who undergo a prenatal medical examination, many are urban dwellers. In a similar fashion, only 5% of pregnant mothers deliver their babies at medical centers. The rest 95% labor and deliver at home without any assistance from trained medical personnel, but with the help of only village midwives who have either little experience or none at all.

What is worse, there are societies whose traditions do not allow their expectant mothers to deliver babies at home. In such societies, mothers in prenatal period go to distant places or forests where they labor and deliver children alone, and come back home only after a certain period of time.

To alleviate these problems, the Ethiopian Government is working hard to reduce poverty during the period 2000–2007. In its plan for health services, in particular, it has given priority to providing ample health care to families, and to raise the level of prenatal medical examination to 45% and to increase the number of trained medical personnel who work with expectant mothers to 25%.

People are, therefore, expected to assist the Government by working according to the given instructions and bringing the intentions of this policy to the desired goal.

The church is a sacred society; the Bible says, "... the church of God (is) to them that are sanctified in Jesus Christ" (1Cor 1:2). The founder of the church is Jesus Christ himself, as he has affirmed saying, "... upon this rock, I shall build my church." (Mat 16:16–18; 1Cor 3:11) In addition to this, the church is part and parcel of the body of Jesus Christ. This again is stated in the Bible, "... and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:20–23). To the church that he himself has founded, Jesus Christ also assigned apostles, prophets (disciples), evangelists, pastors and teachers (see Eph. 4:11). And he made the Church be strengthened, its knowledge widened, its existence safeguarded. The practices of the Church have continued on the basis of laws and orders. From the time the Church has been established it has been growing and expanding. After the Apostles there have been bishops and priests serving the laity in full swing.

Since bishops and priests are designated to look after the church and its congregation, they understand that they should carry out this immense responsibility diligently and with care. It demands a lot of commitments including devotion, trustworthiness, love and kindheartedness. It is for this same purpose that the apostle Saint Paul warned, “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, that obtained with the own blood his own Son” (Acts 20:28). Paul continuing says, “Be watchful for yourself;” he said this to alert the current officials of the church not to be sluggish in following up the preaching of the orderly principles of the church to its worshipers. When he says, “be watchful of the herd,” he is addressing to the church managers to remain vigilant herdsmen in looking after the Christian flocks so that the flock may not run away from the conventional Christian belief by the influence of other false preachers. In other words, he is advising Christian leaders of all times to keep the Christian congregation unwavering from their faith in Christ and to maintain their orderly manners and good deeds. In simple words, he is speaking out his opinion that Christians must always remain strong in their faith, discipline and activities. The watching of the flock could be perfect only when the children of mankind are kept safe and sound.

Since making the children of mankind entirely perfect in their secular and spiritual life is a very challenging task, Fathers of the church of all times must remain committed to their apostolic mission as a lot of duties are waiting for them. Firstly, with regard to spiritual well-being, we have to note that the new generation does not take every religious teaching given to it without question. Let us not forget that the current era is a period of science and technology. In order to educate the generation in religious matters, it demands the teacher to be a person of the highest proficiency in religious studies. What is more, since the time we are living in is a time of too many wolves, our vigilance in looking after the flock should continue to be better prepared. Secondly, in connection with secular well-being, we have to note that the generation is threatened by the pandemic HIV and AIDS. However, this disease does not spread by air. It attacks only those who are not caring for themselves. The solution for this problem is abstinence from sex before marriage and faithfulness to a single partner. The medium for the transmission of HIV includes promiscuity, careless use of sharp objects such as

contaminated blade and needle, removing a child's milk teeth and cutting short an adult's uvula. Hence, people should be cautious of such harmful practices. In fact, the remedy for this is to totally avoid these harmful cultural practices.

Since consistent vigilance in looking after the flock implies commitment in the implementation of the laws of God in many spheres of life. The priests and other church workers should make it their duty to teach the laity counseling them seriously, and pay visit to their houses, advise them about the dangers of marriage before maturity, console patients not to be discouraged but help them to stay strong with the words of the Lord, pray for them and grant them the blessing of the cross, advise that the society keep their words of vows. Priests can be sure that they have fulfilled what is expected of them, as true lovers and followers of God, if they carry out, in their assignment of vigilant herding of the flock of the church, the responsibilities just listed in this paragraph; Jesus asks his disciple: "Simon, do love me? Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said also unto him, 'Feed my lambs.' " (Jn 21:15–17).

10. HYMN: /s'ägäyä wäy n / [THE VINE BLOSSOMED] (For the last Sunday of October or Sunday before 6th of Hidar) - November 15

SCRIPTURE READING: Revelation 12:13 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.” (Rev 12:13-14)

These verses are taken from the Book of Revelation which John the Apostle, who was also called Boanerges (The Son of Thunder), wrote while he was on the Island of Patmos.

Revelation is a vision that a person sees when he is in deep thought while he is still awake. God speaks to a chosen person through revelation. A dream is what one sees while he is asleep. So vision and dream are not the same. Only people who know God and whom God loves can see vision. Regarding this the Lord said, “Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams.” (Num 12:6; Acts 2:17).

Many prophets of the Old Testament particularly Ezekiel and Daniel saw visions. At the time of the New Testament, the Lord also spoke in vision to Zechariah (Lk 1:22), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Cornelius (Acts 10:3), Peter (Acts 10:9–17), Paul (Acts 18:9) and to John the Apostle (Rev 1:17–19; Rev 4:1)

Although the interpretations of this vision are many, we try to highlight here one that concerns a particular season, the Season of Flowers. This period is the period of Mary's (mother of Jesus Christ) flight with Joseph and Salome to Egypt so that King Herod the Great could not kill her Son Jesus. Herod had heard a story about the birth of a child at Bethlehem that would become King of the Jews, a story that troubled him and all Jerusalem. Herod was afraid that this child would take over his kingdom. So he decided to kill the child Jesus before he grew up. In the mean time, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in vision and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to

Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.” (Mt 2:13) So Mary fled with her Son and other companions to Egypt and stayed there until King Herod died.

Our opening text says, “When the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman which had given birth to the male child.” This is interpreted to mean the devil having realized that he was denied victory, he came in the person of Herod who persecuted Virgin Mary, who had given birth to the Child Jesus forced her to flee to Egypt.

“But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness.” The meaning of the above verse is interpreted to mean, according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition, “In order to assist Mary escape to Egypt, she was given the power of physical and spiritual purity as she was the abode of the Holy Spirit.” The part of the verse that reads, **“to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time”** refers according to the Church tradition to the time that lasted for two and half years, during which she lived in Egypt and away from Herod, the king whom the devil had inhibited. “That serpent flew after her,” means the king continued perusing her. (Rev 12:15)

The phrases, “then from his mouth the serpent poured water like river after the woman to sweep her away with the flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.” also refers to the unsuccessful attempt of Herod, who sent his soldiers to bring Mary before him and kill the child but could not succeed because she was out of his reach in safe place.

“It (the dragon) did not know that she was given wings,” means Herod was not aware that Mary was given the power of physical and spiritual purity.

“And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children,” means, being angry with the woman, the devil, which had inhibited Herod, went to Israel to slaughter the children of Bethlehem.

This revelation also explains the sufferings and persecutions that the false Messiah inflicts on the faithful followers of Christ. In reference to this, Daniel the Prophet says, “He shall speak words against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones

of the Most High, and shall attempt to change the secret seasons and the law; and they shall be given into his power for a time, to times and half a time.” (Dan 7:25; 12:7).

The history of the flight of Mary and her child to Egypt is written in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 2 v. 13 to the end.

St. Mary was different from other women as she had no problem or pain like other women when delivering her only Son Jesus Christ. However, she suffered persecution by King Herod and his soldiers. Similarly women in our time suffer from a lot of problems such as sexual harassments which should be controlled and eliminated.

There are several precautionary measures that could be taken in reducing women’s sufferings. Some of the ways of tackling the problems could be avoiding marriage before maturity, raping, and abduction or forced marriage. Another is counseling women to protect themselves from several venereal diseases including HIV and AIDS. And if they are already infected they should be advised to go through the necessary medical treatment. A third measure is elimination of the practice of beating women which is wrongly considered to ‘be the sign of expressing of love.’ Still another measure of reducing their problems is avoiding artificial infertility by way of medication and/or consultation with family doctors.

To expand health education of women the following should be undertaken:

- ❖ Create conducive situations for the publication and distribution of qualitative informative pamphlets;
- ❖ Increase the level of women’s economic, social, administrative and political participation to ascertain the gender equality;
- ❖ Stop the practice of partiality and discrimination against women at schools, workplaces and other similar areas; and with this, stop the practice of abortion;
- ❖ Enhance access to education for all
- ❖ Provide the youth with information, services and education related to reproduction and gynecological health, etc.

Currently, the right to education on Reproductive Health has gained equal recognition with the Universal Declaration of Human Right. The Church leaders have to work hard that the sufferings, which the children and mothers of Bethlehem had experienced during the time of Herod do not happen again.

11. HYMN: /itäkäiro abesa zeane/ [WITHOUT RECKONING OUR SIN] (The 1st Sunday after Hidar 6) - the first Sunday on or after November 15 in Eur. Cal.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 79:8

OPENING CITATION: “Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.” (Ps 79:8)

In the tradition of the Ethiopian Church, ‘as täm h ro’ is a reference made to a particular season, a season that comes right after the end of the Season of Flowers. During the season of ‘as täm h ro,’ the church is engaged in preaching, firstly, God’s mercifulness, kindness, forgiveness and compassion. Secondly, it is also a season when the Church teaches that Christians should act in the same way towards one another. We understand that Prophet David prayed to God saying: “Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.” Pleading to God at a time of difficulties had been a traditional practice of the Israelites. The Israelites used to plead to God when they were struck with drought, famine, plague and war, exile and captivity. For example, when they lived in Egypt under slavery they suffered to the extent of denouncing their lives due to the oppression and subjugation that the Egyptians inflicted upon them. When God saw their long sufferings He said, “I have surely observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings. And I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians. ...” (Ex 3:7–8), and he emancipated them from the oppression of the Egyptians with Moses’ leadership. The compassion that God had for Israelites to set them free from the oppression of the Egyptians was neither the first nor the last. God’s compassion and kindness to human beings have been endless.

God’s bounty is known to people not just by the salvation he has rendered to the Israelis only, but also to all mankind. God’s kindness and mercy are limitless for all mankind, and that is why Prophet Jeremiah said, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.” (Lam 3:22). We human beings exist because of God’s will, mercy and compassion. Let us also consider what Prophet David said in

this connection, “If you, Lord, should mark iniquities who could stand?” (Ps 130:3). If God had judged us according to our deeds we could have not existed even for a day. That is why we beseech God in our liturgical prayers saying, “O Lord, let matters be according to your compassion, but not according to our offences (sins).” As bounty, compassion and mercy are the nature of God, we are also supposed to be merciful and compassionate to others. Regarding this James the Apostle said, “For God will not show mercy when he judges the person who has not been merciful; but mercy triumphs over judgment.” (Jas 2:13) Thus, according to James, a person who accords mercy to people, he himself will be accorded with it on the Day of Judgment. How can a man who does not know mercy himself expect mercy from God? God loves mercy more than anything else as he has this to say, “For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burned offerings.” (Hos 6:6). Charity to the needy is one way of showing compassion. If a person assists the destitute and the weak, he is very compassionate.

Among the destitute, physically weak and the impoverished are victims of HIV and AIDS. The problem of these people is seriously worrisome because the disease is unusually transmitted fast and exists with the victim for a long time. What is more, some members of the society avoid communicating with the victims. Usually these victims need constant attention as they are physically unable to help themselves. They should be assisted in all their movements and activities. Because many of them are poor, they require financial assistance. Since their poverty stems from having no income, they have to be provided with jobs so that they can earn means of living. It is to such victims of HIV and AIDS that we have to be charitable and compassionate. Let us help victims of HIV and AIDS physically, financially and morally.

The virus is sometimes transmitted by way of sexual relation with a person infected with the virus. Avoiding such a practice is useful to keep oneself safe and sound. Another way by which the virus is transmitted is using contaminated objects such as razors or needles that could carry the virus to the veins of another person. Since the virus cannot be transmitted by air or other kinds of bodily contact or embrace, people need not try to avoid communicating with AIDS victims. Truly, avoiding these individuals is neither human nor Christian. As much as we plead to God when we are in difficulty, we should also come to the assistance of people when they are in difficulty. We should

always condemn the avoidance of HIV and AIDS victims. We should, in fact, make it a matter of concern to help them in everything that we can afford. We should help them physically, financially, and psychologically. We can counsel and console them. We can show them our human as well as Christian compassion. There are many ways in which we can help the poor and the weak.

“For God will not show mercy when he judges the person who has not been merciful; but mercy triumphs over judgment.” (Jas 2:13)

12. HYMN: /'lotu s b hat ' / [PRAISE IS DUE TO HIM] (The 2nd Sunday of Hidar)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 5:16–28

OPENING CITATION: “Verily, verily, I tell you, anyone who hears my word, and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life.” (Jn 5: 24)

The above statement was said by Jesus Christ himself to all human beings when he was teaching. He made the statement to make clear to the children of mankind that listening to God’s words is like having a new life; that is, like coming back to life after death, and to continue to live for ever and ever. It is a lesson taught to instruct human beings that listening to God’s word and put them into practice is life itself. The Bible is the inspired word of God sent to the people of the world in two ways. From the time of Adam to the time of Moses, God himself communicated his words to people verbally. Later on, his words were communicated directly to mankind through the words by His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. God’s words told by the prophets who lived between the time of Moses and Jesus, and those words told by the Apostles after Jesus Christ are all equally trustworthy because they are inspired by the Lord. Therefore, the word of the Lord spoken either through the Apostles or Himself is the word of life; and so it should be universally proclaimed and be put into practice.

Among all words of God passed to us, today we focus on 1st Corinthians chapter 5 which speaks about indecent sexual life. We need to pay special attention to serious problem of involvement in indiscriminate sexual behavior which transgresses the rules of God. The practice of indiscriminate sexual activities exposes people to incurable HIV and AIDS virus. We do not deny that, even in the ancient days, indiscriminate sexual relation had put people in danger of physical as well as spiritual infirmity. What makes the sin of indiscriminate sexual relation more dangerous than ever is that it has posed a serious threat to the survival of mankind. It has speeded the spread of HIV and AIDS, a disease that has claimed the lives of many. We have earlier on said that the transmission of HIV through blood transfusion is ascertained by medical practitioners. It can also be transmitted by infidelity committed by one of the partners whereby the healthy partner

could contract the virus from the infected infidel partner. It has also been evident that children born to parents with HIV and AIDS can also be infected by the virus.

We have learned from today's reading that listening to God's words and putting them into practice is like coming back to life from death. The act of leading life while one is well protected from HIV and AIDS could be possible only if one listens to God's words and attunes one's lifestyle with what the words say. We can look at the meaning of 'restriction' from three perspectives. One of these is the temporary restriction. This one addresses abstinence from sex until one's maturity and subsequent marriage. In connection with this kind of restriction, there are some who say the youth cannot heed to this since their young age forces them to be submissive to sexual act. Such a statement actually has no place in the Christian religion for there are many Christians who have lived and still live in virginity. Some people may ask whether people can stay virgin. The answer is yes, they can. The second type of restriction is one of a permanent type. That is a type of abstinence whereby a person concerned stays restricted and virgin all life long. When Paul, the Apostle, says, "For I would that all men were even as myself... I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I;" (1Cor. 7:7-8) he means that man can stay virgin and unmarried all his life. Besides, among the sacred fathers and mothers of the church many are virgins and abstainers. The third type of restriction is confinement to a single sex partner after marriage; that is, to refrain from visiting a sex companion outside of wedlock. This is what is called 'fidelity.' Fidelity simply refers to the sense of not having sex with a person that a husband or a wife has not been married to. If one puts these three types of restrictions into practice, the problem related to HIV and AIDS would have no place. In other words, we would have lived in a world free of HIV and AIDS.

"Verily, verily, I tell you, anyone who hears my word, and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life." (Jn 5: 24)

13. HYMN: /‘am lak f s’um bä-h lawehu’/ [GOD IS PERFECT IN HIS NATURE]
 (The 3rd Sunday of Hidar)

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 8:23–34

OPENING CITATION: “And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat being swamped by the waves: but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, Lord, save us! We are perishing! And he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you of little faith?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” (Mt 8:23–27)

This is a story of an incidence that took place when Jesus Christ was traveling with his Disciples on a boat. From the above citation we learn that Jesus Christ entered a boat to make a journey to the country of Gergesenes, his disciples followed him. As they sailed in the boat, a great storm raged over the boat till it found itself swamped with water. As the storm overpowered the boat, the Disciples feared for their lives and began thinking ways of saving themselves. Because they knew with whom they were, they were not totally discouraged of the situation. Depending on Jesus Christ for their hope of survival, all came close to him crying in one voice “O Lord, save us; we are perishing.” Having heard of their cry, Jesus replied, first, by asking them, “Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?” Then by rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm. Jesus asked his disciples the question, “Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?” He said this because he felt that they did not have the confidence in him. They should have known that they should have been safe as he was with them. This confirms that one can be saved from any difficulties if one puts his/her faith in the Lord.

Many consider life on earth as a voyage on the sea. As voyage on sea encounters hurricanes and storms, so life of sailors is exposed to hardship and difficulties. Life on earth is full of historical facts related to absence of peace and prevalence of war, severe famine and hunger, and scourge and pestilence. Such calamities can be reduced only by coming close to God, not by running away from Him. Salvation can be obtained only by being faithful to Almighty God. If there is faith, there is salvation. Jesus has himself said,

“... all things can be done for the one who believes.” (Mk 9:23) So let us all believe in Him. He who believes in God can be known only by his deeds. Belief is expressed in good work. A religion that does not bring work with it is a dead one, as has been stated by James, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (Jas 2:26).

Currently, many are unfaithful, act unlawfully and are out of the will of God. Therefore, they bring misery upon themselves by exposing themselves to HIV and AIDS, a calamity that the world has never experienced before. Mankind has fallen into a great apprehension because of the incidence of HIV and AIDS. Again, due to this pandemic, the world has now become like a ship tormented by a storm on a body of water. Therefore, all people should turn their faces to God and beseech his help to save them from this calamity. Everybody must adhere to the laws of the Lord so that He could calm down this storm of disaster. In this lesson adherence to the laws of the Lord refers to restraining from having sex with people other than one's partner. If people earnestly behave in this manner, then they can limit the spread of HIV. It is only in this way that we can calm down the curse of HIV and AIDS that has befallen upon humanity. Strong faith is crucial for this.

The psychological torment that victims of HIV and AIDS are experiencing is immense. The torment is immense because this disease does not have cure and is deadly. The people living with the HIV and AIDS can be consoled in two ways. One is that the disease does not take life immediately after infection. If the victims have strong faith in God and confess their wrongdoings on time, they can be saved both physically and spiritually. The second consolation the victims have is the availability of a medicine that can help them stay alive like their uninfected fellowmen.

The society is expected to take care of the people living with HIV and AIDS. They should get them involved in various social activities. The Church should also provide them with all services it renders to all members without distinction. So victims of HIV and AIDS do not have anything to lose there. They can participate in all church activities including the taking of the Holy Communion and the Holy Water. If victims of HIV and AIDS are with God, their psychological problems can be solved. To be discouraged due to little faith in God would be a mistake on the part of the victims. They

are expected to stay steadfast with God. What departs a person from God is unfaithfulness, not illness.

“...‘why are you afraid, you of little faith?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. ” (Mt 8:23–27)

14. HYMN: /‘y belu israel’/ [THE ISRAELITES SAID] (The 4th Sunday of Hidar)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 9:1–41

OPENING CITATION: “When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and he spread the mud the man’s eyes, saying to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent. Then he went and washed, and came back able to see.’”
(Jn 9:6–7)

The above reading that we have just heard is a narrative about the phenomenal miracle that Jesus Christ has demonstrated in retrieving the sight of a man who had been born blind. The miracles that Jesus Christ had performed during his stay on earth are many. It is not possible to present the details of all of them in this short period of time. What we can generally say is that Jesus had spent his time on earth performing several miracles. One among his many miracles is that he restored the sight of a man who was born blind, and whose story we are going to read today. The miracle was done thus: while Jesus Christ was walking in Jerusalem on a certain day, he saw a man born blind. In those days impairment was believed to be a punishment imposed by God on a person involved because of sins committed. On grounds of this belief, Christ’s Disciples asked Jesus to explain to them if that man had been born blind because of his own sins or for that of his parents. In his answer to his Disciples, Jesus said that the man was born blind neither because of his own sins nor because of that of his parents. The man was born blind, so that the power of God could be shown upon him. Jesus gave this answer to his Disciples to let them know that he was about to show his miraculous power.

After having given this answer to his Disciples, Jesus spat his saliva unto the soil and made mud with which he anointed the eyes of the blind. Then he sent the man to Siloam pool and to wash his eyes. As was commanded, the man went to Siloam pool and washed his eyes, and then he came back with both his eyes seeing. Because Jesus Christ showed this miracle on a Sabbath day, the Pharisees felt offended and did mumble in protest for they thought that Jesus had disrespected their Sabbath day. However, Jesus did not give much attention to the Pharisees’ protest because showing a miracle on a Sabbath day was actually rendering the day a high regard, not disregard. The way Jesus Christ had

performed the miracle upon this man, who had been born blind, was different from the way he had performed other miracles in other occasions. Other times, Jesus performed miracles by way of oral statements and/or by laying hands on. But, this time Jesus did the miracle by spitting his saliva to the dust and anointing the blind man's eyes with the mud. This is of great symbolic significance to drugs and medicinal applications of our time. As can be learnt from the words of the Bible, there were times when a lump of fig (Is 18:21), and oil and wine (Lk 10:34 and 1Tim 5:23) were used as medicines. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." (Mt 9:12) He meant to show us curing sickness comes to us not only by way of miracles but also by way of blessings given to us by God in many ways.

Although disease has been a health problem since ancient times, a new epidemic is now attacking the human genus in a more horrifying manner than ever. What makes the disease of our time more horrifying than ever is the incidence of HIV and AIDS. Because this disease does not have any cure, we can indeed say that it is a threat to the survival of the humankind. Indeed, to be able to protect oneself from being attacked by such a disease is tantamount to getting a miraculous solution to the problem on its own right. No matter how much horrifying this disease may be, there are ways by which one can protect himself from this disease. The most reliable way of protecting oneself from the disease is to stay healthy before being infected by the virus. The major means of the transmission of the virus from person to person is having sex with people other than one's partner. So the best way of avoiding the virus is restraining oneself from extra marital sexual relation. Apart from this, there is a chance of staying healthy and alive even after being infected by the virus. This is possible by using medicines that man has discovered recently. They help first to reduce and confine the incubation of the virus, and second to help patients gain strength to live longer. This can be considered as one of the good gestures God provides us with. As has been said earlier, the church believes that God's will is to cure illnesses of people. If this had not been the case, the good results that we have at hand now would not have been possible. Therefore, the church has it as a guiding principle to advise that virus positive individuals (i.e. AIDS patients) take both the medical drugs as well as the Holy Water, since God's will is to cure patients. God's saving power is still being proven right by taking the Holy Water. So, AIDS patients are

encouraged to take both the drugs and the Holy Water. It cannot be a cumbersome act for God, who has restored the sight of a blind man by anointing his eyes with mud made of the soil and spittle, to cure HIV and AIDS patients with both drugs and the Holy water.

“Go! Wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent. Then he went and washed, and came back able to see.” (John 9:6–7)

15. HYMN: /sär -aa sän bätä läsäb räf tä/ [HE SET FORTH THE SABBATH FOR MANKIND TO REST] (The 1st Sunday of Tahesas)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 12:32–48

OPENING CITATION: “Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit.” (Lk 12:35)

It is Jesus Christ who uttered the words in the above opening citation. Before uttering these words, Jesus Christ gave some words of exhortation to his followers about how they should lead life in this world. One major hardship that mankind is confronted with in this world is anxiety about life. Indeed, mankind needs basic needs for life like food, shelter and clothing among others. However, as the Lord told us a person cannot acquire these things by being anxious. Since God created mankind after having made everything ready, he is provided with all that he needs. However, man should think, plan and work hard. It is in this manner that a man can have what he desires to have, not by being anxious. Therefore, it is made clear in today’s reading that Jesus Christ consoles his followers saying, “You little flock, do not fear.” According to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ man should not worry about the requirements of life such as food, shelter, and clothing. Instead, he must be concerned about matters related to the Kingdom of God. St. Paul, the Apostle, said in his Epistle to the Ephesians, “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household. (Eph 2:19) This is in reference to the fact that mankind was not a member of God’s household before the coming of Jesus Christ. After the birth of Christ, the chance of being part of the household of God was given to everybody who believes in him, and his followers are not strangers or foreigners in his Kingdom. That is why Jesus Christ said that our heavenly Father willed to give us his kingdom.

Grace given by God for Christians may be lost if it is not preserved with care. As the words of the Lord warn us in the prophecy of Ezekiel, any good deeds that a person might have done before cannot be remembered if he dies while committing sin in his latter life. However, if a sinner turns back from his sins and does good things, his former sin shall not be counted on him. (Ezek 3:20; 18:27) It is on this ground that Jesus Christ says, “**Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit**” (Lk. 12:35) as has been pointed out in the opening citation of the day’s reading. This shows that it is important to be

always ready in life for the Kingdom of God. While ‘dressing up’ implies readiness for acting good deeds, ‘lamp’ implies clear conscience. This is steadfastness in belief and good behavior. Evil spirits, evil ideas, and evil deeds cannot deprive him of his readiness for good action.

Nowadays people are exposed to HIV and AIDS because of immorality and other factors. As a person who walks in darkness does not know that he is going to fall into a cliff, so a man who leads an immoral life does not realize that he is falling into moral depredation that harms his physical and spiritual life. The permanent solution for this problem is living always implementing the words of Jesus Christ which read: **“Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit.” (Lk 12:35)** This instruction is very often violated by the young generation. This is evidenced by the fact that numerous victims of HIV/AIDS belong to this section of the society. If the youth had paid serious attention to the instruction given by Jesus Christ which says, **“Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit”, abstaining from sexual relations outside marriage would not have been difficult.** If it had been possible to restrict oneself from such conduct, HIV/AIDS would have not spread so widely all over the world. There are some people who argue abstinence is impossible. Posing such an argument can be taken for an offence against the dignity of man. It is also belittling the word of the Lord. God has permitted celibacy knowing that temporary and life long abstinence is possible. There are many instances for this. Joseph was able to resist the offer of sexual relation in the country where he was sold. (Gen 39:7-13) Also St Paul, the Apostle, advised all people to stay virgin like him (1 Cor. 7:7). There were many fathers and mothers both in the Old and the New Testament who lived and are living celibate life. Talking about virginity should not be considered as disregarding the importance of marriage. Marriage is indeed sacred. The Holy Bible states, “Let marriage be held in honor by all, and the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.” (Heb. 13:4). Hence, advise on abstinence does not discourage marriage. The term refers only to a sexual practice performed outside marriage. Abstinence also refers to shunning away from activities that arouse sexual desire. Indeed it may be difficult to control sexual desire. But, abstinence will not be difficult for people who seriously take the instruction of the Lord who said, **“Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit.”** as their guiding principle. This is

what is expected of the society to control the spread of the HIV and AIDS. It is by doing this that one can be part of the Kingdom of God.

“Be dressed for action and have your lamp lit.” (Lk 12: 35)

16. HYMN: /wol do mäd hanä n säb k / [WE PREACH HIS SON, THE REDEEMER]

(The 2nd Sunday of Tahesas – Advent)

SCRITURE READING: John 1:43–51

OPENING CITATION: “The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘follow me.’” (v. 43)

Jesus Christ came into the world and was incarnate to save mankind. He started his saving work by preaching the Gospel. The first followers were the Apostles. When Christ began his teaching, his major focus was recruiting his Disciples. So he selected his Disciples from among those who were vigilant and duty-minded. When he recruited his Disciples from among the diligent people he told them simply to follow him. Subsequently, when he once passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon (who was later called Peter) and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea to catch fish for they were fishermen. So he told them, “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mk 1:16–17). They then left their net where it was and followed him (Mk 1:18). Walking further a little distance, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were in a ship mending their net for fishing. Here again he called them to follow him and they immediately left their net and father and went after him (Mk 1:19–20). Once again he met Matthew on another day sitting at a customs office and said unto him, “Follow me.” And Matthew arose and followed him (Mk 2:14–15). As has been cited in the above reading for the day when Jesus set forth to Galilee, he met Philip and asked him to follow him. And Philip accepted the call, and became one of the disciples ever since. Nathaniel also joined the apostolic band on the same day.

The Disciples of Jesus did not follow their leader Jesus because he asked them to follow him. They followed him because they realized that he was the Messiah the Savior, about whom Moses and the prophets had spoken about his coming. This is explained in detail in today’s Gospel reading. The word of the Gospel cited above is selected for this Sunday because it is on this day that the birth of the Son of God and his descent to this world is commemorated. In the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church this season is called as ‘The Season of Advent.’ Jesus Christ started his work of saving the world by preaching the Gospel because he intended to make all people his disciples, and thus, to

give them all both physical and spiritual life. That was why he said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And, remember that I am with you always, to the end of the world.” (Mt 28:19–20).

According to today’s reading, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one first needs to be his follower. The disciples of Jesus Christ became his representatives in thought and deeds. After his Ascension, one can be Christ’s follower only in deeds. According to the teaching of Peter, following Jesus in deeds means imitating Christ’s example (1Pet 2:21). As John the Apostle says whoever is born of God does not commit sin because the divine grace remains in him. To follow the example of Christ we should not commit sin; but love people; be compassionate and helpful; be righteous; be patient when confronted with difficulties, and do the best to all people even to the extent of being a martyr.

People cannot claim to be followers of Christ while being involved in immorality. It is also presumptuous to claim to be a sincere Christian while having a heart that is never compassionate to the pain and anguish of patients and the destitute. Such claims are, indeed, tantamount to insults and defamatory to the Christian religion. HIV and AIDS which has threatened the survival of human beings spread in the world because of immorality and many other reasons. It is evident that the virus is transmitted through blood transfusion, or from infected mothers to their newly born children, or by way of breast feeding. Whichever way it may be contracted, what people should do is understand to take maximum precautions to protect themselves from contracting it.

Followers of Christ should not avoid people living with HIV so that they will not aggravate their anxiety about their conditions. Avoiding AIDS victims, who are unable to support themselves and are waiting with hope for the serving hand of the charitable, is not an act which Christ has taught us. We can precisely say that a Christian should be compassionate and loving towards AIDS victims. What is more, we have to be convinced that the virus for AIDS has come about to this world and remained a threat to the existence of human beings mainly because of uncontrolled and illegal sexual behavior. One solution to this is to refrain oneself from being engaged in promiscuous sexual activities and remain faithful to one’s life companion. HIV and AIDS victims suffer from psychological impact when people avoid associating with them. Therefore, we should

stop this practice for the sake of both humanity and God. We have earlier on said that the virus for the disease can be transmitted from the patient to the healthy mainly by way of illegal sexual copulation and blood transfusion, not by way of other kinds of social interactions. Hence, there is no reason for the healthy persons to avoid the patients. Since helping AIDS patients, who, as we said earlier, are feeble and unable to help themselves, is both humane and Christian, let every member of the society give attention to this commitment and do their share to minimize their misery. Apart from that, doing such good deeds is translating the words of the Lord into practice. Hence, those people who act thus can rightly claim that they are followers of Christ. Provided that one has followed the example of Christ in the manner just stated, then one can live a safe and sound physical and spiritual life. What had been taught to the Disciples of Christ concerns us all and all the people of the world at all times. Therefore, the phrase, “Follow me” is a recurring message to every generation.

“The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘follow me.’” (v. 43)

**17. HYMN: /aqdimu nägärä bäorit / [HE TOLD (THIS) IN THE PENTATEUCH]
(The 3rd Sunday of Tahesas)**

SCRIPTURE READING: John 1:1–19

OPENING CITATION: “In him was life; and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness has not understood it.” (Jn 1:4–5)

According to the tradition and practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church today’s Sunday is called ‘The Sunday of Light.’ The day is so called because during this period it is taught that God is the light of the world and he gives life. The word of God selected to be read and sung during this season must be one that describes that God is the light and life of the world. When we say God, we understand the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In his Epistle, John the Apostle has this to say, “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.” (1John 1:5). Besides, witnessing about the God Son, the one that has come to this world, John the Apostle says as stated in the opening citation, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” God the Son, in his divine nature, is life and light of the world. The world was created by his will. There is nothing created without him. Light represents knowledge. As all things can clearly be seen in light, so can things be understood clearly by having knowledge. When the Son of God came to the world with him life and light have come to the world. This indicates that God who gave life and knowledge to mankind in creation has also come as a man in the latter date to give life and knowledge to mankind. The phrase ‘new creature’ refers to the new man who has faith in Christ, and therefore, he is a new creature. St. Paul says about, “... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone; the new has come.” (2Cor. 5:17)

In today’s reading there is a phrase that reads, “The true Light, which gives light to every man was coming into the world.” (Jn 1:9). The symbolic interpretation of this phrase is that he who gives knowledge has come to the world. From the time that light has come to the world unbelief and heresies have disappeared from the world. And so, the people of the world have not failed in realizing the virtue of Christianity. As a result Christianity, which started with only one hundred twenty followers, has now become the

religion of the world. Because that true light that has come to the world has given those who believe in his name the power to be children of the Lord. Consequently, they are expected to be light to others. The Bible states, “You are the light of the world Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works, and give glorify to your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:14–16). Therefore, Christians should be light of men by making God’s words practical and helping others to know God’s words (Phil 2:15-16). Being an apostle of the Christian religion by putting God’s words into practice as has been indicated by St. Paul the Apostle in his Epistle to the Corinthians, is possible only when there is a light of knowledge in every body’s heart. Paul confirms this saying, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor 4:6).

As the Bible indicates, ‘darkness’ symbolizes ignorance and inability to think reasonably. Job says, “Teach us what we shall say to him; for we cannot draw up our case because of darkness.” (Job 37:19; Is 9:2). Ignorance and inability to think reasonably make people commit sins. Committing sins implies living in darkness. As a person who walks in darkness tumbles over an impediment, so does a person living in sins. The obstacles that a sinful person encounters in life are too many and are not easy. It is possible to observe this from the current health problems that mankind faces. Immoral sexual behavior is an activity performed by people engrossed in the darkness of ignorance. For that reason, immoral people are exposing their life to danger by contracting one venereal disease over another. One among the many communicable venereal diseases one which is extremely life threatening is HIV and AIDS. Living without purity and dignity until marriage is being indecent. Likewise, having indiscriminate sexual relation out of wedlock after or before marriage is also being indecent and immoral. The damage that inappropriate sexual relation does is a great deal. It becomes a cause for family break up; it brings about disgrace and humiliation in the society one lives in; it exposes one to habitual drunkenness; it greatly affects one’s economic strength, and gradually drags one into a calamity in which one finds him/herself unable to support oneself and one’s family. It exposes one to different kinds of diseases including HIV and AIDS which has been described earlier on as most threatening to human existence. Victims of this disease are being counted in millions.

Apart from this, immorality separates one from God. It also makes one lose both blessings that can be received from God. There are many obstacles that instigate a person to be deprived of knowledge and reasonable thinking to be involved in indiscriminate sexual activities. Women's fashionable clothing is not compatible to religious discipline. It is far away from both cultural and moral behavior. So, the kind of dressing that shows ladies' private bodies should be abandoned as harmful cultural practices. What is more, if mass media programs do not present indecent shows for entertainment that insights sexual yearning, it can be possible to reduce incidences of adultery and fornication. The public itself, which is the victim of the problem, must refrain itself from watching such shows to protect itself from this hazardous disease of HIV and AIDS.

People to whom God's light is illuminated must not be defeated by the darkness of sin that they have themselves have brought about. They should, instead, be able to freely walk to and fro in the illuminated light of Christianity. The sense of walking freely to and fro, in the present lesson, connotes refraining from and keeping oneself away from the sin of promiscuity. A person who keeps himself away from such a sin of immorality is a man of the Lord who freely walks to and fro within the illuminated light; and the light of Jesus Christ is within him.

“... Awake up, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (Eph 5:14)

18. HYMN: /nolawi zämäs’ -a/ [A SHEPHERD THAT CAME] (The 4th Sunday of Tahesas)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 10:1–30

OPENING CITATION: “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.” (Jn 10:14)

The reading of today is a word of the Gospel that conveys its message representing Jesus Christ as a good shepherd and his followers as a herd of sheep. The statement quoted in the opening citation is Christ’s own words. Today’s Sunday is called “The Sunday of the Shepherd” which is in Geez ‘Nolawi’. The word “Nolawi” means ‘shepherd.’ A shepherd is a person who tends flock of sheep or cattle. In this section of the lesson there is a part that reads, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never die.” (Jn 10:27–28). In Ethiopia the sheep do not follow their shepherd; but it is the shepherd who follows them. So the phrase “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” which has just been quoted, may not be a clear illustration for Ethiopians. But, to the people of Jerusalem, the illustration is very clear. In Palestine, a shepherd walks in front of his herd of flock making a signal with a certain voice to his sheep and the sheep recognize his voice and follow him. It is this example that today’s reading explains the relationship between Jesus as a shepherd and his followers as a herd of sheep. The example conveys a great message. Since Jesus Christ is a good shepherd of his followers, he wants them to follow him as the sheep follow their shepherd.

The word of Christ does not change but last for ever. So, knowing one’s shepherd requires staying with the shepherd for a long time and getting accustomed to his unchanging voice and word. In a like manner, knowing Christ, our shepherd, requires knowing his voice, listening to his word, and following him doing what he says. Herding a flock of sheep has great responsibility. A shepherd has to be alert watching over the flock so that a wild beast may not snatch anyone of them away. He should also look for a green pasture and for clean water where the flock can comfortably feed. He has to attentively observe the flock so that they may not run away to an unwanted direction. A good shepherd has also to carry out all these responsibilities. In a similar manner,

clergymen, must look after members of the Church so that they don't go astray and abandon their Christian faith or be overcome by secular practices and worldly temptations. The clergy should carry out tasks of counseling the members of the Church preaching the word of God to them, providing them with spiritual incites and knowledge, serving them with the Holy Communion, attending to their vows and confessions, and making sure that they remain faithful to the doctrine of the Church.

Jesus Christ said "I am the good shepherd" because he takes care of the believers, and makes sure that the life of his followers is well kept. He, therefore, expects all church workers to follow his example. When Christ lived in this world, he preached the saving word of the Gospel to mankind. As he did, he called on sinners to repent, consoled the afflicted and forgave the sin of those who lived wicked life. In other words, he carried out his duties of a good shepherd with perfection and set example to his followers. Therefore, all preachers, who are presently engaged in looking after Christians, are expected to be good shepherds as Jesus Christ.

Nowadays, there are some who are not good followers of Christ. They do not listen carefully to his word. Therefore, many who are not careful to the word of God have become victims of HIV and AIDS. Many people of the world are exposed to this disease for two reasons. One is that they have not got sufficient protection. If people had sufficient moral education, HIV would have not spread so widely. Thus, many individuals do not lead their life according to religious principles and therefore they are exposed to HIV and AIDS. The second reason is that people do not lead their life in accordance with the advice and counseling of the clergy. The church has always taught and advised people to get married to a life companion receiving Holy Communion and stay steadfast with such a partner for life. Had this advice been adhered to, there would not have been any HIV and AIDS victims. Unfortunately, the number of AIDS victims is constantly increasing, not decreasing. This confirms that most people do not pay much attention to the teaching of the Church. However, priests must continue to work hard in advising and preaching the people for a better result.

What is more, fathers-confessors should constantly instruct their Christian children that must remain faithful to their respective partners and receive Holy Communion to seal the one to one partnership. If priests had done this job responsibly

immorality would not have prevailed in our community. If wedding couples are encouraged to undergo medical test and produce health certificate to show their health status before marriage, the spread of HIV and AIDS virus could have been controlled.

A good shepherd advises members of the society not to avoid and discriminate HIV and AIDS victims. He should visit, console and counsel them so that they could feel comforted. He should also encourage the victim to receive Holy Communion and participate in church activities. This would do everything good that can build up their hope and confidence in getting physical and spiritual salvation from the Lord. Thus, if priests were to become good shepherds like Christ they meet these responsibilities.

Finally priests who are the representatives of God on earth are expected to look after their Christian children by giving them proper education and advice on the importance of married life. They must tell their Christian children that a married life, confirmed by taking Holy Communion, confines them to a single life-partner, and guards them from being involved in immorality. They should also encourage them that the married couples must often go through a medical check up before marriage to insure that they are free from HIV. In addition, it is part of the priests' responsibility to inspire their Christian children and ascertain to them that it is a matter of religious commitment to help and care for those children who lost their parents because of HIV and AIDS.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never die.” (Jn 10:27–28).

19. HYMN: /y sär q kokäb / [A STAR WILL ARISE] (The 1st Sunday after Christmas) - The 1st Sunday after January 7

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:1–13

OPENING CITATION: “They went into the house, and when they saw the child with Mary his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and presented them to him.” (Mt 2:11)

This season is a period when we remember the birth of Jesus Christ from Virgin Mary. God disclosed his love and respect to mankind. It is a time when God revealed himself in flesh. It is a season when the prophecy of the prophets that God loves the world and thus would send His Son was realized. The event relates to the feast day of the annual commemoration of the descent of the Son of God from the Heavens by being born to Virgin Mary to save mankind from sin and condemnation. Since the festival is religiously of paramount importance, Christian well-wishers exchange words of good wishes with these words, “Merry Christmas!). The birth of the Son of God from a human being to save humanity took place at a time when mankind was away from God because of sin and guilt. This act of God shows how much He loves mankind. By being born assuming human nature God has also shown His respect to mankind. God being born as human being proved himself that he is faithful to fulfill the promises he gave through the prophets. In this connection, as the Son of God has become man, the human being also has become son of God by being baptized as Christian and this is God’s gracious gift. As a son of God, man has attained the right to inherit the kingdom of God. All this has been possible by the descent of the Son of God to this world, which is a gracious heavenly gift. So, we celebrate Christ’s birthday with joy and exuberance.

As it is said in today’s reading, it was since the time of his birth that the world has been rendering great respect to the Son of God, born of Virgin Mary. David had prophesied before long, “The kings of Spain and of the islands will offer him gifts. The kings of Arabia and Ethiopia will bring him offerings.” (Ps 72:10). In confirmation with this prophesy, three kings who have come to Christ’s birthplace from the countries cited in the prophecy, have presented the child Jesus gifts that included gold, frank-incense,

and myrrh. In the Bible, these three kings are referred to as Men of Wisdom /magicians. Because the word Saba is Ethiopia's old name, there are history books that tell us one among the three kings who presented gifts to the newly born child was an Ethiopian King. Having known through vision that Christ was born in the land of Jerusalem, the three kings started their journey to that land where Christ was born. They reached the exact spot of the birthplace of Christ, Bethlehem, being guided by stars. As the kings entered the house, they saw the young child with Virgin Mary, his mother; and then they knelt down and worshiped him. Then they presented him with the gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. The gifts presented to him were meant to render him respect. In those days, such items of gifts were highly valued articles to be presented to only kings in expression of obedience. It was to communicate this same meaning that the kings presented those items to the Child Jesus. However, apart from the meaning just given, interpreters have been ascribing various other meanings to the items presented. So gold signifies the child's purity; incense indicates the child's sweet fragrance; and myrrh, symbolizes the forthcoming sufferings and death that the Child is going to experience on Good Friday.

When Christ was born of Mary, the Angels praised the Lord. The news of his birth was also heard and this was known as 'the birth of the Holy Savior'; and, as was said earlier, the Men of Wisdom presented gifts. That all this was done was honor not only to the born Child but also to his mother, Mary. We (Ethiopians) very well know the kind of honor, respect and care given to a woman who is in maternity period. Such a mother is deservedly praised being described as 'a woman in St. Mary's semblance.' She is also presented with different kinds of gifts. Again, due to her safe delivery all her acquaintances share her happiness. However, when St. Mary gave birth to a Child Jesus, those who expressed joy were not only worldly men but also the Angels of the Lord, for the fact of the matter was that the child born to her was a Savior of the world. Besides, the gifts presented to her flowed from all directions of the world. So, it is no wonder that the honor rendered to her appeared different from that rendered to other mothers. There is a vivid exemplary lesson that one can learn from this story. This is that a newly born child deserves applause and acclamation at the moment of his arrival to this world. Besides, the mother of the newly born should also be honored and respected for the hardship that she has pulled through during the maternity period.

Indeed, what our society currently does in honor of a mother in maternity period, and to a child coming to this world is appreciable. The traditional practice of presenting gifts to a newly born child and to a mother in maternity period, the words of appreciation and encouragement which is given to a mother who has just given birth to a child and the care given to such a mother are practices that must continue. In addition, the society is well aware, and we encourage it too, that breast feeding is extremely useful to maintain the health of a child that is newly born. In fact, this is a matter that medical people put special emphasis on. While this and the aforementioned positive practices are matters we should appreciate and encourage, there are other traditional practices that we have to correct and if possible to totally abolish their being performed. Some among these include: the mutilation of girls' genital organ, the act of rubbing the belly of a woman in labor with butter during delivery, the practice of shaking and pricking the throat of a laboring mother with the idea of helping her to eject the placental tissue and the tradition of forcing her to drink a mug of cud (collected from a goat slain for this purpose) when labor persists, and so on so forth. We also need to be careful when separating a newly born child from its mother; i.e. we have to use a clean razor while cutting the umbilical cord. In connection with child care, as well, the culture of cutting the a child's uvula, scratching its throat, removing its milk teeth, all of which are done with the intention of doing good to the child, but actually end up being fatal, must be stopped. Surely, such cultural routines of the kind just discussed must stop for they do more harmful than good. However, those other traditional practices of the type the Wise Men had done to Christ and his mother (the gifts and all) are good and exemplary practices and must continue to exist.

“They went into the house, and when they saw the child with Mary his mother, and knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and presented them to him.” (Mt 2:11)

20. HYMN: /n gus ki s' yon / [O, ZION, YOUR KING] (The 2nd Sunday after Christmas)

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:19–23

OPENING CITATION: “... an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel, because those who were seeking the child’s are dead.’ (Mt 2:19–20)

This season according to the Ethiopian Orthodox church’s tradition is called Christmas and Epiphany season. In conformity to that, the word of the Lord that the church preaches to its congregation at this time is also one related to Birth of Christ. At this season as was stated in the preceding lesson, it is a period of commemoration of the time when the Son of God was revealed as concrete human being and settled on earth to save mankind from the destruction they were about to suffer, and subjugation to the Devil that they were about to encounter. It is a time of remembering the event when the Son of God revealed himself in flesh. Because the Son of God was born of Virgin Marry, the season is also a period during which St. Marry is also praised and honored.

We find that the opening citation for today’s lesson has the words, “...**Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel.**” This is so said to Joseph by the Angel of God. The phrase ‘young child’ in this citation refers to Jesus Christ; and the word ‘mother’ indicates Virgin Marry. There can be no more honor or respect than being addressed and referred to as ‘The Mother of the Lord.’ That is why our church puts Virgin Marry immediately next to God in honor above all other creatures. As is shown in the day’s reading, the name of St Joseph is also respectfully remembered, and persists to be remembered, in this season because it was he who helped, carried errands, stayed obedient and served as guardian to the mother and the child in those miserable days.

The elderly St Joseph came down to the Land of Egypt with the child Jesus and his mother Virgin Marry to keep the child out of reach of King Herod who sought to kill him. As the story extensively told in the Gospel, King Herod, the sovereign of the Land of Israel at the time, was not happy to hear about the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem.

Herod thought that Jesus was to be the king of Judea. This news worried Herod much. As Christ is supreme ruler of the world many foreign rulers of the time came to Jerusalem to worship and present him gifts. This foreign king that had come to Jerusalem reached where Christ was born enquiring the place where he was born saying, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” These kings knew that Christ was born in the land of Jerusalem and set on their journey to this land to worship and give him presents. The phrase ‘King of Judah’ which the kings used in their enquiry for the address of Christ disturbed King Herod very much. So the only solution that he could think to resolve this problem was to get rid of the child by killing him. However, since His descent to this world was to save mankind by living and dying like man. But Jesus knew that the time for dying to save mankind was not so close yet. So he took flight with his mother to Egypt so that King Herod could not reach him. With this, Africa got the blessed opportunity of hosting St. Mary and her son Jesus Christ. After having lived in Egypt for over three years, they again got message from the Angel of God that they now could return to Israel. So they return and settled in Nazareth. It was here, at Nazareth, that Jesus Christ passed most of his thirty three years of earthly life preaching the Gospel.

Joseph endeavored to keep the child Jesus alive by migrating to a foreign land would give us good example. It teaches us that parents, the society and the government have responsibility to safeguard the security of children at all times because children are extremely loveable section of the society and they are precious assets of the time to come. The commendable good behavior, personality and spirit of citizenship that we expect of the children in their forthcoming formative years and adulthood ages start to have roots and get developed well from the kind of care we render them in their childhood ages. In connection with their life, they have to be breastfed to grow healthily. Milk from a mother’s breast has no substitute when it comes to feeding a child for healthy growth. Briefly speaking, saving and caring for children helps them to grow strong and healthy physically as well as mentally. This enables them to become creative and productive citizens later. It is this that parents should know and put into practice. With regard to education, parents must realize that sending their children to school at the proper time of their age is very decisive. It is the healthy and educated citizen that can build a better society and economy for people of the future. Education is the source of creativity and

general knowledge. What is more, the Bible says that education can be attained not only from formal educational centers such as the school, but also from parents at home. In other words, if parents set example of good conduct to their children, this means the children have acquired the needed education. Regarding to this the Bible says, "... they should learn first to carry out their religious duties towards their own family and in this way repay their parents and grandparents, because that is what pleases God." (1Tim 5:4). If such education is attained right from childhood it would not be difficult to be a child of God and a good citizen for the country and heavenly Kingdom of God. Pertaining health, one of the major duties of parents is looking after the physical and spiritual condition and vitality of their children. If a child has lost his vitality in his/her tender age, he cannot become a dependable and strong citizen. Neither can he/she be able to lead a good life in the future.

Therefore, caring for children by feeding from their mothers' breast, taking them to medical centers on time when they are sick and avoiding the application of harmful traditional medicines are some of the things expected of good parents. As has been pin pointed in earlier lessons, the culture of cutting a child's uvula, scratching its throat, removing its milk teeth, all of which are done with the intention of doing good to the child, but actually end up being deadly, must end up now.

To add to this, since many of the pictures that children watch on television and cinema screens do not suit our children; they too have to be stopped from being transmitted; only those pictures that are constructive and helpful to the development of the children's mind should be selected and transmitted. Since children get used to bad habits such as smoking cigarettes, chewing chat, drinking intoxicant beverages, fighting over negligible issues, stealing properties of other people, insulting people, lying, and the like by listening to and observing their elders, parents should take utmost care not to show such undesirable conducts in front of their children. Virgin Mary fled with her Child Jesus to a country she did not know in order that she could keep the child's life safe by going away from the reach of the cursed king, Herod. In a like manner, there should not be any sacrifice that parents would not make for the sake of their children's physical and spiritual safety. Keeping the safety of children is safeguarding the well-being of the future generation. Particularly at this time, during which the threat of HIV and AIDS has

extensively pervaded the society, and the number of children who have lost their parents for reasons of being infected by the virus is increasing day by day, parents must safeguard not only the health of their own children, but also that of those other children who have happened to be orphans by the effect of the just cited virus.

“But, if anyone does not take care of his relatives, specially the members of his own family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1Tim 5:8)

**21. HYMN: /horä iyäsus bät f s h t wus tä k b kab / [JESUS GLADLY
HENT TO THE WEDDING] (The 3rd Sunday after Christmas)**

SCRIPTURE READING: John 2:1–14

OPENING CITATION: “... my time has not yet come.” (Jn 2:4)

Jesus, in his divine nature, is not subject to obedience; but in his human nature he is obedient. However, he has his own time schedule to carry out his duties.

In the Bible, the word ‘time’ which is repeatedly spoken of by Jesus is very often referred to the time of his death on the Cross. To mention some examples: when his compassionate mother asked him about the running out of wine at the feast, he talked about the blood of his body that he was to shed on Good Friday which he described as the ‘drink of life and drink of redemption’. When Virgin Mary asked him about the feast of the groom and how the groom’s shortage of supply of wine at the banquet could be made plentiful, he spoke about the heavenly wedding feast he prepared for the lamb’s wedding for his friends and blood which fills the emptiness of the world.

As we can learn from the stories in the Bible, several miracles had taken place in the time of the prophets that lived before Christ. Apart from the miracles of punishments, forgiveness and show of supremacy that took place in the Land of Egypt during the time of Moses. He emancipated his people who suffered about which they cried a great deal pleading to God in the heavens for deliverance from the tyrannical rule of Pharaoh. The other miracle is when God divided the Red Sea into two between which there was dry land to let the people of Israel cross over to the other side of the Sea. Pharaoh and his army, who ran chasing the people of Israel to return them to Egypt, were drowned when the divided sea was closed.

In the story of the journey in the desert, miracles were performed to solve the problems of the people of Israel. Manna had been dropped from heaven when the people were hungry; water had sprang out of rocks when they were thirsty. Bitter waters of streams turned sweet and drinkable. As a matter of fact, the first miracle of Jesus in Cana of Galilee has a theme closely related to easing problems of people. Their problems were deprivation, humiliation and other similar difficulties. For example, Jesus Christ, the Holy Savior of the World, attended the wedding ceremony at Cana and changed six jars

of water to wine miraculously. Therefore, there was no shortage of wine any more and the host could serve wine abundantly to guests and by so doing, he protected the hosts from shame, letting them have enough wine to serve.

The attendance of Virgin Mary and the Disciples of Christ at the same wedding ceremony shows that marriage has the blessing of God.

Our church celebrates, on the basis of order and regulations of the Church, the service of the Holy Sacrament of matrimony. This is done so that the bridegroom and the bride are united and given the divine grace. The sacrament sanctifies their matrimonial union, and makes it perfect and spiritual like the unity of Christ and the church. Marriage, which is the source of families and societies, must have strong foundation so that union does not break. The service of the sacrament of matrimony is, therefore, a practice connoting the church's act of calling of the blessings of the Lord of heaven to the wedding ceremony and to the partners, in the first instance.

Marriage is honorable and pure. Paul the Apostle affirms this in his Epistle to the Hebrews saying, "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers." (Heb 13:4). So, therefore, God created "male and female ... and blessed them saying be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Gen 1:27-28; Heb 13:3-7) Giving honor to matrimony itself, the Lord used it as an example of the kind of relationship existing between himself and the church, and his followers. He says, "... wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it). (Eph 5:24-33).

When Jesus Christ, our redeemer, attended the marriage feast in the wedding house with Virgin Mary, he showed his first miracle by turning water into wine, and blessed the whole marriage ceremony. Wedding is a pleasing event, and wine makes the heart of man glad. (Ps 104:15).

Our redeemer was invited to attend the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. He came to this place, a place of merriment where wine of life was being served, and revealed his first miracle. Virgin Mary is the real cause for the miracle performed at Cana of Galilee. It is the part she played for the miracle to happen at this place that makes Virgin Mary our dependable mediator. When she found out that the wine to be served at

the banquet was running out, she thought a while about what to serve to the guests and how to save the hosts from shame. She came close to her son, Jesus Christ, relying on him that he would surely find a solution. She pleaded and interceded to find solution about the shortage of the wine. As goes the Ethiopian saying, “a pleading from a mother cannot make one turn away his face.” Jesus accepted her mediation and turned water into wine, and thus, he resolved the problem at the feast.

There is one major issue that we should not skip without mentioning while talking about sacred matrimony. This is the issue of the HIV and AIDS which has been threatening the people of the world. The solution for this deadly infectious disease is to be faithful to a single partner. It is this that the society has to encourage. Much is expected of us to inspire the matured youth to stick to one life companion by being committed to a legally recognized marriage, and never to be involved in an immoral conduct either before or after marriage; for it is written in the Bible, “Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.” (Heb. 13: 4).

22. HYMN: / munä konä l dātu/ [HIS BIRTH BECAME REAL] (The 4th Sunday after Christmas)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 2:42–52

OPENING CITATION: “... Why were you searching for me?” (v. 49)

Talking about the laws of Moses and the teachings of the prophets, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” (Mt 5:17) To fulfill what was said in the law written in Exodus which says, “Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God,” (Ex 23:17), our Lord and redeemer, Jesus Christ, went to the Temple of Jerusalem, as a young man of twelve years of age, with his guardian Joseph and his mother, Virgin Mary. He made this trip to celebrate an annual feast in Jerusalem. This fact is recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke.

However, when the festival was over, Joseph and Virgin Mary started to return to their home place in Nazareth. But without their knowledge Jesus, the twelve years old, stayed behind in Jerusalem where he joined the highly educated priests. These priests, to whom Jesus attentively listened and presented questions, were very much impressed by the wisdom, intelligence and insight of this young fellow (Jesus). Apart from his thoughtfulness, they were also very much overwhelmed by his physical appearance. He was very handsome. They were highly exulted, to say the least, to listen to and observe the Messiah, Christ, about whom the Bible says, “You are the most handsome of men; grace is poured upon your lips: therefore God has blessed you forever.” (Ps 45:2)

His guardian Joseph and Mary came back to Jerusalem after three days looking for their missing son. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, they found Jesus in the Temple. Then Mary (His mother) asked him, “Son! Why have you treated us like this?” He responded by asking back, “**Why were you searching for me?**” (v. 49)

The Lord who was revealed in human flesh and was perfectly human without sin, fulfilled the law of God by asking the teachers of the Temple about his Father’s laws. He told his mother and Joseph, too, that he ought to live in his Father’s house.

Jesus Christ’s childhood is exemplary; we can all benefit from it. He sanctified our youthful age when he was young. We should not forget that Jesus was found in the

Temple when he was being searched by his mother and guardian. He was found in the Temple while asking the teachers of the law questions about the words and laws of God.

Where do people look for us today? And where are we found? Where are the young of the current generation being searched? And where was the child Christ found? Actually, Christ did not transgress the laws. He was found in the Temple while discussing and deliberating about the laws with Temple officials and lettered individuals. Our growth and rearing should also be like that of Jesus. It has to be with God and in front of people of the Church and in a manner that pleases God. How many of us are reared honorably and graciously? The rearing of many of us is only secular, one affiliated to a human nature and spiritual. However, all those who belong to Christ should be brought up with the teaching of God's word, grace and love. In order that God may provide them with grace and honor, they should come close to him.

We ask you, parents: Where are your children, today, whom you have sent out of your houses? Are they at the church? Do you really bring them up spiritually, righteously, gracefully and with love of the Lord? Do we really follow them up and check their activities? Do they listen to the advice and guidance of their parents? Think a while about the childhood days of Jesus Christ? When they came back to their home place from Jerusalem, Joseph and Saint Mary were not aware that Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. After being aware of his absence, they came back to Jerusalem in search of him and they found him, at last, in the Temple.

This means that children of the current generation must also be found at the church if they are looked for. If this is the case, children will surely avoid all evil social practices such as addiction to drugs and harmful customs like raping and being raped and eloping, etc. Parents should also pay close attention to what children say and comment.

**23. HYMN: /täwol dä yäsus bäbetäl hem zäy huda/ [JESUS IS BORN IN
BETHELEHEM OF JUDAH] (The 5th Sunday after Christmas)**

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 47/48:8

OPENING CITATION: “As we have heard, so we have seen...” (Ps 47/48:8)

As the prophets prophesied that Messiah would come down from heaven and be born of Virgin Mary, he was really born of Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. (Mt. 2:1)

St. Paul, the Apostle, has given a detailed description of the mysterious connotation just given above saying, “Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great. God was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, preached among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.” (1Tim 3:16)

Why did the Lord reveal himself? He revealed himself to destroy the works of the devil. (1Jn 3:8) He revealed himself in human flesh to destroy death with his death, sin with his sacrifice and falsehood with his preaching. He revealed himself to save us from sin. (1Tim. 1:15) He revealed himself so that we might have truth more abundantly. (Jn 10:10). He revealed himself to be the way, the truth and the life. (Jn 14:6). St. Ephraim the Syrian also has this to say: “Come and look at this wonderful thing; and sing for his incarnation is revealed to us, for that which had never been incarnated is now incarnated; the word became flesh, he who had no beginning became ‘the first’; he whose age was never reckoned, time has been counted for him; he who was invisible, became now visible; the Son of God, Jesus Christ, has become a man, but he is eternal.” Thus the Syrian father described Christ’s incarnation in this way.

Christ’s coming to this world, therefore, is (i) to look for mankind who had been lost from the right track; (ii) to bestow to man redemption of flesh and soul; (iii) to give the children of Adam the blessings of the soul and the flesh; and (iv) to enable human beings inherit the Kingdom of God which they had lost because of the transgression of God’s commandments. Therefore, having realized the magnitude of the ransom paid for him, man has to learn to live according to the rules and laws of the Lord keeping himself away from committing sins, but always maintaining righteousness and purity of life.

In conclusion, to save oneself from physical and spiritual ailments, every Christian should remember the sacrifice Christ has undergone for him/her and urge

him/herself to lead a sanctified life confining oneself to a single life partner, if married abstaining oneself from immorality, but if unmarried he should abstain from any sexual relation until he gets legally married. In simple words, Christians must set example of good behavior to other people living in their vicinity and to generations yet to come. If we do not follow this advice, Christ's revelation in the flesh of mankind will have no value to us Christians. Being disobedient to this rule will, in turn, harm the life of every individual of the family and society. Living according to God's laws and rules is more important than every other valuable thing. It is when people manage to live lawfully and orderly that they can protect themselves and the society from the threat and catastrophe that HIV and AIDS has currently posed to mankind all over the world. So, let us live lawfully and orderly, and we should keep in mind that this is a necessity of greater importance than anything else.

24. HYMN: /täbähalu s'ad qan bäbäy natihomu n zä y b lu/ [THE

RIGHTEOUS SAID TO ONE ANOTHER] (The 6th Sunday after Christmas)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 10:34–42

OPENING CITATION: “... Even though you do not believe me, believe my works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the father.” (Jn 10:38)

There is an Ethiopian proverb that says, “A person who pretends to have slept does not respond even if he is called with a roaring voice.” The essence of this proverb is applicable to the family of Jews who, despite all the miracles such as giving sight to a man born blind, restoring the life of the deceased like that of Lazarus, curing the sick, and exorcising evils from people that he revealed before their eyes, feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fishes, were unable to be convinced by what Christ preached and did. They should have seen this and believed, and upon their belief, become saved. But they stubbornly remained unimpressed by his teaching and miraculous acts and have not believed. It is to these people that Christ said, “... **Even though you do not believe me, believe my works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the father.**” (Jn 10:38)

We can learn from the opening citation that our Savior, Jesus Christ, made the Jews well aware to choose between gaining and losing from his preaching. While he was preaching in the treasury of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews asked him saying, “Who are you?” His answer was, “I am the same that I said unto you from the beginning.” (Jn 8:20–25). Adding to that, Christ said, “... You would die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.” This statement was strong enough for the Jews to follow him. It emphasizes the necessity of making a choice between dying and surviving. That was the matter for them to make decision on whether to bring about death or life. The Jews should not have ignored giving an answer to him.

However, although the Jews had a physical father, Abraham, and that they were the owners of law and commandments, they should have known who Jesus Christ was and must have paid attention to what he said so that they could make the right decision. Now that they did not heed to his teachings, and did not recognize that Jesus was

speaking for their good it was inevitable that they would physically go to the grave and spiritually to hell for all the sins they had committed.

That is why Jesus Christ, the lord of compassion and forgiveness, said to them, **“... Even though you do not believe me, believe my works....”** However, as an Amharic proverb says, “A town that is going to perish does not listen to a decree proclaimed.” So the Jews gave verdict upon themselves of being accountable for his death declaring their decision in these words: “... Let his blood be on us, and on our children.” (Mt 27:25).

Today we clearly understand the descendants of Adam are suffering because of sins they are committing as they refuse to listen to what they are told; do not believe in miracles shown to them, and do not perceive what they actually see.

It is on these grounds that God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah who said, “You keep listening, but you do not comprehend; you keep looking, but you do not understand. Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.” (Is. 6:9–0; Mt 13:14–15).

Despite all the knowledge gained through education, our generation is losing its sweet life for different petty reasons at different times and places instead of leading a happy life weighing the good and the bad and choosing what is good. What appears practical, however, is that this generation does not seem to choose what is good. Consequently, it has become burden to the family and a concern to the nation. They are also observed abandoning their parents without any supporters, and their children without any custodians. In fact, the number of street children is increasing by the day. So where are the fruits of hearing, learning, and perceiving? Upon whom is it that we observe the words of Isaiah, the Prophet of God, is becoming practical? Is there any human being to whom the Gospel has not been preached thus far? Was it not said that, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the (entire) world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end will come.” (Mt 24:14).

Reading is for the purpose of realizing facts, listening for the purpose of perception, perception for the purpose of conviction, and all these are for the purpose of protecting ourselves from appalling mistakes. So we need to convince ourselves that we

have to avoid unchristian behavior. Our physical body is so built to provide accommodations only for the Holy Spirits. Therefore, it is necessary that we handle it and our soul with purity and sanctity.

The Bible says, "... You shall be holy for I am holy." (1Pet 1:16) Following this guidance, we also advise people to keep themselves holy by refraining from sexual relationships before marriage, and by faithfully sticking to one life partner after marriage. We should also make it a matter of importance to adhere to social laws and rules if we have to protect ourselves from the threat of the current deadly contagious disease HIV and AIDS. What is more, protecting ourselves alone does not amount to anything unless we counsel others to do the same so that everybody in the society is safe and sound from the peril of this epidemic. Such social remedy is not new. Even St. Paul, who was selected from the time he was in the womb of his mother, had been involved in such assistance as he advised, taught and counseled people orally, as well as in a written form, to enable people keep themselves holy and get into the Kingdom of God. Other prophets and apostles have also taught people to be holy and righteous.

It is important to recognize that children can be elected by God from the wombs of their mothers to carry out social activities. David became a prophet and a king after being chosen from his mother's womb. He had prophesied about what Jesus Christ would do from conception to his Second Coming. The Prophet Jeremiah was also chosen from his mother's womb to tell prophecies about Jesus Christ. Why is it that we do not discuss about underage expectant mothers along with the destruction of Jerusalem in old times? Why do we not care for laboring expectant mothers?

When we look at practices in rural Ethiopia, we find that underage girls are forced to marry and get pregnant before maturity. They suffer from labor during delivery. At times, for reasons of intensive laboring, either they themselves or their children or both die. If they survive the risk of death, damage could happen to one of their reproductive organs; or they could be exposed to fistulous infection which is a health problem connected with the urinary bladder and the rectum sustained in difficult childbirth. Under such circumstance severe damage occurs unless medical treatment is taken on time. In such situations, children who might be chosen from their mothers' womb to be leaders

and priests could end up dead without being able to carry out the tasks for which they had been chosen.

So, in order to avoid such problems, marriage before maturity must not only be discouraged but also abolished. It is also necessary to take laboring expectants to medical centers so as to avoid the death of mothers and children that can result from backward and traditional practices of child delivery.

**25. HYMN: /wä-b zuhan nolot mäs' - u/ [AND MANY SHEPHERDS
CAME] (The Sunday before Lent)**

SCRIPTURE READING: John 4:1–27

**OPENING CITATION: “... those who drink of the water that I will give them, will
never be thirsty.” (Jn 4: 14)**

According to the narration of St John, the Evangelist, Jesus Christ stayed in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover and after the feast is over he left Judaea for Galilee. On his way there he had to pass through Samaria. Because he walked a long distance as a human being without sin, he got tired when he reached Sychar, one of the towns in Samaria. In this town, Christ sat down for rest near a water-well on a portion of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Soon a Samaritan woman came to fetch water from the well.

At that time Christ who is the living water asked the woman to give him some water to drink. She responded to him by asking, “How is it that you, being a Jew, ask drink of me, a woman of Samaritan?” The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. (Jn 4:9) Jesus answered her saying, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” (Jn 4:10) To this, the woman answered saying, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?” (Jn 4:11) To this, Jesus replied with these words, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again; but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty; but the water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water springing up to eternal life” (Jn 4:13–14). The woman’s reaction to this was to plead to Jesus for this water in these words: “Sir, give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” (Jn 4:15). Because Jesus Christ was of the conviction that such ‘living water’ is essential not only for this woman, but also for all those who could come close to him in faith, he instructed her thus: “Go and call your husband, and come back.”

As the hymn of praise of Saint Jared describes, “Many shepherds came, but they could not lift up the stone from the mouth of the well until such a time when Jacob, a man from whose bosom will be born Lord, came. He lifted up the stone and the shepherds could give water to the flock.” In a like manner, many prophets came, but they were not able to

establish baptism. When Christ, the respectable and kind shepherd came, he did establish the order of baptism and a great many people are baptized. And so, the hymn of St Jared has become real. As we can understand from Jared's song of praise, redemption, life, righteousness, honor and glory have been granted to all people of the world. That is, the boulder of curse was rolled away, and the gate of the kingdom of heavens was opened and the sonship of God that was lost was made to return to human beings by the good shepherd, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Before she was persuaded to be a devotee in the faith, the Samaritan woman did not know the real shepherd from the Heavens. That was why she asked Jesus, "Are you greater than our Father Jacob, who gave us this well, and he himself drank of it, and his children, and his cattle?" With this question to Jesus she showed interest in the faith. As a result, she was asked to bring her husband though she did not have one. As a matter of fact, through her many have been attracted and brought to the true redeemer, Jesus Christ.

As we can understand from the opening citation, this 'living water' is necessary for all people who would believe in Christ since this living water is a medicine for both human flesh and soul. This 'living water' heals the physically and spiritually sick persons... Incidentally, we advise all, particularly those victims of HIV and AIDS who knowingly or unknowingly had found themselves infected by the virus, to be rescued and saved by Jesus Christ in examining themselves and confessing their sins to the church, bowing down to and getting in touch of the cross, using Holy Water to purify themselves from physical and spiritual ailment according to the rules and regulations of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church. We must always keep in mind the words quoted for today in the Bible, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again; but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty; but the water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water springing up to eternal life'" (Jn 4:13–14).

Praise be to the Lord

25. HYMN: /täqän yu lä- g ziab her/ [SERVE THE LORD] (The 1st Sunday of the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: Hebrew 13:7–17

OPENING CITATION: “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have with others, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” (Heb 13:16)

There are many kinds of good deeds. To be charitable to the poor and destitute, to feed the hungry, to serve drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to look after the sick, to be guardian to children who lost their parents (rearing and educating them properly), to help the aged (particularly those who have no supporters), etc., are all first-rate examples that Christians should consider as good acts. “To share with others” means to freely give to those who are in need food, drink, clothing; and in general every thing beneficial done collaboratively and accommodatingly to one another. It is such a ‘sacrifice’ that pleases God very much. In simple words, God is pleased more when alms are given to the poor and destitute than he himself being presented with offerings. In his Epistle to the Romans, St Paul also confirms this by saying, “Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” (Rom 12:13)

Paul’s message about giving alms is better than presenting offerings to God. This is also repeated in his Epistle to the Philippians, “But I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied. Now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” (Phil 4:18). God had formerly said in the person of the Prophet Hosea that he would prefer alms (mercy) instead of offerings, and knowing God instead of burnt offerings. The exact words run thus, “For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Hos 6:6).

In our society there are many who expect all kinds of help from us, such as charity and food among other things. Some among the needy fellows are HIV infected individuals and children who have lost their parents to AIDS; and, as a result of that loss, do not have supporters. Although there are some drugs and medicines that are already

discovered and could help HIV positive individuals to live longer, it has not been possible to discover any other scientifically proven cure for this disease.

As several sources of information indicate, good diet, sufficient rest, ample physical exercise, positive thinking and being part of a community that renders support in terms of material and psychological backing, could help in giving hope to HIV and AIDS victims to live longer, and to increase their social participation to a greater extent. In contrast, medical professionals say that poverty, malnourishment, and feeling of being discouraged, can aggravate the HIV and speed up its undesirable consequences.

Therefore, those who need alms and care but do not get them could feel discouraged. If they become discouraged and get starved for shortage of food, the available medicine alone cannot help them to survive; and so, they could soon cease to live. Not to allow this happen, let all of us not forget to always share whatever we have with these individuals.

26. HYMN: /g näyu lä- gziab her / [GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD] (The 2nd Sunday of the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: 1Thessalonians 4:1–13

OPENING CITATION: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication; that every one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness.” (1Thess 4:3–7)

The will of God is sanctification; the will of God is to keep oneself away from immorality. Therefore, the Apostle said, “Let every one know his own person and manage himself with purity and honor.” He added, “Do not be overcome by sexual lust as do the Gentiles who do not know God.” If a person is not overcome by sexual immorality, he can keep his own person with purity. If he does these two things (i.e. distancing oneself from immorality and keeping one’s own person with purity), then it will mean that he has, really, protected himself from several kinds of venereal diseases. The Apostle Paul very well disclosed that we have been called to Christianity for purity and sanctity, not for immorality. This is so because purity keeps one safe from both spiritual and physical ailments, while immorality does subject one to both spiritual and physical ailments. Saint Paul, the Apostle, stresses how bad immorality is in his Epistle to the Corinthians saying, “Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food, but God will destroy both one and the other. Now the body is not meant for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” (1Cor 6:13–20)

27. HYMN: /bo-aa Iyäsus m kurabä ayihud / [JESUS ENTERED INTO THE
SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS] (The 3rd Sunday of the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: James 2:8—to the end

OPENING CITATION: “Whoever keeps the whole law, but breaks one law, he is guilty of breaking all. For the one who say ‘You shall not commit adultery, also said, ‘you shall not murder, now if you do not commit adultery, but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of all the law.” (James 2:10–11)

As James, the Apostle, said that he who breaks any one of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, or one of the six of the New Testament, he will be considered as a transgressor of all the laws of either the Old or the New Testaments. He is therefore a sinner, and is liable for punishment. For example, if a certain house has all its doors and windows closed, but only one window remains open, and if it happens that a burglar enters the house through this only open window and takes away all property in the house, what would be the use of closing the other windows? Indeed, there is no use. In a like manner, if a Christian perfectly keeps the commandment against killing, but transgresses the commandment against adultery or the vice versa, then he has committed sin in all; and so is liable for punishment. To conclude, to be saved from sins, a man has to keep all commandments at all times.

The Lord has this to say in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teach them, will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mk 5:19)

In our society some people do not obey the commandments of the Lord thus exposing themselves to HIV and AIDS, and are becoming threats to their own survival and of many others. They are being injured both physically and spiritually by endangering their lives and the lives of many others. If a person does not transmit the virus causing AIDS which he/she has brought about upon him/herself by immorality to other people, and if he/she does not confess of this sin, he/she dies alone; and thus, damages him/herself alone; because he/she is not a cause for the damage of other people.

The harm and sin done in this way remains a case with an individual. But he who transmits the virus to others will have committed a double sin, and will also be punished for having committed murder.

So it is necessary to keep ourselves safe from both physical and spiritual death by abstaining from sexual relation before marriage. Other safety measures are undergoing medical examination before marriage, and limiting oneself to just one trustworthy life companion after marriage.

If a person's test shows that he/she is infected of HIV, then he/she will have to take care not to transmit the virus to other people for the sake of the well-being of society. In other words, the victim of the virus will have to take an utmost care not to become a murderer in disguise.

Our body is a gift of God. All people must, therefore, look after such a gift very carefully, for a gift of this kind is of prime importance and worth. In fact, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, St Paul described the excellence in value of the human body by describing it as 'God's holiest sanctuary.' The exact words in the Epistle run thus: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, for the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple." (1Cor 3:16–17)

28. HYMN: /am lakusä lä-adam .../ [BUT THE LORD OF ADAM ...] (The 4th Sunday of the lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 5:1–25

OPENING CITATION: “Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happen to you.’” (Jn 5:14)

It is the altruistic and absolving Jesus Christ (who came to this world to cure the physically sick and save the spiritually stained; to feed the hungry and quench the thirsty) who stated the words in the opening citation above. He said these words to advise the crippled man whom he had healed after the man’s thirty years of sickness on bed taking treatment for his lame limbs. The word “crippled” refers to a person with malfunctioning limbs. Many professionals of our time tell us that crippling can happen from various causes. The ‘crippling disorder’ of the man Christ talked to resulted from committing sins. This can be learnt from the words, “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.” That is what Jesus Christ stated while cautioning the man upon recovery. Even though it was because of sickness that the man spent thirty-eight years in bed, he had been sinful in his previous life. Jesus Christ did not want this sinner to die with all the sins he had committed; and so, he healed him and gave him the aforesaid advice. As can be learned from readings in the Bible illnesses are of various kinds. Some among these are: illness of purity of the kind Timothy suffered (1Tim 5:23), illness of reward of the kind Job suffered (Job 2:1-10), illness of righteousness of the kind St. Gebre Kirstos, Ethiopian saint suffered (see Synaxarium, October 24), illness of punishment of the kind Saul and Herod suffered (see 1Sam 18:10; Acts 12:23 for the respective cases), and illness of sin of the kind the Crippled suffered.

If HIV and AIDS, which has currently posed a serious threat to the survival of many, is a consequence of immorality, it cannot be described as one of the illnesses categorized as illness of punishment and illness of sin. Thus, if a woman keeps her purity and fidelity to her husband, but the husband commits immorality with another woman who had earlier on been infected by the virus and contracts it and brings it home to infect his faithful wife, such an illness would be an illness of sin to the man whereas it could not

be so for his wife. Conversely, though, if a man keeps his purity and fidelity to his wife, but the woman fornicates with another man who had earlier on been infected by the virus and contracts it and brings it home to infect her faithful husband, such an ailment would be an ailment of punishment to the woman whereas it could not be so for her husband. However, if both man and woman keep their purity and fidelity to each other, but somehow become infected by way of, say, unknowingly using same tools like razor, needle, or knife, etc., that infected individuals had earlier on used, then the ailment that befalls upon the innocent couples could not be ascribed to as an ailment of either punishment or sin.

But, because the illness of the crippled cited above was a result of being involved in sinful acts, Jesus gave him the salvage and warned him saying, “Behold, you are made whole (now): sin no more, so that a worse thing come unto you.” (Jn 5:1:4) Likewise, people exposed to HIV and AIDS for reasons of immorality should try their best not to transmit the virus to other healthy people. If, however, they deliberately transmit it to others, they are doing damage upon other people. They commit transgression upon other transgressions, and sin over other sins. For reasons of such severe offences, they again fall into an irreconcilable discord with God. In order to be pardoned, they should, instead, constantly take the medicines given to them by health professionals while at the same time confess their earlier sins so that the illness that had befallen upon their physical body might not fall upon their spiritual souls too. As a matter of fact, if they work cautiously hard so as not to be involved in transmitting the disease to other healthy people, then they will be considered as having done the work of righteousness.

30. HYMN: / n zä y näb r g zi nä w st däbrä zeyt / [WHILE OUR LORD
WAS SITTING ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES] (The 5th Sunday of
the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 24:1–36

OPENING CITATION: “All these are the beginning of birth pangs.” (Mt 24:8)

Women’s pain or pangs during delivery of children is still strong and scaring even after Jesus removed the original sin by his sacrificial death on the Cross. We are told in Genesis that after Eve was misled by the serpent God passed a curse on her saying, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbirth; in pain you shall bring forth your children. Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ talked about the pains of birth pangs of women as an example of his second coming. He talked about this while he was teaching his Disciples on the Mount of Olives. There he talked not only about his coming but also about (i) the destruction of Jerusalem, (ii) the emergence of an impostor Messiah with the same name, Christ, and (iii) about the end of the world. Let us look at each of these separately:

ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

When his Disciples told him admiring about the splendor and beauty of the Temple in Jerusalem that King Herod renovated, Christ responded to them saying, “Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon; all will be thrown down.” And when was asked when that would happen, he replied saying, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for all these things must take place, but the end is not yet.” (Mt 24:6)

He went on giving them signs of his coming, “Beware that no one leads astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah (Christ)’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are alarmed... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places: All this is the beginning of the birthpangs.” This is to mean that the trouble that results from the deceit of an impostor

Messiah will begin with the invasion of Titus. And the trouble that comes as a result of the imposter Messiah is the beginning of the coming of the end of the world.

Christ gave them signs of his coming in the following words, “Then they will hand you over to be tortured and they will put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name.” And then, he told them that many shall deny their faith. He added more signs as these words say: “And then will fall away, and will betray one another, and will hate one another;” (Mt 24:2–10).

ABOUT THE COMING OF AN IMPOSTOR MESSIAH

In relation to this, Christ told his disciples these signs, “And many false prophets will rise and lead many astray. And because increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.” He added that many shall change their faith and conduct. He continued: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. But when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by Daniel the prophet (let the reader understand).” Having said this, he added that it would be the end of the world when they see false Messiah. That time, he said, “then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; and the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; the one in the field must not return back to take his clothes.” This is to say, any one out will not come back home. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ; or there; believe him not.

ABOUT CHRIST’S COMING AND THE END OF THE WORLD:

In connection with this, Jesus Christ told his disciples several signs that impostors Messiahs could say to them about his coming. He warned them not to accept that if they were to be told that Christ feeds bread in abundance at a monastery, or that he preaches at a Synagogue. As the lightening comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. This means that everybody will see Christ’s coming all at the same time. He said that men would gather around him as vultures gather around a caracas. His own words on this were: “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures

will gather.” He went on further saying, “Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light; the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” It is when this happens that the sign of the coming of the Son of Man appears in the sky.

For all these troubles, Christ used the apprehension women feel during laboring at child birth. The apprehension of labor pangs during laboring at child birth comes from underage marriage. When underage girls get married they are forced to sexual practice incompatible with their physical capacity. Then, they conceive and worry about laboring at delivery and finally get into the actual birth pangs which their body cannot endure. Such a situation brings about other undesirable consequences. For instance, serious health problems like fistulous infections can occur. Or they could be exposed to venereal diseases. What is worse is that they could catch the HIV.

On the other hand, other health problems that women experience as a result of underage marriage are many and varied. If a lady whose body is not ready for pregnancy conceives, her chance for safe delivery is minimal. In fact, she could die during delivery. A research carried out by UNICEF has confirmed that many death incidences of women aged between 15 and 19 result from problems connected with pregnancy and laboring at child birth. The same study has made it clear that the number of death incidences of mothers aged below 15 is five times greater than the number of death incidences of mothers aged 20 and above. This problem is gravely serious particularly in Ethiopia because there is an acute shortage of midwives and other nurses that could work with pregnant women. According to the information gathered from the Ministry of Health, only one-third (i.e. 28%) of women that need prenatal follow up get the service. Among these, only 10% get help from trained nurses. Another health problem that can be raised for discussion in connection with underage marriage is fistulous infection. What is actually fistula? What does it mean? What causes it? In what follows, we look at the answers to such questions.

Fistula is an abnormal, inflamed passage leading from one internal organ, canal, or cavity to another, or to the surface of the body. Fistulous infections are usually named after the particular organ or region of the body affected. There are, for example, salivary, bronchial, and biliary fistulas which affect the salivary gland, neck, and gallbladder,

respectively. Fistulas may also form between the urinary bladder and the rectum or women's genital organ. The most common fistula affecting the urinary bladder and women's genital organ is called vesicovaginal fistula. It occurs between the bladder and women's reproductive organ. It usually comes about from injuries sustained in difficult childbirth. Especially women living in developing countries who labor for more than twelve hours at the time of delivery are vulnerable to fistula. Such long lasting laboring stems from scarcity of health facilities and trained midwives. Another reason why it is frequent in developing countries is that girls get married underage, that is, before their reproductive organs are mature enough to carry babies. What we should do to help mothers on such a problem is to stop this harmful cultural practice of underage marriage. That brings an end to the misery of women from further fistulous infections.

31. HYMN: /mänu w - tu gäbr her / [WHO IS THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL
SERVANT] (The 6th Sunday of the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: 1Peter 5:1–12

OPENING CITATION: “Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising
the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God
would have you do it not for sordid gain but eagerly.”
(1Pet 5:2)

This Epistle of Saint Peter, the Apostle, is a guideline given to clergymen and to church leaders. Although the Apostle was of the status of ‘archbishop’, he acted as an ordinary clergyman. So he said, in his Epistle, “I, an Elder among you, plead to those elders among your.” Then, he added the point of his pleading saying, “Tend (look after) the flock of God which is among you.” Peter in his Epistle considers priests as guardians and the faithful as ‘flock’. The work of a shepherd is to be alert and watch over his flock of sheep to make sure that the flock graze on a land of plentiful grass, drink clean water, and are safe from being preys to wolves and foxes. During the time of the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were used to be hailed as people’s guardians; and the supervisor of the guardians was God Himself. The flocks to be looked after were the Family of Israelites, and this is confirmed by Psalms which says, “Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock ...;” (Ps. 80:1). “... Thus saith the lord God to the shepherds: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?” (Ezek 34:2) In the time of the New Testament, the role of tending of sheep is assigned to the Apostles and their followers, the priests, all of which are taken for shepherds. The supervisor over all these shepherds is our Lord Jesus Christ; the flocks to be looked after are Christians. (John. 10:1-18; 21:15-17, Acts. 20: 28-30, Titus 1:7) The Discipline of the work of a shepherd requires, as was said earlier, watching over his flock of sheep to make sure that the flock graze on a land of plentiful grass, drink clean water, and are safe from being preys to wolves and foxes. Likewise, clergymen who stand for shepherd here must look after Christian community, who are symbolized by flock here, with outmost care so that they may not commit sins and

contract incurable diseases. This is done by giving constant advice and teaching so that worshipers may not fall into various kinds of venereal diseases.

As to the oral and practical teachings of Jesus Christ, a real shepherd worries about the life and well-being of his flock. A real shepherd takes the trouble of ascertaining that the physical as well as spiritual health of his flock (of sheep) is well maintained, and does all that he can to recuperate their health in case it happens that they become ill. Doing this is duty entrusted to him by the Church and God himself.

The priest is also responsible for caring and giving hope to those who are victims of HIV and AIDS. He is expected to advise and teach his fellowmen to take care of themselves before they are infected by the virus. And he has to help and support providing material and spiritual needs to those who are already infected by the virus and become ill.

Clergymen should teach and watch carefully over the believers so that they are not victimized by HIV and AIDS.

Church workers should devote themselves in teaching the members of the community about the dangers of the HIV and AIDS so that the Church and the nation could have physically and spiritually healthy and strong future generation. These kinds of Church workers are appreciated and approved as ‘good and faithful servant.’ Those other kinds of Church workers who do not carry out their duties of teaching and watching over their flocks, and expose their flock to unchristian behavior and are involved in immoral activities which expose the flock to venereal diseases such as HIV and AIDS, are judged as “wicked and lazy servants” and would be “cast into the outer darkness” where they will remain “weeping and gnashing their teeth.” (Mt 25:14-30). And the believers who are represented here by flocks of sheep have to adhere to the advice and exemplary behavior of their shepherds and safeguard themselves from the current peril of HIV and AIDS.

32. HYMN: /horä habehu/ [HE WENT TO HIM] (The 7th Sunday of the Lent)

SCRIPTURE READING: Rom 7:1-13

OPENING CITATION: “A married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulterous if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulterous.” (Rom 7:2–3)

The words in the opening citation above were thus stated by St Paul who is called ‘the light of the world.’ This was written to the Christians of Rome. Historical records tell that Rome was founded in 733 BC. The city was the capital of the Roman Empire. Rome became famous and powerful as it expanded greatly. During the time of St. Paul, Rome had one million inhabitants. It had much decorated buildings with splendid structure. Although it is not clearly known who founded the Church of Rome, the city was a municipal where St Paul and St Peter preached and became martyrs. St Paul, the Apostle, wrote his Epistle to this church at about 58 AD, and in it, he included an extensive explanation about the teaching of Christ. To present some of the details here, we have the following:

1. God cursed man in anger, or man was cursed by God’s anger;
2. God made man righteous graciously, or man became righteous by God’s grace;
3. God venerated man with love, or man became venerated with God’s love;
4. God chose man by his compassionate forgiveness, or man was chosen by God’s compassionate forgiveness; and
5. God raised man to an elevated rank by his majesty, or man was raised to an elevated rank by his majesty.

One of the social questions Paul had raised in his Epistles is about matrimony and divorce. The guidelines given by Paul about marriage concern the matrimonial rules and

regulations to be exercised by the Church of the New Testament. And Paul compares the observance of the law of the Old Testament with the law of marriage in the OT.

In his attempt to teach the family of the Israelites to reject the laws of the Old Testament and receive the laws of the New Testament, St Paul, the Apostle, begins by asking them this question, “(Don’t you know that I should tell you) now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter?” St Paul had a purpose for posing this question. Before he said this, the Jews used to be ruled by the laws of the Old Testament. When the people of the world accepted the laws of the New Testament, the laws of the Old Testament had become obsolete. He, therefore, firmly told the Roman Christians that they should change with time. A world that was being ruled by the new laws of the New Testament should not backslide to the obsolete laws of the Old Testament. That was why he asked the question posed earlier, and added that other statement in the opening citation that says, “For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband is dead, she is discharged from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.”

According to this teaching, if a woman divorces her living husband and marries another one, or commits promiscuity while she is still with her husband, she will be called adulterous. What is more, there is the risk that she can expose her husband to various diseases including venereal disease. However, after the death of her husband, she is allowed to marry another husband, but she and the new husband should undergo a medical check up to ascertain that both are free of communicable diseases. Besides, it is recommended that they confess their former sins and be given matrimonial service to bless their marriage with the Holy Communion which sanctifies their matrimonial union. This commitment is not one restricted to the woman alone, but also to the man.

One of the causes of divorce while both are alive is the vast age difference between the marrying couples. In some instances the married couples are young both physically and spiritually. In other cases one of the couples is much older. This kind of matrimonial union put marrying couples into difficulties of irreconcilable interests which

ultimately drives them both to lose love for each other to live together and, at the end, they divorce. Such a situation, in turn, leads to women's migration to nearby urban centers. However, because urban life is not always hospitable to all, and because that women are not well educated, it can happen that migrating women end up being maidservants or prostitutes. Such a life does have an immense contribution to the spread of HIV and other venereal diseases. It is to avoid such dangers that we (members of the church) advise members of the society to live together with their life partners in fidelity to each other, and above all, venerating the divine grace of matrimony.

33. HYMN: /wä- n zä sämun / [AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY] (The Palm Sunday)

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 28:11 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: ‘the Holy Spirit was right in saying through your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘Go to this people and say, you will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn and I would heal them.’”(Acts 28:25–27; Is 6:9–10)

Isaiah, the Prophet, had also uttered these words in his prophecy about those Jews who would not agree and accept the teachings of Jesus Christ. Similarly, St. Paul, the Apostle, criticized (blamed) the Jews quoting directly the above prophecy of Isaiah for their refusal to accept his teachings. With this Paul described the Jews who always attended Christ’s teachings but were not attentive to the lessons given. When Jesus Christ told the Jews that he was the Son of the Lord, they refuted this and replied to him that he was the son of Joseph; thus, describing him no more than one common man. They listened to what he said but did not look into it seriously or examine it deeply; they did not want to get it into their minds.

The words, “You will indeed look, but never perceive,” are so said because the Jews did look at what was going on around Jesus, but they did not want to have a perception of what they looked. They saw when he healed the sick; they saw when he cleansed the leper; they saw when he exorcised the evil; they saw when he healed the lame; they saw when he gave sight to the blind. When he showed them all these miracles, they did not want to say Jesus saved the bodily and spiritually sick with miracles with his divine power for the simple reason that they did not want to believe in him. In fact, they accused him saying, “He exorcises evil with the help of chief of evils; he sends men with their beds on their shoulders

on a Sabbath day; etc.” And because they did not believe in him, they were not protected from scourge; they were both physically and spiritually sick.

This day (Palm Sunday), was the day on which followers of Christ (the old and the children) chanted songs of praise to Jesus saying, “Hosanna on the Highest! He who comes in the name of God is blessed.” While the people were praising him thus, the Jewish priests were shouting at the children in protest against their chants and praises; they also instructed them to be quiet. Jesus asked the protesting Jewish priests saying, “Have you never read your book that says, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and babies you have prepared praise for yourself?’” But still they refused to accept that Jesus was the Son of God. However, Jesus told them, “Even though these children are quiet, the rocks and stones will praise.” Even while watching the rocks praising him, the Jewish priests could not be convinced.

There can be some, in our society, whose hearts have been made dull. We dare say this because there are many who do not like to listen to the advice the church gives particularly in relation to the HIV and AIDS. The church, time and again, gives sermon on this issue saying, “Fellow countrymen so as not to expose yourselves to this deadly disease called HIV and AIDS, refrain from sexual activities before marriage; and when you marry, marry after you have made sure that you and your life-long partner are free of the virus by undergoing testing. After you have married, be confined to one partner and remain faithful to this life companion of yours till death departs you two. Do not be drunk; do not rape young girls; do not marry by way of eloping; do not smoke or chew stimulant and intoxicant herbs all of which can induce you into committing serious errors

However, no matter how much teaching and counseling are given, the youth of this generation do not seem to take the lesson seriously. Yes, they take the message with one ear, but let it out with the other. As a matter of fact, some make fun of the teaching and say, “There is no AIDS after 10 pm,” and indulge into various kinds of immoralities. They drink a lot and become intoxicated, get involved into immoral activities which may result in contracting HIV and AIDS. All of these can bring about death. O God, have mercy on us! Let us turn our face to God and pray so that he can redeem us from all these kinds of conducts. Let us also adhere to the rules and regulation of God.”

34. HYMN: /y t fäsah sämay / [THE HEAVEN REJOICES] (Easter Sunday)

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 16:1-18

OPENING CITATION: “... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mk 16:18)

This is the words of Jesus Christ who spoke on the day of his resurrection. After having said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be condemned,” he added, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not harm them.” “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” To affirm that those who believe he is the Son of God and a redeemer shall perform many great miracles in his name. Because his disciples believed in him, they were bestowed with all these authorities. Today those who have faith and are pure have the same authorities.

His disciples did cast out evil spirits from individuals both when Christ was physically with them and after he had ascended to his heavenly Father. After they were granted the spiritual power at Pentecost, they had taught and preached in all languages of the world. They also laid hands on the sick and healed them. Today, too, there are priests, in many churches, who are devout followers of the apostles that do cast out evil spirits from individuals and lay hands on the sick and heal them from their illness.

One of the instructions Jesus Christ gave to the seventy two disciples whom he chose and sent out to preach was this, “Go your ways.... And heal the sick.” (Lk 10:1–9) Then he added, “Whoever listens to you listen to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me,” (Lk 10:16). When the seventy two disciples came back pleased from their errands, they reported to Jesus saying, “Lord, in your name even the evil spirits submit to us.” What he responded to this was, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightening. See, I give you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Lk 10:17–20).

It is good, in fact, very essential to all, to undergo HIV counseling & testing to know whether one has the virus. But it might be counterproductive in some individuals whose behavior and outlook are not yet changed. Results of such medical examination in some people just cited can bring about many undesirable consequences, like vengeance and retaliatory measures, on the side of victims; and rejection and segregation, on the side of the healthy ones. That must be why many people undergo medical check up but never disclose results for others to know. What would have been useful was to know the result, disclose it genuinely, and discuss solutions with people to lead a cautious, but still joyful life. Because such situations worry us, much is expected of each of us to work towards changing such unwelcome social behavior to a better social life. In concrete words, we have to bring about a lot of change in our behavioral and cultural practices.

35. HYMN: /wäbä -hud sän bät / [ON THE FIRST DAY OF SABATH] (The
1st Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTURE READING: 2Corinthians 5:11–to the end

OPENING CITATION: “... If one has died for all, then all have died. And he
died for all, so those who live might live no longer for
themselves, but for them who died and was raised for them.”
(2Cor. 5:14–15)

This message of the Apostle Paul is that as our Lord, Jesus Christ died on the Cross for the sake of Adam, Eve, and their children, the faithful also should live to serve not only themselves but also live to serve God and other people. He has also sent a similar message to the Romans. It says, “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord: so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died, and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and living.” (Rom 14:7–9).

In both of his Epistles, the apostle tries to communicate the idea that man does not live for himself alone, but also to serve God worshiping Him and urging others to do the same. He tells us to teach men to adhere to the laws of God and never to transgress them so that he may not be condemned. A man should live to advice and respect others, to venerate the Lord and to help other people when they are in difficulties. Briefly speaking, the two messages give a lesson that a person should follow Christ’s example. As Christ died for all mankind, so all must die for the love of God and fellow men. Indeed, men live for the sake of God and other men; and therefore, they should die for God and other men.

Some people in the world may live for God and mankind. They have also died for the sake of God and mankind. For example, prophets, righteous people, martyrs, teachers, religious leaders, and many kindhearted Christians died for the same purpose. Church leaders and Christians who are currently alive and active, have to learn and teach that people should live and die for God and for one another. What is more, in as much as we celebrate the Day of Easter, a time that Jesus Christ had resurrected for the redemption of mankind, we should consider that we should live for our ailing fellowmen. With this

thought in mind, we need to help and advise those suffering from HIV and AIDS to patiently follow up the medication that God has made ready for them and are recovering from their physical as well as spiritual illness. And when we do this, let us do it by avoiding discrimination against the HIV and AIDS victims. In connection with those who are not infected by the virus, what we have to do is give them advice to take care of themselves. King Solomon said, “Prudence shall watch over you; and understanding shall guard you.” (Pr 2:11) The interpretation for this is simply this: cautiousness and insightfulness maintain your life; and the care a healthy man should take is to lead a legally married life. It is known that a married life seasoned with love and fidelity keeps couples away from immorality which is a cause of physical as well as spiritual infirmity. The Church commands that people take note of these facts and live legally married.

36. HYMN: /tän s -a wä-an s -a kulo mutanä/ [HE IS RISEN AND MADE
ALL THE DEAD RISE] (The 2nd Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTURE READING: Colossians 3:1 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.” (Col 3:18–19)

The piece of advice in the opening citation above is one given by St Paul, the Apostle, to married couples so that they could live loving, attending, respecting, and understanding each other. He has also sent the similar Epistle to the Ephesians in these words, “Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.” (Eph. 5:22–25).

Apostle Peter also gave a similar advice to women and said this, “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.... Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your faith.” (1Pet. 3:1–7)

When the two apostles advise women saying, “Be subject to your own husbands,” they do not mean to command husbands to suppress their wives. They only want to communicate the idea of Solomon the wise who said, “A good woman is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.” (Pr12:4). So a wife is a blessed gift given by God. The Bible confirms, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtaineth favor from the Lord.” (Pr 18:22). As a matter of fact, both a husband and a wife have equal responsibilities in managing the family. On the other hand, when the apostles say, “Husbands, love your wives,” they mean that men should affectionately consent to what their wives say, for there is no force other than love that moves people to action. So a husband should love his wife and do what she asks him to do. He should not subdue her. He should not involve in abusing her physically because she is physically weak. Or he should not get into extramarital activities. In fact, both should restrain from looking for another partner until death departs them. The Bible says, “Therefore a man

leaves his father and his mother, and shall cling to his wife, and they shall be one flesh. (Gen 2:24). That is what people should know and put into practice.

We see that men like David married several women and got into lots of problems. In the New Testament, there is a clear description of how priests should behave in connection with marriage; and others should follow their example. At one place, it says, “Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunker, violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way.” (1Tim 3:2–4; Titus 1:6). Man and wife are one, and their matrimonial union is the sign of their oneness. Marriage can be happy and enjoyable only when the two follow God’s rules and regulations. (Gen. 2:25; Deut 7:1-4; 1Co 7:39)

Marriage is an example of the union of God and the Family of the Israelites. (Hos 2:21; Jer. 3:14) Marriage is also an example of the union of Christ and the church. (2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-33) In order that a husband should not physically abuse his wife the Bible gives instruction saying, “Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.” (Col 3:19)

Dominance over women relates to such acts as physical offence, raping, psychological harm, and other kinds of maltreatment inflicted upon woman. It also includes violating their human rights for the same reason. At the level of society, offences against women go to the extent of making gender distinctions in activities that men or women can perform. These offences include physical and psychological damage, raping, and exclusion from management of common economy. The physical offences include flogging, eloping, raping and the like. The psychological harm comprises of affronting, demoralizing, unnecessary inspection and engaging in income generating activities, etc.

Research has shown that women offended in a manner indicated above had run away from their husbands many times and also made peace with them as many times, and at last divorced once and for all. If men have to help women on this issue, what they should first do is be patient with them at times of disagreement. Offended women usually look for a certain place to go to. They render due respect to those relatives and/or friends who, with open hands, accept them for accommodation for a certain period. Such women

do need moral financial support to let them go back to their husbands and lead a settled life once again.

Much is expected of married couples in being well aware that marriage life is noble and precious. And so they both should maintain it faithfully and be good model to their children and the society as a whole. It is only in this way that we can have a society free of HIV and AIDS.

37. HYMN: /fasika/ [PASSEVER (EASTER)] (The 3rd Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 21:1–15

OPENING CITATION: “He called out to them, ‘Friends, have you not any fish? ...’ (Jn 21:5)

Jesus Christ, who taught saying, “ I am the resurrection, and the life: ..., ” (John 11:25) had lived on earth preaching the gospel for about forty days after he rose from the dead overcoming death by his own death. We read from the Gospels of his Apostles that Jesus was revealed to them at different times during these forty days.

After Jesus showed himself again to the seven disciples at the sea of Tiberius, he asked them, “... Friends, have ye any fish?” And they answered, “No.” Then he said, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” The disciples, who had not caught any fish after endeavoring to get fish the whole night, were close to being discouraged. Now that Jesus instructed them to cast their net on the right side of the ship, they said, “We have not caught any fish though we have been fishing here over night; now we shall do as you order us.” Then they cast their net to the direction they were told to cast. Now, they caught a lot of fish. In fact, they were unable to draw the net out because of the multitudes of the fish they caught. As soon as they came to land dragging their net full of fish, “they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.” (Jn 21:9). Then Jesus said, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught.” (Jn 21:10). He then blessed the fish and the bread and gave them back to eat. They accepted and ate. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection. (Jn 21:14).

The Main Point of the Message

The Disciples tried laboring hard all night to try to catch fish. However, when Jesus came and told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship, they did not say that they had trawled all night and could not get any fish and so they would not try any more to catch fish. They rather listened to their teacher and confidently continued searching for fish for the second time and caught numerous fishes, a quantity which they had never thought would catch at all. Another surprising thing is that they found, on their

return to land from fishing, a scorching fire-furnace on which fish was being fried, and that Jesus Christ was at the spot to bless and give them to dine, which they did.

What we learn from the episode above is that man should work hard without being discouraged to secure success, no matter how much slim the chance of securing the success might be. God commanded man, after he had created him at the beginning, to eat bread by toiling hard. His actual words run thus: “By the sweat of your face you shall bread until you return to the ground.” (Gen 3:19). God blesses the incomes of a person that are brought home after a hard labor. Sometimes it happens that the seeds one sows do not sprout, the plants that one plants do not take root, the trades that one gets into do not yield profits; bankruptcy does follow. Even then, if one sweats without being disheartened, he can eventually succeed. After all it is natural to lose and gain, and to be sick and recover. What is crucial is to distance oneself from all harmful practices and stay safe.

As goes the Amharic proverb, ‘From suffering pain of being sick later, better being cautious earlier,’ to keep oneself protected from harmful sickness, particularly from the HIV and AIDS, is a wisdom that has no substitute. One can easily eat and drink if only he is healthy; so, we should take care for our health to lead a happy life. Victims of HIV and AIDS should emancipate themselves from depressing thoughts and be enthusiastically involved in income generating activities.

38. HYMN: /ar ayä s l t'ano la lä mot/ [HE SHOWED HIS POWER UPON DEATH.] (The 4th Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTUER READING: (John 21:15–19)

OPENING CITATION: “He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God. After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”(Jn 21:19)

We remember that Jesus, in his days of teaching, said to his disciples, “..., If any one wants to become my follower, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mt 16:24).

After his resurrection, Jesus revealed himself to his disciples for the third time at the sea of Tiberius. After they have dined lunch there, he said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He asked this question to him three times; and three times did Simon answer “Yes!” Finally, Jesus Christ said, if you do, then “feed my lambs; take care of my sheep, feed my sheep.” We read from the Bible that Jesus gave this last command to Simon Peter to emphatically urge him to look after those followers whose faith to the Lord was loose, immature and childish in nature. (Jn. 21:15-7).

According to this lesson of the Gospel, diligent shepherds get prepared and leave home to go on duty to meet their responsibilities. But, lazy shepherds run away leaving their sheep behind when enemies come close to the sheep. We recall what Jesus said in connection with this lesson, “But, the hired man, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away- and the wolf snatches them and scatter them.” (Jn 10:12).

As has been said earlier, the true shepherd is our redeemer Jesus Christ. He handed over the custodial duty of his flock (believers) to his disciples and all those other church personnel ranking top to bottom, i.e. bishops, priests and deacons, and these carry out the responsibilities of protecting Christians from the influence of enemies of the Church and from all other harmful practices.

We understand from what is given above that Jesus said, “Follow me,” (Jn 21:19) to the Apostle Peter only after he knew that Peter had accepted to take up the good

example of Jesus in carrying out the custodial duty given to him, which is watching over the flock steadfastly and vigorously. Further Jesus described to Peter his forthcoming suffering and death in these words, “Truly truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else fastens a belt around you and take where you do not wish to go.” (Jn 21:18).

The custodial duty handed over to Peter by Jesus is still relevant. Leaders of the church are responsible to teach people so that they do not face problems, encounter physical and spiritual death, grow stronger in their faith and Christian discipline, live lawfully and in self-restrain, get physical and spiritual salvation, and protect themselves from various sexually transmitted infections specially from HIV.

39. HYMN: /bäsän bät ar gä hamärä/ [HE ENTERED INTO A SHIP ON A
SABBATH DAY] (The 5th Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 24:13-49

OPENING CITATION: “Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him;
and he vanished from their sight.” (Lk 24:31)

After his resurrection, two of the disciples went that same day to a village called Emmaus which was about eleven kilometers away from Jerusalem. On their way, they talked about all those things that had taken place in Jerusalem against Jesus. While they conversed, Jesus himself drew near and joined them walking. At the beginning, they did not know him as their eyes could not identify him as Jesus. Because he was attentively listening to their discussions, he asked them what topic they were discussing as they sadly walked. One of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered, in a manner of questioning, “...are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” And Jesus asked back, “What things?” And they said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” They added that that day was the third day since all those things had taken place. They went on narrating, “Moreover, some women of our group made us astonished. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

St. Luke (24:5-31) tells us in detail that Jesus responded to this story saying, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” He went on talking, at times asking and other times explaining that they should have known all the things recorded in all the scriptures since the time of Moses and all the prophets concerning him (Christ). As they were conversing thus, they all came close to the village they were heading to. As they drew even nearer, Jesus attempted as though he

would go even further. But they urged him strongly saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” He then agreed to stay the night with them. During supper, “When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. “It was at this moment that “... their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

The Main Point of the Citation

Christ is accessible to those who seek him. When one looks for him, he makes himself available. Whether one flies in the air, or drives on the land, or sails on the sea, the Lord is with one if one is a real, devout worshiper of God. He also protects everyone from accidents. It is in confirmation to this truth that God’s prophet, David, said, “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.” (Ps 139:7–8). Wishing that the Lord who opened the eyes of his disciples also protects us from getting into troubles, and pleading to him to give us the courage to distance ourselves from harmful things, we remain advising people to lead a lawful and self-restrained life.

If the Son of God who was born in flesh as human being physically had not died, and not resurrected, and not ascended, our redemption would not have been ascertained. Even some people who have fought for the lives and rights of other people are always remembered. Jesus Christ had really offered himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of mankind and did rise up from the dead overcoming death. After his resurrection, he ascended to heaven on the fortieth day. Therefore, he exists forever. As the Amharic proverb says, “Name lives forever beyond tomb” every one who follows the example of Jesus Christ and does good things for people, particularly for those who suffer from the incurable disease of HIV and AIDS, will always be remembered, as one’s fame remains on earth to shine forever even after one’s death. At this point we would like to advise those who are not infected by the HIV. We say to them, “Abstain from sex if you are not married until you will get married. And be faithful to your legal life partner if you are already married.”

40. HYMN: /wärädä män fäs q dus la lä hawar yat / [THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME DOWN UPON THE APOSTLES] (The 6th Sunday after Easter or Sunday of the Holy Pentecost)

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 2:1-13

OPENING CITATION: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (Acts 2:4)

The writer of the verse above is St. Luke. He is one of the seventy-two disciples. He wrote the Gospel and the Acts. The Acts is a book found between the four Gospels and Paul’s fourteen Epistles of the New Testament. It is the story about the foundation, expansion and other general issues of the early church. The Acts of the Apostles was written to Theophilus. It elaborates how the holy Apostles of Jesus continued Christ’s work and teachings in a manner they would continue forever.

On the fiftieth day after Jesus’ Resurrection, the feast of the Pentecost was celebrated. On this day (Pentecost Day) all the hundred and twenty disciples of Jesus Christ and his mother Mary had gathered together for prayers in the Chamber of Zion (i.e. in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark). As they were seated with one accord in one place in this house, “Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (Acts. 2:4)

After Christ had risen from the dead, he had left his disciples with this promise: “And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Lk 24:49) This promise had to be fulfilled. St. Luke tells us in detail that the Jews were surprised to see that Christ’s Disciples spoke in different languages.

The Main point of the Citation

According to the promise given by Christ, the Disciples were endowed with the power from the highest to change the world with the words of the Gospel. The Disciples

of Jesus were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit who bestowed on them great power. After that, they became courageous and bold instead of becoming feeble and cowardly. It was not only by way of a rushing mighty wind that the Holy Spirit reached the holy Apostles, but also by way of cloven tongues of fire to purify them as is gold is purified by fire. It is this point that the phrase, “there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it rested upon each of them,” (Acts 2:3) makes it clear. The Holy Spirit is a guide to the church. The Holy Spirit is also life to the church. The Holy Spirit is a guide to good life. The Holy Spirit is also a way that leads transgressors to confession. The Holy Spirit is a comforter. (Ps 143:10; Jn 14:16; 15:26; 16:5–16)

It is to be remembered that Jesus said, “But the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” (Jn 14:26). In view of this statement, every church leader must use the Holy Spirit as his guide in carrying out his responsibility to face the challenges that the church and its members encounter. He has to comfort the believers facing various problems by giving them the necessary advice and counseling in the light of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. It is also his duty to teach believers to remain firm in their faith, refine their conducts, distance themselves from the danger of HIV and AIDS, and to protect themselves from all those other diseases. In general, it is the responsibility of church leaders to advise and teach all people to safeguard themselves from all kinds of harmful traditional practices. It is when this happens that we can say they we are filled with the Holy Spirit like the Disciples of Christ.

41. HYMN: /ar gä gziab her / [THE LORD HAS ASCENDED] (The 1st
 Sunday after Pentecost or 8th Sunday after Easter)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 14:22–31

OPENING CITATION: “... Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father
 will love them, and we will come to them and make our
 home with them.” (Jn 14:23)

When Jesus Christ taught his Apostles about the Paraclete, the Spirit of the truth (i.e. the Holy Spirit) to his disciples on the night of Maundy Thursday, he confirmed to them that he would not leave them alone like orphaned children. In this lesson, Christ taught about the relationship existing between God his Father, himself and the believers of the church. One point he spoke about that day was this, “Whoever has my commandments and obey them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him, and will reveal myself to him.” (Jn 14:21) One of the disciples who was comforted with this statement asked Jesus saying, “O Lord how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” (Jn 14:22).

To this question, Jesus answered, “..., If anyone loves me, he will obey my teachings. And my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (Jn 14:23). One important lesson we can learn from this verse is the relationship of man to God. This is already included in the verse which says, “keeping God’s commandments and words.” People are expected to preserve this lesson. When men are bound to preserve the essence of this lesson, God rewards them. And because they are rewarded, God dwells in them. In this manner, the relationship between him and them continues for eternity. The Bible puts this fact as it is said, “... obey everything that I have commanded you, and, remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages.” (Mt 28:20). Another point that the Bible teaches is that man is a shrine where God dwells. At one place, it says, “Do you not know that you are God’ temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.” (1Cor 3:16–17) However, for God to dwell in men, there are some preconditions which God has set for men to fulfill.

The preconditions can be generalized by the phrase: ‘enacting and preserving his words and commandments’.

It is helpful to look at one of the Ten Commandments here. One of the ten commandments God gave us says, “You shall love your neighbor (friend) as yourself.” (Mt 22:39). While living on earth, man cannot avoid confronting problems of various nature: social, economic, and spiritual, etc. Such problems can be solved only if men can cooperate, love, and help one another, and work together towards the solutions. When the Lord says, “You shall love your neighbor (friend) as yourself,” he means that all of us should live together and cooperates. Problems always occur everywhere including in our country. Among the spiritual, social, and economic problems of mankind is the HIV and AIDS pandemic. This disease is first the worst enemy of mankind for it has caused many old people to lose supporters and countless children to be without parents.

This plague has affected significant number of people of all ages and walks of life and as a result is confined to bed for years. This makes the productive force of the working society become dependent on a few members of the family and the nation. When many people do not work national production decreases, and shortage of consumers’ goods and services occur. This, in turn, brings about undesirable consequences such as turmoil and chaos. Ultimately, the nation gets into general crises. That is why we earlier said that HIV and AIDS is currently an extremely serious spiritual, social, and economic problem of mankind. Therefore, we should put an end to the causes of this disease, which is the result of our own short comings, to eliminate the prevalence of this disease specially the HIV and AIDS and love one another and work towards the solution of this common problem. If love prevails among us, we can support the aged, rear the orphans, and look after the AIDS patients. In short, we can get two advantages when we carry out such benevolent activities of love. These are:

1. We bring the social and economic problems of the society to an end.
2. We make ourselves a well organized holy temple so that God may dwell among us.

As the Lord has said, “If a man loves me, he will keep my words,” let us show affection to those infected by the HIV and AIDS disease and render them proper care, so that we may perfectly be the real temple of God.

42. HYMN: /zäm ru lä- g ziab her / [SING PRAISES TO THE LORD] (The
2nd Sunday after Pentecost)

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians 1:1–15

OPENING CITATION: “..., he has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the
world to be holy and blameless before him in love.”(Eph
1:4)

From the very beginning, God wants human beings to be holy. He stated this in clear words saying, “Be holy as I am holy.”

However, man lost his holiness because he had not walked on the way that God wanted him to walk. (Rom 1:18–32). Even then, God had his own plan to bring man back to holiness by making him free from sins and transgressions. On grounds of his plans and decisions, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to the world to make man blameless and holy. (Jn 3:16–18; 1John 1:7)

Thus Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this world and washed man by his precious blood and made him holy and blameless. (Rev 1:5) We understand that the blood of Christ had brought us many things.

- ❖ It made us holy and blameless.
- ❖ It has given us the grace of being his sons.
- ❖ By his blood he gave us the remission of our sins.
- ❖ It brought us the seal of the Holy Spirit that guarantees our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

All this was so in order to implement the plans and decisions that God made at the beginning into of the creation of the world.

In the first place, man was created in the image of God so that mankind could share the greatness of God and live like him (his creator). (Gen 1:27). However, this plan of God had encountered obstacles because man disobeyed God and did not abide by His command. However, the Son of God paid ransom by coming down to earth and shedding his blood to save human beings. The Bible confirms that it is for this reason (i.e. for reason of Christ’s sacrifice) that we regained our former dignity and holiness. (Rev 5:10)

The Bible consistently teaches men not to bring again former sins which alienated man from God earlier (1Co 10:12)

A patient can recover from his illness by getting medical treatment. However, if the patient is not able to adhere to the advice given to him/her by the medical doctor and take the medicines according to the prescription, the illness could relapse and severely attack the patient again. In a like manner, although we have got back our holiness by the saving blood of Christ, it is possible that we again lose our holiness and descend to the pit of impurity and guilt unless we live up to his words.

Christians had become holy through faith and baptism and receiving the Holy Communion on the day they accepted Christianity. The question that comes next to this is, have Christians maintained their holiness intact as it was the day they got it, (i.e. on the day of their baptism)? Or has their Christianity been impeded by obstacles?

Every Christian has to answer this question to him/her. If one has continued to be faithful to ones own partner according to rules and regulations of the Church we can surely say that his/her sanctity is neither spoiled nor confronted with obstacles. If, however, one violate the doctrine of the Church, discontinue receiving Holy Communion, breaks the matrimonial regulations and is involved in immoral activities, then we can, for sure, say that man's sanctity is confronted with obstacles. In that situation such a person has lost his holiness which he acquired through baptism.

Currently, some people face various challenges to keep their chastity. The wide spread of the HIV all over the world could be cited as one of the reasons in keeping the chastity.

We had regained our initial sanctity with Jesus Christ shedding his blood to wash away our sins. However, now that we have fully grown up and became matured adolescence we have totally given up that sanctity and turned to profanity. Who is going to give us our sanctity back again? Hereafter, Christ will not come again to sanctify us shedding his blood to remove our sins and make us holy. What we should do now is to sincerely confess all the sins we have committed so far and come back to our initial belief and praise God, work for righteousness, and take the Holy Communion. With respect to matrimonial practice, let us learn to restrain ourselves from sexual practice before marriage, and be faithful to a legally married partner after marriage. If we do this, our

sanctity will be reinstated for the very fact that the blood of Christ that sanctified us at the beginning does still have the power to sanctify us now again.

This is the only way we can correct our faults. A soul that wants to be redeemed can be redeemed in this manner. A soul that wants to get rid of sins should make use of this way alone. If a soul has done this, it cannot lose its sanctity. If there is one that has lost its sanctity already, it will have it reinstated again in this way. It will also be free from worrying about ailments in general.

43. HYMN: /g bäru bä-aläk mu bt f s h t / [DO YOUR FESTIVAL WITH JOY] (The 3rd Sunday after Pentecost)

SCRIPTURE READING: 1John 4:1–10

OPENING CITATION: “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1Jn 4:8)

St. John the Apostle teaches us in his Epistle about love for God and love for a friend. After clarifying the fact that love originates from what God has done for human beings, the Apostle says that if we (people) love one another, it indicates that we are all born from God. That we are born from God, in turn, leads to the fact that we know God for sure. For love is God’s, let those of us who belong to God love one another. If we love one another, God shall dwell in us. We, too, dwell in Him. Having said this, the Apostle continues describing the love of God. He says, “Love is like this: in order that we can live by Christ’s side, God has sent his Son to this world so that we could be cleansed of our sins; we know that God loves us with this.”

It is true that people can live loving one another when they understand what God has done for their sake with regard to love. They should understand that God has given them everything in nature free of charge. What is more, they should realize that God had given His only begotten Son to die so that they could be redeemed and be blessed by his death. (Jn 3:16-18).

When people have a clear understanding of this teaching, they could take this example to love God and their fellowmen. When people put such love into practice, then we can say that they know God. In contrast, if people do not understand well what God did and still does in loving them, then they cannot have a clear concept of love. And so, they cannot have room for it. But when they do not love their fellowmen, such an instance indicates that they do not know God.

Briefly, people who know God very well do treat other people with love. But those people who do not know God do not care for love. If we have, thus, noted that the basis for loving men, according to the teachings of Christianity, is knowing and loving God for what He has done because for the sake of love. What we should do is to take lesson from his exemplary work and render love to other people. But the question is:

How much have we known the essence of love and put it into practice? All of us must examine ourselves how much practical and realistic we have been in this regard.

The way the Bible expresses this love is brief and crystal clear. It says, “Love the Lord and your neighbor.” (MT 22:34–40) Now, we need to ask this question: do we (people) really love God and our fellowmen with all our heart, soul and mind? Let all of us have an answer to this question. Let us first reckon very well what God had done for us because He loved us; and then, let us love Him back for that with all our heart, soul and mind. Next to that, in as much as God loved us, let us love mankind as a whole without making any distinction because of race (black, white, yellow, light colored); or wealth (rich, poor); or knowledge (learned, laymen); or age (children, elderly ones); or sex (male, female); or ethnicity (of this or that tribe, of this or that village, of this or that river). In simple words, let us love people as much as we love ourselves for the only reason that they are human beings. Currently, love for one another is the base for the holistic life of all men, but it is on the decline. The continuation of this decline surely leads to a social, spiritual and economic chaos.

These days, many people are unable to show friendly smile and love to their life companions. Instead, some are usually violent against their wives whom they flog, demoralize, inflict physical injuries, infringe on their human rights, and intrude on their equality. On the other hand some women mistreat their husbands in, more or less, the same manner. All those who are involved in such anti-Christian and anti-social practices do not reflect Christian love. Neither do they know God very well. In fact, the Bible describes them as fools who have no faith in God, and have not accepted his being their redeemer. If they had had faith in God and had accepted him as their Savior, they would have taken lesson from God, who equally loves both friends and foes. Then, they would have loved all men equally, let alone their wives, who are the mothers of their children.

For it is said that one who has no love does not know God. One is advised to love and know God to love, look after, help and affectionately treat his wife (her husband) as oneself in all spheres of life, and to make social life sweet in this manner. A divorce of marriage due to lack of love is destructive to people’s social and spiritual life, and so should always be condemned.

44. HYMN: /nak b r sän bätö/ [LET US GLORIFY HIS SABBATH] (The 4th
Sunday after Pentecost)

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 22:1–23

OPENING CITATION: “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was wearing a wedding garment.” (Mt 22:11)

This wording of the Gospel relates to a story about a king who arranged a wedding feast for his son and invited a great many people to attend the festivity. However, many of the invited guests did not show up for the feast. They went on working on their personal business, instead. So, other people were invited from the streets to feast on the ceremonial meal. These other people soon changed their plainclothes and put on their wedding garments and entered the feast hall to take part in the festival.

Then the king entered into the hall of the feast to look at the invited guests and saw a man who was not wearing wedding clothes. And he criticized him for getting into the wedding feast without wedding clothes. The man was tied and sent out to prison. (Mt 22:11–13).

This story exemplifies the call God made through the sacrifice of his only Son to the people of Israel to accept Christianity; but they rejected the offer. By extension, the story reminds us that the Lord, after the refusal of the Israelites, dispatched his disciples to all corners of the world to preach Christianity and to urge the people of the globe to accept Christianity. Among those convinced by the disciples and accepted Christianity, there were some who did not have Christian conduct; and so, were condemned since being Christian by name only does not redeem one from sin unless the name is accompanied with positive action. The main point of the message that we are reading here is that faith without good work is worthless. The Bible teaches that faith without good work does not save man. (See James 2:14-26).

This story is comparable to the reality in the world. If we take an example in the academic sector, we reckon that graduating from higher institution as a teacher alone is not enough for a teacher to benefit from his profession. Indeed, getting the training and graduating as a qualified teacher is fundamental. However, being a graduate in teaching

alone cannot pay the person wage; that is, the teacher gets no benefit. A teacher gets benefits from his profession only when he can put his knowledge into practice preparing lesson plans, getting into class on time and sharing his knowledge properly with his pupils. In other words, it is only when a teacher proves himself fit in practical teaching that he can get paid and benefit. In a like manner, a Christian can be redeemed only when he/she has proved himself/herself worthy of his name by doing good work; not by name only, as is believed by some who claim to be Christians because this religion belongs to their ancestors. The Christian religion has its own guidelines and principles for its followers how to lead their Christian life.

In relation to this, Christianity proclaims, for instance, that matrimonial procedures must go like this: First, it commands that betrothed couples should wait purely virgin attending schools until they become matured for marriage. Second, when they reach the desired level of maturity for marriage i.e. when the man is about 25 and the girl is at least over 15, they can get married provided that both are willing to marry each other and that they have got the approval of their respective families. Next to that, they should attend the church ceremony for sacrament of matrimony where prayers and Holy Communion service are given to the marrying couples. After this, they exchange promise to be faithful to each other till death separates them. In this manner, the marriage gets completed. (Mt 19:3–9)

When Christians strictly follow this procedure with regard to marriage, we can say that they properly prove that they are true Christians. It can also mean that they have a religion that saves them from judgment and enables them to get into the kingdom of heaven. However, what are observed men and women, whether they have reached maturity age or not, get into undesirable and illegal sexual relation violating the Christian marriage guidelines and procedures. Such sexual practice is considered as adultery, fornication, and promiscuity; and so, a vile practice.

Apart from this, there are other big crimes committed against women in shadowy places, namely, getting them into forced marriage and raping. Such are the appalling conducts that give Christians bad name. Conducts of these kinds expose Christians to expulsion from heaven and bring condemnation into hell.

Therefore, all members of the society, particularly the Christian community, should make it their duty to carry out the procedures of marriage only according to what Christianity directs them so that they may not be exposed to punishment, as was the case with the man in the story who was imprisoned for not dressing a wedding garment, or be condemned, as is the case for 'Christians by name' who fail to adhere to Christian principles. Married couples, who have not passed through Christian marriage ceremony due to ignorance, need to have a father confessor now, learn the words and principles of the Gospel, confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion; and then, lead a virtuous life.

45. HYMN: /d m s'ä gärihu/ [THE SOUND OF HIS FEET WAS HEARD]

(The 1st Sunday after 25th of Sene or the 1st Sunday of Winter Season) - The
1st Sunday after July 2nd

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 8:1–22

OPENING CITATION: “.... He, who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Lk 8:8)

When Jesus Christ taught he often used parables. One such a parable was sowing seeds on different kinds of grounds. He said, “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundred folds. As he said these, he called out, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen.’” (Lk 8:5–8).

The parable just narrated stands for four kinds of audience to the word of God which is preached at the court of mercy (church compound). In other words, it is about how different audiences listen, conceive and react to the messages of the Lord.

As we can understand from the parable, the audiences are divided into four kinds. In the first group come those audiences who just listen to the message, but do not have the inclination to take in the message and apply it to practice. The word of God that flows into the ears of such audiences is quickly forgotten because the Satan, which very well knows the inclination (tendency) of such people is weak, comes in to play its role in making these people fail to recall and forget what has been told to them. It also suspends the fruits of the message from being practical. As shall be elaborated a little later, Jesus Christ resembled the audiences in this group as kinds of seeds fallen by the way side and eaten up by the birds of the air.

In the second group come those audiences who have the ability to quickly listen to the message, soon grasp the message, and have the tendency to turn it into practice right away. However, the haste of these people to swiftly listen, understand and act also makes them forget the message quickly. Such people are not dependable because their minds waver between good and bad ideas and actions. They are weak in looking into things deeply and persisting in the decisions they have made with unwavering determination.

Satan, which again knows the wavering attitudes of such people, comes in to play its role in testing and confronting these people with all kinds of difficulties. In fact, Satan many times pushes them to fall into the pit of denial of faith. It also hinders them from harvesting the practical fruits of the message. Again, as will be clarified later, Jesus Christ considers the audiences in this group as kinds of seeds fallen upon a rock and withered away because they lacked moisture.

In the third group, those audiences who have the talent and tendency to properly listen to the message come and get grip of the main points of the message, but fail to put it into practice. Such people do understand and apprehend the message told to them. However, they would like to put focus on working for worldly trivial benefits instead of devoting their time and energy to the cause of their religion. Satan, knowing the interest of these people very well, comes in to play its role in tempting them with fortunes and high positions so that they may become barren of practical fruits from what they have learned. As we will make clear, still after a while, Jesus Christ regards the audiences in this group as kinds of seeds fallen among thorns that grew up and choked the plant.

In the fourth group come those audiences who have the competence to listen and grasp the whole message, and with that, the complete tendency to practically show and follow up its application. Such audiences are thorough thinkers and men of action. What is more, they are strongly persistent in decisions they make and unwavering in doing what they are taught. They are, therefore, those who harvest plentiful fruits. As will be shown in the following paragraph, Jesus Christ recognizes the audiences in this group as kinds of seeds fallen on good ground and bear fruits in hundred fold.

Now that the disciples listened to this parable carefully, they pleaded to Jesus to expound its interpretation for them. Jesus did respond to their pleading and gave them the explanations of the parable. (Lk 8:10–15)

Consequently, we find it an undeniable fact that the existence of different kinds of Christian churches in the world today has resulted from differences in tendencies of listening, understanding, and accepting the truth. If the inclination of people to understand and accept matters had not been different, there would not have been any doubt and misunderstandings. The root causes for the present day problems of the world are misunderstanding and different tendencies to look at issues.

The church has been preaching for two thousand years saying, “Whoever welcomes one such little child in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Mt 18:5–6).

Nonetheless, because the audiences are different, there are many who pose obstructions against the safety and security of children. One among this is making ethnic or beauty marks on the body of children using unclean tools such as the razor blades or needles. Other problems which girls encounter include denying them the right to attend school, to work on household chores, underage marriage, being sent abroad for sexual business, or for other kinds of humiliating affairs. These problems persist even though churches and the international organizations for children’s right repeatedly complain about such offences against young girls. Neither could the people involved in such shameful acts be restricted by law.

Even if we ask ‘Why?’ we do not get any answer. As was the case in the parable, whereby the word of God that fell by the way side, on the rock and among the thorns did not yield fruit, so is the case here. Our complaint about children’s right could not yield any fruit because people who benefit from these disgraceful undertakings are not willing to listen to stop the plight of the girls. The intention of this shameful act is only a means of amassing wealth, not adhering to the call of the church and the international organizations for children’s right.

Now, we appeal to the true Christian worshippers not only to adhere to the word of God, and help others keep it, but also to emancipate children from this agony. The Christian community is obliged to meet its responsibility in teaching children, honoring their dignity and respecting their rights.

Our young daughters are created for sanctity not for profanity. We have to pave the way for them in order that they could work and earn their livelihood while their dignity, integrity, and purity are well respected before the law and their religion. When we do this, we can say that God’s word blossomed and produced many fold fruits.

46. HYMN: /yisät'äwo/ [HE RESPONDS TO HIM.] (The 2nd Sunday of Winter)

SCRIPTURE READING: Hebrews 6:7–21

OPENING CITATION: “Earth drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God.” (Heb 6:7)

In the present Biblical lesson, we shall look at two possible chances that await the earth. The Apostle teaches us saying if the earth produces vegetables, fruits and grains using the rains that fall on it, then blessing await it for the good things it grants us. On the contrary, if the earth produces thorns, briars and prickles using, once again, the rains that pour down on it, then scorching and damnation awaits it for the bad things it has given us. (Heb 6:7–8)

The Apostle wrote the above message to the Hebrews whom he heard had begun being doubtful of and denied their former religion, Christianity, a religion they had accepted earlier and from which they had learned about rains and earth. The Hebrews committed this error because they were influenced by anti-Christian intruders who infiltrated them. The Apostle’s intention for writing the Epistle was, therefore, to give them advice to urge them rectify their error, which they daringly committed ignoring the principles and disciplines of Christianity. In other words, he meant it to raise their spirits for Christianity and to remain faithful to it unwaveringly.

As we all know, it has been two thousand years since the Gospel, symbolized by rain here, started to be preached in our country. However, our conscience symbolized by earth here has been sprouting two things; on one hand, it germinates faith, and on the other, it brings forth doubt and denial. The parable for this is detailed in the Gospel according to Matthew where religion is symbolized by wheat and doubt by tares. (Matt. 13:24–30).

Although this phenomenon continues until the 2nd coming of Christ, it is our responsibility to decide on the right choice between the useful and the harmful things. Despite the freedom given to man by God at the beginning to choose between things on his own free will, there has never been time when he was left free from being accountable for the choice he has made.

Every other man has the right to choose to be guided by God's word. He also has the right to choose to be guided by what is contrary to that. However, the person benefits or loses according to his choice. Two choices are made available to mankind.

One choice is to listen to and accept the law of the Lord to keep oneself safe and sound from physical and spiritual ailment. Such a choice demands that the chooser leads life abstaining from sexual contact before marriage and confining oneself to a single life spouse after marriage. With this choice made, the person will ascertain that he/she is living a healthy and respectful life. The second choice is to reject the law of the Lord and be involved in immorality whose end is exposure to contracting HIV. The church cannot compel anyone to make this or that choice. What it can do is only informing people that these choices are available. And the Church also clarifies to them as to which one is useful and which one is harmful.

What comes next to clarification is choice, and choice is made by the individual. The person that prefers healthy and respectable life chooses to follow the law of the Lord. One who does not prefer this rejects the law of the Lord and chooses to get involved in an unrestricted sexual practice. Which one to choose is left to the concerned individual who eventually is responsible for the consequences of his choice. Despite all that, since the church is as a representative of Jesus Christ on earth preaches the truth and urges the people to make a better choice so that all of them could lead a safe and sound life.

It is always the church's desire to see that mankind is well protected from the dangers of HIV and AIDS. And the remedy for this is following strictly the law of the Lord. The church emphatically advises that this is a dependable medicine to treat HIV and AIDS. The church also encourages its members to do all they can in providing those infected by the virus with their social, psychological and spiritual needs. It teaches that stigmatizing and discriminating against the carriers of the virus is a sin which is against the teaching of the law of God.

To the patients already suffering from HIV and AIDS, the church advises that they confess their sins and live without being worried or discouraged, but to listen and adhere to advice given to them by priests and physicians. And, in the mean time, praise and pray to God. They are also advised to be very careful not to communicate the virus to other people. What they should do is to take the anti-HIV medicines prescribed by Health

workers and the Holy Water provided by the church. As they do this they are advised to praise and pray to God.

To sum up, let us always remember that we shall remain being an evergreen plant if we live watered by the rains of the Gospel and sticking to the law of the Lord.

47. HYMN: /bäqädami gäb rä g ziab her s may w m d r / [AT THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH] (The 3rd Sunday of Winter Season)

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 24:36–44

OPENING CITATION: “As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Mt 24:37)

Noah is a man of the tenth generation in the line of our ancient ancestors. During his life time, the world had been subjected to a very severe punishment. Punishment cannot be imposed upon one without one having made a serious mistake. So there was a very serious blunder that the world was involved in for it to take the punishment. The blunder was that the people of the time, except Noah, used to practice a shameful sexual practice that brought about a great punishment to the world to the extent of its virtual destruction. As we read in Genesis, the people who used to be called the children of God selected girls and mated them in a highly outrageous manner, and beyond that, they spread this practice all over the place. What is more, the generation that followed also continued with similar disgraceful sexual conducts. The people persisted in sinning like this till the earth was forced to open its mouth and cry unto God; and “God saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth; it grieved him to his heart.” (Gen 6:5–6). However, God would not leniently disregard this crime by grief only. So, “for the wages of sin is death;” (Rom 6:23), he decided to punish them for their sins. The punishment was to destroy the people and the earth in which they live by a great flood pouring down from heaven,.

Noah was the only person who revered God and for this he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was, therefore, given a command by God to make ‘an ark of gopher wood with rooms in it’ which Noah himself would sail in order that he and his family could be protected from the flood which God would bring to earth as a punishment for the sinners of the time. One day, as people were making a feast and committing the usual disgraceful sexual sin, it happened that the windows of the heavens were abruptly opened and “the waters of the flood were upon the earth,” (Gen 7:10). The

deepest lakes of the earth, as well, jetted their waters outward. With this flood of destruction all, except Noah and his family together, and except of "... every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort (brought) into the ark to keep them alive," were destroyed and completely wiped out of the surface of the earth. The cause of this punishment was the unrestricted sexual immorality in which people were involved in those days. The punishment was also brought abruptly at a time when the people were not aware of it. Jesus Christ has also told us that his coming would be as it was in the days of Noah. He would come suddenly when people would not be aware of his coming. Telling us what we should do to avoid destruction, he said, "live readily."

However, our world is not living ready for the Second Coming of Christ. Its desire and attention for sanctified life and worship of God is very cold. But, its strong desire for profanity and secularly comfortable life has increased to a very high level.

There is no doubt that the end of a widespread phenomenon of such situation over the globe could be of an extremely dangerous consequence. We say this because, today, immorality has become prevalent at all places in the world where mankind makes travel for secular affairs. The result of such liberty is surely contracting HIV.

We can say, almost certainly, that the widespread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic over the world has reached this high level because of the rampant out of marriage sexual intercourse. Had limitless sexual activities not been practiced widely, this pandemic could have been stopped confined to the country where it had begun. At least, it would not have overwhelmed the world. As goes the saying, 'history repeats itself,' we are now witnessing that what had happened during the lifetime of Noah is taking place in our time too in some places.

A soul that needs God's forgiveness can have only one choice; and that choice is to revere and worship God.

Such a soul must stand aloof from disgraceful sexual intercourse (homosexuality) and other profane activities. It should uphold only the sacred and legal, one to one union of married couples and leads a happy life guided by such a principle. The biggest challenge today is the elimination of the practices of sodomy. All those who love their compatriots, their country and their religion have now got to work towards putting an end to these practices. Not only should all distance themselves from such practices but also

help others to do the same. Ignoring this challenge can only mean preparing oneself for exposure to a disease caused by HIV and AIDS.

Nonetheless, because the choice of the church is the salvation of mankind, and not their punishment, it still advises its members and all other people to work towards their own rescue. The Church teaches that unrestricted sexual relations and sodomy only invite sins that extremely infuriate God and subject their performers to unforgivable severe punishments. Therefore, if there is one who has mistakenly been involved in these sins, let him confess his/her sins immediately and come into the ark of Noah, which is the church, for there is redemption there.

**48. HYMN: /Bäsän bät bo-a yäsus m kurabä ayihud / [JESUS ENTERED
THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS ON THE SABBATH] (The 4th Sunday of
Winter Season)**

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 6:47–52

OPENING CITATION: “For they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’ (Mk 6:50)

At one time, Jesus Christ instructed his disciples to sail across the sea by boat and wait for him on the other side of the sea while he walked uphill to pray. As the disciples rowed their boat across the sea, a storm that put their lives into danger came against them from in front of them and troubled them much. As Jesus saw that they were much troubled, he came down to join them walking on the surface of the sea. Nevertheless, they did not think that the man walking on the surface of the sea was Jesus. They thought it was Satan who came to drown them in addition to the torment inflicted upon them by the storm. But, Jesus calmed them down saying, “Take heart, it is I; be not afraid” and he boarded the boat. As Jesus spoke to them, the storm calmed down; and the disciples were surprised to see this.

It is natural to worry about a problem for which a solution is not as yet available. However, to be worried about a problem cannot be a solution. The fear of the disciples on the boat from the storm did not rescue them. But they were rescued because they were sailing as obedient followers of Christ for which he came in their rescue so hastily.

Obedience to Jesus Christ is the best means for a person to be rescued from any danger. To come back to the story in the opening citation, while the disciples sailed across the sea as Jesus commanded them to do, they happened to be confronted with harsh storm. Because the trip by sea was made by obeying his word, Jesus did not like to expose them to a danger; so he came and rescued them. Today, too, many people trouble themselves due to various reasons. For instance, there are some people who are traumatized because they have been infected by the HIV. However, there is not any solution that the worry or trauma can bring about. The solution is to get the help of the Lord by consenting to his command and making it practical. If all those in trouble, be

they are victims of HIV and AIDS or are patients from other diseases, want to recover from their worries and illnesses, they are advised to submit themselves to the word of God and remain obedient to his command.

The command of God is brief and clear. His command says this, “Be holy as I am holy.” (1Pet 1:16)

On grounds of this word of God there are many people who passed away being holy. If being holy had been possible, those who passed away hallowed would not have been able to be holy. As a matter of fact it is not difficult to be holy if anyone tries hard.

One can be holy even at young age. If young couples remain virgin until they are married, there is holiness in their marriage. If in the business world people transact their business with honesty there is holiness in business. Also if public officials do not use their authorities for the purpose of corruption and harming other people, then there is holiness in high public offices. In general, if people do not play favoritism and nepotism with their responsibilities, if they revere and worship God and work with clean conscience, there is holiness.

When we are obedient to God in this manner, God comes and protects us from our difficulties and ailments. If we have lost our sanctity because we have departed from God for some reason, then we can confess our sins and reconcile with him and come back to our sanctity again.

It is inevitable for a society without sanctified life to continue to suffer from storms of difficulties and plagues. We ought to eliminate all difficulties and ailments existing in our society by being obedient to God and tracking on the road of sanctity. For we have been told this: “if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.’ (Is 1:19)

49. HYMN: /ar w yo lät lämeha/ [YOU VISIT THE EARTH AND WATER IT]

(The 5th Sunday of Winter Season)

SCRIPTURE READING: 2Corinthians 10:1 to the end

OPENING CITATION: “Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standard, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strong holds; ...” (2Co 10:3–4)

It is the Apostle Paul who said the statement in the opening citation above. Saint Paul is among the seventy two disciples. He used to persecute Christians but was later converted by Christ to become one among the apostles; so he was one of God’s well chosen vessels. The Apostle wrote these words to the Christians serving the Church of God in Corinth, Greece.

Corinth is a town in Greece located at about 75 km from Athens. History tells us that some six hundred thousand inhabitants lived in this town during St Paul’s days. The town is situated on the isthmus between two other Greek regions, namely, Macedonia and Achaëa. Because the town of Corinth is founded on a land strip suitable for sea route, ships coming from east and west used it as a transit port. As a result, the town became a business center where traders exchanged goods, habits, customs and culture. Thus the town was in a state of flux, changing in a gradual manner, all its earlier features. As the town developed into a city, it became a place where fornication, promiscuity and worship of idols were frequented. The inhabitants of the city had an idol of love called Afrondi, which they worshiped with great devotion. Since the residents of the city were Greeks and Jews, there was disharmony and competition for dominance among the two groups of people. Because of this the names Corinth and Corinthian had become insult words.

The message St Paul wrote to Corinthians had views that considered the life of the society: that is, the way how they lived, the problems they had, and the solutions Paul proposed. This is how he advised them: “I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ- I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!- I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standard.” (2Co 10:1–3)

People have two kinds of customs: useful and harmful. Among the useful customs: feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, dressing the naked, visiting the prisoners, praying for the redemption of one's own life and that of others, encouraging discussions and finding solutions to problems confronting people. When the Apostle says, "For we walk in the flesh," he is making a reference to the useful customs of people, i.e. to "feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, dressing the naked, visiting the prisoners and patients. In general he refers to all those good customs that keep us cohesive and enable us to live together sharing foods and views in common. Having expressed this view thus, the apostle Saint Paul properly teaches us that plodding along the track of harmful customs is useless.

There are many people who do routinely go to church but do not respect or adhere to church orders and disciplines. This is because they do not listen and understand the message of the church while being within the church. Such people are embarrassments to the church for they expose its principles and the preaching of the Apostles to abuse and defamation. There are many people who wrongly practice genital mutilation on girls. But this is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

There can be habits or customs that a man creates and develops by himself. And these habits could eventually become a challenge to the society because they could negatively affect the society's health, welfare, and economy. An example of such a custom is the outlook of some about the inequality of genders. There exists in the society today a belief that considers masculinity as superior to femininity. This belief does not have religious ground. It is a belief that the society created, developed and accepted as 'proper'. In Christianity we learn that the old belief that women are inferior and subordinate to men has been abandoned as incorrect because of the birth of Saint Mary and other holy women. The equality and, even in some cases, the superiority of women is well affirmed in the New Testament. However, there are still today some men who look down on women as less important to the society ignoring that they are mothers and sisters. That is why some men are involved in raping women and enforcing underage girls into marriage. However, this custom is totally condemned by the laws of the Christian religion. There are also sections of society in our country that passively ignore these vulgar acts as being traditionally acceptable social behaviors. Nonetheless, such acts can hinder our sisters and mothers from being educated

and to be healthy citizens. They could also cause physical as well as psychological damages to women.

Another harmful customary practice concerning women, one derived from tradition, and not from religion, is the genital mutilation done on the genital organs of baby girls. This practice is not a law of religion and of the Bible. It is one of the most harmful traditional practices that bring about various physical and psychological problems to the mutilated girls. For instance, it can expose them to infections. When they grow up, they could suffer from different kinds of complications at delivery. It may also cause very painful fistulous complication. Many mothers have died with their children unborn because of this traditional practice. What God commands is to be affectionate towards children. Out of ignorance we are being defiant of this command when we mutilate baby girls. Indifference is not expected of Christians while observing tradition jeopardizing the lives of many mothers and children. It can also mean rebelling against the law of the Lord. (Mt 11:3).

Thus, when the Bible says “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh,” it is referring to such practices of bad customs, one of which is, of course, circumcising baby girls. We have to avoid such practices and help mothers and children through education so that they may lead a happy family life avoiding infectious diseases, delivery complications, and fistulous pains. It is by doing such things that we can claim that we are devoted Christians.

“Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage according to human standard, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strong holds; ...” (2Cor. 10:3–4)

**50. HYMN: /t' bu l bu läh s'an / HE HEART OF THE INFANT BECAME
RESOLUTE (Sunday on the 19th of Hamle EC.) - July 26**

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 10:17–25

**OPENING CITATION: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because
you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent
and have revealed them to infants....” (Lk 10:21)**

Jesus Christ, the redeemer of the world, stated the above statement. He said the statement to thank God (his Divine Father) and the Holy Spirit (his Divine Spirit) after he observed that his disciples knew what they should know, and began to follow his instruction, and realize when and how they should express their happiness. To this, all the seventy disciples returned to him rejoicing and said, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” Then he responded, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” As he was saying this at the moment, Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them unto infants.” (Lk 10:17–21).

This word of Christ is cited on this day because it is a day of commemoration for Saint Cyriacus, the child of Angebine, who, according to the canons of the church, is one of the well known holy martyrs. Saint Cyriacus is a fruit of the Gospel who, from childhood, had been firm in his belief, properly carried out his share of spiritual struggle, and consoled and helped his mother not to be afraid and deny your faith. During the Age of Martyrs, when Christians were persecuted, Saint Eyeluta (Julitta) was brought with her child Cyriacus to the court of a certain Roman officer to answer questions about Jesus Christ. She responded to the officer saying, “Ask this child of three, he shall tell you about that.” The officer ignored asking the child hastily assuming that a child of three years of age cannot know anything about such issues. However, as they stood before the officer, Cyriacus, the child witnessed, with well articulated language, about Christ’s being God and redeemer. He also courageously spoke out about the emptiness of the

officer's idol. Upon hearing this, the officer turned furious and ordered his men to boil the child and his mother in a barrel of extremely hot water put on a furnace that thunders with flame. The child was not frightened and even he led his mother to the boiling barrel of water and got into it saying, "Behold Mother, do not fear the flame of this fire, and do not doubt, he who has rescued Hananiah, Azariyah, and Mishaël will rescue us."

At that moment, the angel of the Lord (St Gabriel), who always stands by God, came to their rescue sent from God. Soon, he put out the flame and turned the water cold and rescued the mother and the child. As has been said in the Bible, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." (Ps 34:7), the angel of the Lord did accomplish his errand as the Psalmist said. He is truly with those who fear God and honestly delivered them from misery and hardship.

Jesus Christ did not make distinction between small children and big people when he lived and preached in the real world. In fact he drew children close to him affectionately, and commanded his disciples not to forbid children from coming to him. He did not push them aside from his presence, and has let them share from the consecrated bread. He blessed them with his hand. He made children sing on the Palm Sunday. Holding one of the children in his arms, he said, "Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." By having said this, Christ made children symbol of humbleness, tenderness, courteousness, simplicity and considerateness.

Sometimes, some elderly people look down on children and send them away from their proximity for they think they get no fruitful thing from them. But Jesus says they are fruitful. He warns us not to look down on them. He also tells us that there are angels in the heaven, at God's Court, who guard children; and who could impose punishment upon us if we mistreat them. Moreover, he lets us know that children are themselves court attendants at God's place, and so, have the capacity to influence God pass verdict of punishment upon us.

The duty of the holy angles is to praise God, carry out his command and to serve all those big and little ones who believe in the Lord. By way of clarifying this, Saint Paul, the Apostle, has this to ask: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Heb 1:1–14). The word 'child' does not make a

reference to childhood in age alone. Those who have come back to the right belief after confession, and have become humble, likeable and courteous are also well guarded by angels, as are children in age. As he did to Saint Cornelius, he guides them how they could get redemption for the soul. For us, too, it is not enough to theoretically talk about 'child care, concern and affection' while we do not care for them. We should guard them from all kinds of malice, and look after their wellbeing. We should teach them civics, so that they could become good citizens of their country and faithful members of their church. We should educate them so that they could be good professionals who would contribute to the advancement of the society.

Orphans and street children are part of the society; and so, they need the help and support of the society in order that they could grow well served, properly looked after and well educated. In general, we have to love all the children. We should not harm them by cutting their uvula, or by pulling out their milk teeth, and by mutilating baby girls' genital organs.

Because children's legal rights have to be respected from the time of their conception till they reach maturity, they should not be forced to marry underage; i.e. below the age of 18. This legal right is given to all baby girls and should not be taken away from them; nor should it be compromised for anything else. We should know that these things are expected of every one of us. Particularly priests, who are responsible for building the society's consciousness in all possible ways, must not be involved in matrimonial ceremonies whereby the bride and groom are underage. Instead, they should work hard in teaching the fact that such matrimonial practices are outrageous, besides being harmful.

51. HYMN: /n gus wu- tu k r stos/ [CHRIST IS A KING] (The 7th Sunday of Winter Season)

SCRIPTURE READING: Galatians 6:6–10

OPENING CITATION: “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow” (Gal 6:7).

After warning not to mock at the Lord, St Paul, the Apostle, teaches, in this lesson, that every man reaps and harvests what he sows. According to St Paul, this is to mean that a man who lives serving only his bodily needs, ignoring and ridiculing the word of God, will end up with his flesh thrown into Sheol. On the other hand, he who fears and lives according to the word of God serving both his bodily and spiritual needs will harvest eternal life from the Lord. Explaining matters in this manner, Paul goes on advising us not to feel exhausted in doing good work so that we may gather good harvest when the time comes. As we know, according to the laws of God everyone harvests what he sows. In real life he who sows wheat harvests wheat, and he who sows maize harvests maize.

The Apostle has clearly put the point he wants to make in this present lesson. His point is this: a man who is always passionately involved in bodily desires such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelings, betrayal, profanity, fuming, rebelling, jealousy, and ridiculing the word of God, will finally end up being thrown into Sheol and the hell. (Gal 5:19–21).

On the contrary, a man who lives doing the works of the Spirit and walks in the Spirit has the fruits of the Spirit which include love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, etc. and a man with such qualities will get the eternal life generated from the Spirit and continues to live in the paradise and the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:22–24).

As we can learn from the lesson, the Apostle has clearly stated that there are two kinds of farms and two kinds of seeds. The farms are the body and the spirit; and the seeds are the bodily and spiritual activities. What is more, he says, each of these yields a distinctive harvest; that is, the bodily activities yield fruits of bodily desires while the spiritual activities produce the fruit of spiritual life, which is eternal life.

At this juncture, we as Christians have to focus on what we have to decide as a choice from the perspective of this lesson. As the Bible tells us, “You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Rom 6:11)

This means: as a dead man can never come back to life, a Christian is dead to bodily desires and cannot come back again after he departs from them in as much similar manner as a man who is dead for ever. And so, the two (a Christian and a bodily desire) never pay visit to each other, let alone live together. If Christian teaching and spiritual life are like this, how can wrath, argument, difference and strife, enter the house of a Christian to cast a shadow on love, peace and patience? However, though our wishes are thus, we do not actually observe love and peace prevailing in the houses of Christians today. Instead, what we vividly perceive is the prevalence of strife, cruelty, divorce, disintegration of family, and inflicting various kinds of injuries to young women and baby girls. These are the practices that we observe in our society today. The reasons for such problems are unfaithfulness to a marriage partner, transgressing women’s rights and dignity, callousness towards expectant women, putting burden of domestic work, dwindling love and respect towards life companions, and contempt for life partners. The consequences of such conducts are divorce and disintegration of family. Because the seeds sown in such cases are the bodily activities, the harvest they yield is being thrown into the world of the dead which is Sheol.

Nevertheless, this must not be the choice that Christians should make. Christian husbands should sow, in the conscience of their wives, the seeds of love, peace, tolerance, compassion, benevolence, fidelity and caring. They should pass away having built a respectable and loveable family. A husband should sow the seeds of Spirit in the minds of his wife and children. The Holy Spirit has commanded that a husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself, and be loyal and respectful to her. (Eph 5:21–33; 1Pet 3:7; Mt 5:27–32).

When he has done this, we can say that he has sown the seeds of the Spirit, and so he reaps eternal life.

52. HYMN: /yom n wod sa l mar yam / [We praise Mary today] (The 1st Sunday of Nehase)- The 1st Sunday on or after August 7

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 1:26–38

OPENING CITATION: “And Mary said, ‘Here I am the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’” (Lk 1:38)

When God the Father saw that the time has arrived to redeem the world with the sacrifice of his Son, he sent the Angle Gabriel to take the word of Annunciation to Virgin Mary. As Saint Gabriel reached Virgin Mary with the message of joy from God, he uttered the following words by way of greeting her.

- ❖ Rejoice for you are filled with grace,
- ❖ God is with you,
- ❖ You are particularly blessed, distinct as you are from other women.

By having said these words, Angle Gabriel has confirmed how much great are the grace and respect that God has given to Virgin Mary. This kind of greetings has never been given to any woman in the Bible other than Virgin Mary. It is for this reason that our church believes that Virgin Mary is one step lower under God in honor and higher above all other human beings. We should note that Saint Gabriel did not say these words from his own mind. He is a messenger from God; and so, the words belong to God. Saint Gabriel has also said the following words about the child to be conceived by St Mary.

“His name will be called ‘Jesus’, meaning Savior. He will be great. He is the Son of God. The Almighty God will give him the throne of his father, David. And he will reign for eternity over the home of Jacob. There will not be an end for his kingdom.”

Saying these words, Angel Gabriel made it clear that Jesus is Lord in his nature. Not any other person could be described by these words other than the Lord for the very reason that mankind does not and can never have a kingdom that lasts for eternity.

One line of reasoning for our church to believe that Jesus Christ is God is the resounding statement just cited from Angel Gabriel. When Virgin Mary was told by Saint Gabriel that she would conceive and give birth to a son, she asked him, “How can this be

done since I do not know a man?” The point of not knowing a man in Virgin Mary’s question makes a reference to her not being a common woman and not intending to marry at all and without marriage conception is not possible.

It is on grounds of this question of Saint Mary and the clarification given to her by Saint Gabriel that our church strongly believes in Virgin Mary’s eternal (unblemished) virginity and perfection in thought, deeds and speech.

The answer that Angel Gabriel gave to Virgin Mary’s question is the following.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born from you will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.”

Having said this, he (Angel Gabriel) explained that there is nothing impossible with God as he let Mary’s aunt, Elisabeth conceive a son in her old age. This explanation of Saint Gabriel approves Virgin Mary’s enquiry.

After this, Mary became convinced and said, “Her I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.” Knowing her will, the Son of God dwelt in her womb; and then, he assumed flesh from her flesh and soul from her soul and became man. At this juncture, humanity and divinity are united into one perfect whole. As a result, it is said that by divine providence man has become God and God has become man.

There is a great lesson that we can learn from what Virgin Mary said, i.e. from: “Let it be unto me according to your word.” The statement reflects her obedience and devotion to God’s command.

When St. Gabriel imparted and clarified the message to her, Saint Mary did not have the slightest doubt that this would happen to her. She wholeheartedly accepted the word. We, like St. Mary, have to learn to say “Let it be to us according to God’s word,” when priests and preachers echo the word of God to us.

There is today a word that teachers, priests, preachers, and medical professionals tell us in a similar way. This word relates as to how we can protect ourselves from HIV and AIDS. While teaching how we can do this, they say: “Firstly, avoid sexual relation before marriage; secondly, get married legally with both parties willing for the marriage; you should also get the blessings of the parents of both sides. What is more, it is

advisable that marrying couples make their marriages take place at a church where a matrimonial service is conducted for the engaged couples taking the Holy Communion. Finally, marrying couples should pledge to be faithful to each other and remain confined one to one until death departs them. Such moves perfectly protect people from the HIV and AIDS pandemic.”

We should believe that all those who preach as in the words above are messengers of the word of God like Saint Gabriel since the contents of the words are entirely God’s. (Mt 5:27–32; 15:8–9; Mk 10:2–9).

So, let us always say “Let it be to us according to God’s word,” as did Virgin Mary, whenever we are given or told about such a lesson. We can be redeemed from our bodily and spiritual ailments when we implement the word of God into action. And beyond this, we can be described as blessed and happy when we put the words of God into action, because it is said, “Blessed are those who listen to and keep the words of God.”

53. HYMN: /zati y - iti mariyam/ [THAT IS MARY] (The 2nd Sunday of Nehase)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 1:39–56

OPENING CITATION: “..., behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.” (Lk 1:48)

The word in the opening citation above is what Virgin Mary said while she was pregnant and was visiting her Aunt Elisabeth. She said this guided by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of Luke (1:26–56) contains the praise of Saint Mary. In this Gospel, we find all the praises that the angel and people have forwarded to Saint Mary. Some of these are the following:

1. When the Angel Gabriel, was sent to Virgin Mary to annunciate her that she would conceive in virginity and give birth to the Son of God in virginity, he greeted her saying: “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.” This praise of the angel to Saint Mary is one and the first of all praises addressed to her.
2. After she had perceived what the Angle Gabriel told her, she went to a hill country with haste and entered the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth. At that moment Elisabeth became filled with the Holy Spirit and praised Saint Mary with a loud voice saying, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped with joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” (Luke 1:42–45). The praises given to Saint Mary by Saint Gabriel and Elisabeth are similar because both said the above praises to St. Mary after they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and this is recorded in the Gospel.
3. Knowing that all generations coming after her till the end of the world would praise her for being a cause of our redemption. Virgin Mary, guided by the Holy

Spirit, praised herself prophesying, "Surely, from now on all generations shall call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me." (Lk 1:48–49) Because of this, there is no faithful Christian who does not repeat in his daily prayers, the Prayer of Saint Mary, those of Saint Gabriel and Saint Elisabeth about Virgin Mary, all of which are recorded in the Gospel.

4. Once, as Christ was teaching, a certain woman among the congregation lifted up her voice and praised Virgin Mary in public saying, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you." (Lk 11:27). For this reason, we realize that all the praises addressed to Virgin Mary are not fictitious, but are Biblical facts based on the Gospel; and the reason for her being praised is nothing else other than her giving birth to the Son of God flesh.

Briefly then, because the praises for her and the reasons for them are recorded in the Bible, we too praise Virgin Mary using God's words thus: "Blessed you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women; and blessed is the fruit of your womb." We also plead to her to intercede between us and her beloved Son for his forgiveness.

Even though the life of virginity of Saint Mary is connected with the blessings of the Almighty, she was also prepared to live virgin, pure and holy on her own will. However, virgin girls cannot resemble Virgin Mary in thought, speech, and purity. But it would be a great honor for them if they could wait virgin until marriage, and live faithfully after marriage. It is true that they resemble Saint Mary in virginity though not so fully always. This is a great honor for them. However, if there are some who can willingly decide to remain virgin until the end of their life, they could get reward for their virginity; and Saint Mary is their model.

We have learnt from the verse cited above that Saint Mary went to Saint Elisabeth's house after the angel told her that she was pregnant in her old age. It is not difficult to think that Saint Mary had rendered Elisabeth much social and material support apart from the spiritual one during her pregnancy.

Yes, it is necessary to advise and urge expectant women to go to a clinic or health center to have a medical check up both before and after delivery. In the absence of

modern medical service, women resort to harmful traditional practices during child delivery. To help the delivery of the child traditional midwives massage the belly of the expectant mother using butter, make her drink koso (a traditional medicine against tapeworm), prick her throat with a needle to remove the placenta, and shake her to speed up delivery. The society has to realize that all these are harmful to the baby and the mother; and so, these traditional practices must be abandoned once and for all time.

Indeed, there are cultural practices that should not be abandoned. For instance, after the delivery, there are statements of applause and good wishes such as “Congratulation for the safe delivery of the new baby with the help of St. Mary!” and “May Mary give you strength and help you forget the pangs you underwent during delivery!” Both of these statements of wishes are used in appeasing mothers upon successful delivery. Yes, these are good wishes to which we can say “Amen”. Let Saint Mary’s prayers and blessings be with us.

54. HYMN: /y hab nä z namä bägizehu/ [HE GIVES US RAIN ON TIME]

(The 3rd Sunday of Nehase)

SCRIPTURE REEADING: Psalm 145:15-16

OPENING CITATION: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.” (Psalm 145:15)

Although all the one hundred fifty psalms are assumed to have been composed by King David, only eighty one psalms bear his name and the present 145th psalm is one of these 81 Psalms. The psalm is filled with expressions describing God’s guardianship, generosity, love and righteousness. The opening citation for our lesson today which runs thus: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing,” (Ps 145:15–16), was a prayer chanted before meal in ancient Christian tradition. This prayer could still be used to implore God before meal and to thank him after. The psalm is brief and clear in expression, and deep and deep in interpretation.

In his providence God provides all creatures with food. This is because every living thing exists in life with the help of God. As every living thing gets its existence from God, so is the continuity of its life dependant on God’s will.

Except man, who is created in the image of God, other lower animals do not have the ability to know God. Nor can they know him in time to come. However, as it is indicated in our opening citation, they all look with their eyes to God and wait for his charity. All creatures need food to keep them alive and all of them expect to get their food from God.

The second part of the psalm says, “and you give them their food in due season.” What this means is that in order to feed his creatures God pours the rains in time. He also shines the sun in time. In general, he rotates the four seasons: summer, fall, winter and spring one after the other all in time. In the appropriate season people prepare the ground, sow the seeds and harvest the produce. The food produced in this manner is given by God. Moreover, human creatures, birds and other animals benefit from the fruits and grains which grew by the rains and are ripened by sunshine.

It is true that there was time, as we read in the Bible, when God dropped manna from the heavens and fed the children of Israel. The Bible has this: “Our fathers ate the manna in

the wilderness; as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.” (Jn 6:31). This very instance shows that God cares for man and distinctly respects him.

The third part of the psalm says, “You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.” (Ps 145:16). God’s providence is perfect. He feeds all equally without making distinction between the kind and unkind. He gives all creatures (be they mankind, birds, animals and/or beasts) what is best for them. He provides for the needs of domestic and wild animals, that is, birds that fly and animals or beasts that trudge in the deserts, mountains and cliffs, and to those animals that swim in the seas and oceans. In short, “The eyes of all look to him.”

Is it only their daily food that people expect from God? No, it is not. People also expect for God’s help concerning their health. Particularly at present, the world is experiencing a health problem more worrying and disturbing than any other time. This health problem is HIV and AIDS which is known to have no cure. Because medical professionals have not been able until now to find medicine to cure HIV and AIDS diseases “the eyes of all (people) look to God” to send them a remedy.

Currently, there are many victims of HIV and AIDS who are waiting for God’s remedy and mercy in the premises of numerous churches and Holy Water shrines praying to him with their eyes looking up. Trusting that God saves men from all problems, they use both the life elongating drugs given to them by medics and the Holy Water of the church.

Yes, the Church teaches that it is possible to cure for those who believe in him. Hence, we should encourage victims to continue taking both the anti-AIDS drugs and the Holy Water. However, we must be careful not to undermine their belief and hope.

Orphans who have lost their parents to HIV and AIDS also look up to God for help. God helps these children indirectly through other people. So let every member of society take part in obeying God’s commandments so that these orphans could get the help and care that they need.

55. HYMN: /sän bät täabi m kulu lät / [THE SABBATH EXCELS ALL OTHER DAYS] (The 4th Sunday of Nehase)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 12:13–26

OPENING CITATION: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the possessions.” (Lk 12:15)

Jesus Christ gave this warning when a person in an audience to whom he was preaching pleaded to him saying, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” (Lk 12:13). In those days, it was customary to the Jewish society to go to elderly person to settle disputes when an argument arose among people. The person who pleaded to Jesus had a dispute with his brother on matters connected with inheritance. He made his request on grounds of this Jewish tradition of presenting cases to elders. But, Jesus answered to him saying, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or a arbitrator over you?” (Lk 12:14)

According to the regulation of the book of Deuteronomy an elder son would inherit the family property double the share of his younger brother. (Deut 21:17) The two brothers mentioned above in the verse were also elder and younger brothers. Following the customary practice, which was based on the rules of the Deuteronomy, the older brother had taken a double portion of the inheritance. The younger brother pleaded to Jesus Christ to pass judgment in his favor so that he could get more than what is traditionally legalized. However, Jesus rejected the plea of the younger brother because (i) his pleading was motivated by jealousy, (ii) it would violate existing rules and practices, and (iii) Jesus came to talk about inheritance of the Kingdom of God, which is heavenly, and not about inheritance on earth, which is secular. Nevertheless, noting the envy of the younger brother Jesus taught all in attendance using the following parable, **“Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the possessions.” (Lk 12:15)**

Then, he told them a parable about a rich man with intent to pin point to them the risks of greediness and enviousness. He said, “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my

crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry,’” (Lk 12:16–19). Then Jesus told them that the soul of this rich man would be taken away that night, and asked whose property those things would be. He concluded his parable calling the rich man “a fool.”

Actually, the rich man’s endeavor to farm on a vast land, make the land produce abundantly, and change the size of his barn, and wish to live in merriment was not a matter of foolishness or laziness. What the rich man has erred in is that he did not think of other people beyond himself. There are no family members with him; nor are friends around him; nor does he think anything about the poor. Briefly speaking, this man is not concerned about friends or the destitute other than bothering about himself alone referring to himself as “I, me, mine, myself, me alone, etc.,” some fifteen times a day. That was why he was called a “fool” or “lazy.”

What is more, the rich man did not think of God; i.e. he did not realize that he got all his property with the will and help of the Almighty. (1Chr 29:12). Moreover, he forgot to bring to mind the teaching, “... you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this, or that,” (Jas 4:15), and say that he would live and use his riches if God wills. This was again the reason why he was called a fool or lazy. Yes, according to the words of the Bible, all those who forget or neglect to recall the name of the Lord are called fools as these words make note of: “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” (Ps 14:1)

The rich man never thought that there would be any other world other than the earthly one. He was only fond of living an earthly life. The Lord did not like this. He scorned him saying: “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And then you have prepared, whose shall they be?” (Lk 12:20). What actually happened to this rich man was that he died and buried as these words say: “They spend their days in wealth, and in moment go down to the grave.” (Job 21:13).

In general, all the ideas that the rich man thinks of are contradictory to the teaching of the Christianity. This is because the man is selfish and selfishness is not characteristic of Christianity. He wanted pleasure by hoarding for his own merriment

instead of sharing his property with others. He thought his life could be maintained sound and safe by having a lot of wealth.

All those who would like to amass money and grain should do it in a manner Joseph had done, not in a manner the rich man in the parable above had done. Joseph hoarded wealth in Egypt and saved all his people and the people of Egypt from dying of hunger during the famine.

After having told this parable to those who had abundant wealth, Jesus turned to his disciples to tell them not to worry about their earthly life. Jesus wanted to emphasize that God has created the body and the soul; and so, he provides us with what is less than the body and the soul, which is the food and the clothes. So we should not worry about these things. When God is feeding the ravens, which are unable to work, can he not feed human beings, which are able to work and produce? He can. So worrying is useless.

One should not miss the connotation given to the word “worry” here. It is not worrying about food and clothes that is advised to be abandoned. There is nothing more that man can add to what God can provide by worrying much. This is the message.

We have now learnt from the example of the rich man in the parable that accumulating wealth greedily and enviously is harmful. We know that there are a large number of people, including victims of HIV and AIDS and orphaned children, who are economically weak and unable to produce anything to meet their basic needs. To reconcile these two situations, we advise all those who have wealth, which is given to them with God’s blessing to contribute some of it to the support of those economically weak people in addition to the spiritual, social and psychological support that they are already giving.

As it is said, ‘things that we cannot take with us when we die do not belong to us.’ Only the good things we do while we are alive leave us fame to follow us. Consequently, it will be fairly rational if people could change what they cannot take with them with benevolent works which they can take with them when they die.

56.HYMN: /am lakie her an s ani b t ezaz ke/ [MY GOOD GOD

RAISE ME UP BY YOUR COMMAND] (The last Sunday of Winter Season)

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 4:12–17

OPENING CITATION: “The people who sat in darkness have seen great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” (Mt 4:16)

Our lesson today is a description about Jesus Christ’s resumption of teaching at Capernaum after he came from a visit at Nazareth in Galilee, a place where he departed on hearing that John the Baptist was cast to prison. Capernaum is found on the coast of the Sea of Galilee in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim. When Jesus preached in Capernaum, he stayed at Peter’s house.

Jesus had done his duties while he was in this world according to his scheduled. He went to Galilee from Judea when he heard that John the Baptist was imprisoned. When the time for him to die was due, which he very well knew ahead of time, he gave up himself over to his pursuers to die. (Jn 10:18).

Jesus started preaching immediately after John the Baptist was arrested. This was because John’s assignment was clearing and preparing the way for Jesus to teach. When John’s assignment was over at his being thrown into prison, Jesus soon started teaching the Gospel that signals the beginning of redemption of the world. Jesus based his teaching upon the foundation that John laid.

Jesus Christ started teaching and taught for a long time in the land of Zabulon and Nephtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. It is called Galilee of the Gentiles because people who were not Jews settled there. All the land where mixed people lived was not referred to as the land of the Jews. The mixed people were also considered as second class citizens. Because of this, people who lived in Galilee during the Maccabean Period were forced to become Jews.

Isaiah, the Prophet, prophesied saying, “The people who sat in darkness have seen great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” (Mt 4:16) Darkness, in this prophecy, relates to the period of

the sufferings of the ten tribes of Israel who were taken captive by the Assyrian emperor, Tiglathpileser, and remained under his reign for long detached from the word and worship of God (2kin 15:29). Great light refers to the rebuilding of God's temple and listening to the word of God and worshipping him after the two tribes of Judea and the ten tribes of Israel who were taken captive have come together and rejoined in worship after seventy years of captivity (Hos 1:11). Yes, God's word is light as it is said in Psalms, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105).

According to the interpretations of Matthew the Apostle, people who lived before the birth of Jesus Christ were all ignorant of spiritual life and never knew God. Their souls were confined in the darkness of Sheol being captives by the Devil. People who lived in such darkness saw great light; and this light is Jesus Christ, the true light of the world. In the Galilee of the Gentiles, which was shadowed by darkness, i.e. a place in which spiritual ignorance was wide spread, but Christ's light of the Gospel was brightly illuminated. The advent of the Kingdom of God was declared with a call for confession to the people of the lands of Zabulon and Nephtalim, whose earthly kingdoms were toppled. Spiritual freedom was announced for them. People have to confess to be citizens of the kingdom of God. They have to abandon going on their own way and start to lead on God's way.

There are many today who have not seen the light of the Gospel or known Christ, the true light of the world. Clergymen must shine among these people the light of the Gospel and assist them to come out of darkness with this light

Life in darkness could lead one to several wrong directions. To stick at living in harmful and backward cultures and traditions means literally living in darkness. In the contrary, getting rid of harmful and backward cultures and traditions means emancipation from darkness and living in light.

It is known that there are a large number of harmful traditional practices. Ninety percent of these practices are performed upon women and children. Many of the harmful practices include underage marriage, forced marriage, circumcision (mutilation) of girl's genital organs, and raping.

Underage marriage can bring forth serious social problems in addition to the fistulous infections and it can also cause other health problems. For instance, it can result

in early divorce and disintegration of family. It can lead to migration of girls concerned from rural areas to cities and towns. And it can also lead to the increase of the number of street boys and girls. So the society has to realize that underage marriage is a harmful traditional practice which has to be abolished.

Forced marriage is connected with marital practice done by compulsion. Such conjugal union can sometime cause physical damage, psychological pain, and mental disorder. It also spoils the lady's upcoming prospects. What is more, it can be a cause for a long time feud whereby relatives of both sides fight each other. Therefore, it is a culture that we should all condemn and abandon. In a like manner, circumcising the genital organ of a girl can prompt either temporary or permanent physical injury to the victim. This practice is not permitted either by the Old or the New Testament. Neither is it allowed by the rules and regulations of the Church. So it is a harmful and useless traditional practice that the society has to abandon.

Another traditional practice which resembles to living in darkness is the act of treating woman as unequal to men that we observe widely practiced in some developing countries. Considering femininity as a sign of inferiority and weakness could be taken as men's ignorance to accept that both men and women are human beings and equal in nature. Man is not superior in nature. Neither is a woman inferior to man. The Bible tells us that both are created in the image of God, and the Bible says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27)

Therefore, according to the above citation our society must follow the teachings and advice given to us by clergymen and other professionals of the Church to abandon living in darkness, which is living with backward and harmful practices, and start living in the light, which is living by adopting the more useful and civilized ways of life.

57. HYMN: /kämä an tä mäs räq / [Just like the Thunder] (The last Sunday of Ethiopian Year)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 17:22–37

OPENING CITATION: “For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, will the Son of Man be in his day.” (Lk 17:24)

One of the things Christians look forward to with patience, belief and hope is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the redeemer of the world. He himself (Christ) has told during his teaching about his second coming (Mt 16:27; 24:37; 25:31).

The way how he would come is also stated in the above scripture reading. Some signs are provided for his Second Coming. Before his coming, many false messiahs will arise to deceive many people each saying that he is Jesus Christ, or to tell that Christ is here or there. However, a warning is given to everybody not to quit his/her daily activity by following the false messiahs. The warning is given because, as we can understand from the opening citation for today a lightening that appears at one part of the sky could illuminate the other parts of the sky at the same time. Christ’s coming shall also be like that as he does not come secretly. He will be seen vividly by all. As David, the Prophet of God, forecasted, God shall come shining. He expressed it thus: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire” (Ps 50:3). According to the interpretations of the Ethiopian scholars, no one shall see the coming of Jesus Christ alone; i.e. before others do. All people see his coming together at one common time. Saint John, the Apostle, ascertains this in these words: “Look, he is coming with clouds; and every eye will see him...” (Rev 1:7)

As we read in today’s reading, people in the time of Noah committed sins until God was sorry that he had made man. Despite God’s warning and teaching through Noah, the sinners were not willing to repent and stop sinful acts. They continued satisfying their sensual and earthly desires disregarding God’s laws. They ate and drank, helped others marry many wives and were involved in fornication and adultery. And for all this, God

destroyed them suddenly. Only Noah and his family members were saved from the destruction while all the rest perished. (Gen 6:5–7).

In a like manner, God destroyed (pouring brimstone and fire from the heavens) the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah with their citizens inside because people of these towns committed perverted social acts such as homosexuality. This happened during the time of Lot who together with his two daughters was the only person to be saved from the destruction. The people in these towns not only ignored the word of God sent to them through Lot but also rebelled against it and continued with their sins to the extent God became sorry that he created man and brought punishment upon them (Gen 19:15–25). Because of this, the peoples of the time of Noah and Lot are referred to as examples of sinners that have come and gone. This is confirmed with words in the Bible, “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example for those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Since the Second Coming of the Lord will be sudden we will have to wait for him always prepared. That will save us from the type of wrath and punishment the peoples of Noah and Lot experienced.

The verdict to be delivered on the last Judgment Day will be to each according to his faith and work. Thus, from among two people living together, one is taken and the other is left. This means that the righteous will be called upon with these words: “Ye blessed ones, come close to me.” But the sinners will be judged thus: “Ye cursed ones, depart from me and go to eternal fire.”

Yes, the sinner cannot be redeemed because he has lived with the righteous. Neither can a husband save his wife, nor can a wife save her husband; neither can a mother save her children; nor can children save their mother. Thus, the work of redemption cannot be performed by way of delegation or collective effort. One cannot have faith or be baptized for a second person. Each person is redeemed according to his own faith through his own baptism and good work.

Asked when he would come, Jesus Christ answered quoting the proverb of the time thus: “Where there is meat, ravens gather in large numbers.” This makes a reference to one of the events that would take place before his coming, which is the revival to life of all the dead.

We do not know if Jesus Christ comes in the morning, at noon, in the evening or at mid night. We have to adhere to the advice given to us to wait for him prepared all the time.

We have made mention of the peoples of the times of Noah and Lot in our reading above for today. Those sins that the peoples of Noah's and Lot's time committed are repeated by some individuals in our world. People of Sodom and Gomorrah were neither obedient nor well subjected themselves to God. Their daily routines were eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and fornicating shamelessly. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah of Lot's time in particular committed homosexuality and perverted sex in violation of the rules of nature. This is also against God's command and blessings for human being to multiply. This sin is still referred to as 'sodomy' after the name of one of the towns.

It is known that sodomy is currently spreading widely in the world. In fact, it is also said that the first cause of HIV is sodomy. Sodomy is condemned in the Bible, the teachings of the church, and the canons of the Apostles (Lev 20:13; Rom 1:27–29; 1Co 6:9–10; 1Tim 1:9–10). It is also cursed in the cultures and traditions of almost all societies of the world. Incidentally, our society too has to fight with vigorous effort to stop the spread of this practice before it spreads as it has happened in some other countries. Every body must distance him/herself from this act to prevent the society from facing the destruction inflicted upon the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah during Lot's time

58.HYMN: /worädä g zianä/ [Our Lord has descended] (Sunday on Sene 12)

- June 19th

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 22:31–47

OPENING CITATION: “Then an angel appeared to him from heaven and gave him strength.” (Lk 22:43)

This reading for today explains that every person is subject to pain and difficulties, and goes on telling us that when people are in such difficult situation, they must pray earnestly. If they pray thus untirelessly God the Almighty can send his angel to help them and to rescue them from the difficulties they are in. There are many experiences that we can cite in the light of this reading.

1. Jesus warned his disciples ahead of time that they could be confronted with difficulties in their ministry.
2. He told his disciples not to lose hope and faith.
3. He told St. Peter that he would betray him three times before cock crows.
4. Although they were empty handed when they were with him, he promised that he would provide them with whatever they lacked.
5. In our reading above Jesus told his disciples to pray earnestly and he departed from them a little distance himself to pray and observed whether they were praying. But he found out that they were asleep; so he told them again to pray so that they might not come into temptation.

When we look at the fundamental points listed above, we find that the Lord sends angels to help individuals to strengthen them when they are weak, and to awaken them when they are asleep. The Bible put this point thus: “Poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them (Ps 34:6–7). Therefore, let us be aware of the fact that the Lord can do every thing, and that there is no disease that he cannot cure. The holy angels who are very invisible creation are always available to help and console people in their troubles; and so people should call upon them whenever they fall into difficulties and troubles.

The hymn for today makes it clear that our redeemer Jesus Christ came down to earth from heaven to lift up the children of mankind from where they had fallen. Saint

Paul advises us to remember what we have learnt in the past, and become convinced about healing from earlier diseases and troubles in these words: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it; and how from childhood you have known the holy scriptures that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2Tim 3:14)

Besides St. Paul, also St. Peter reminds us in his Epistle of our responsibility to reply to questions that come from others saying, “But in your heart sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands an accounting for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1Pet 3:15). Thus, he encourages us to teach others about the hope of life beyond equipping ourselves with the hope of salvation, the hope of earning and the hope of victory. This strength and power can come only from God. Jesus Christ confirms this in these words: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:6–12). He said this to his disciples to affirm to them that a man needs the spirit of the Lord beyond his own effort to build on his strength. The spirit of the Lord can help us attain this power only when we solemnly pray, have strong faith in him, and are guided by the commandments given to us. When we do these, we will be able to get his grace.

In his psalms, David has given a description of God and about his infinite power in these words: “With mighty chariots, twice ten thousands, thousands upon thousands of angels, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place. You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train. ...” (Ps 68:17) Thus, the same psalm teaches that wherever God is, God’s angels and people of God are also there. Moreover, it is clear that God abides in people, angles and other creatures graciously to assist them.

The lesson for today relates to Christ’s coming to this world in flesh and his response to the expired question of Satan. The word ‘Satan’ means in Hebrew ‘enemy’. (Mt 4:10) Its Greek equivalent is ‘devil’, though the exact meaning of this word is actually ‘inditer, or accuser’ (Mt. 4:10; Jn 8:44). Although God created Satan holy, respected and reputed as were St. Michael and other angels, he lost his glory because of his conceit, haughtiness, and arrogance. He was, therefore, dethroned and condemned to

hell (Is 14:12–20; Ezek 28:12–19; 1Tim 3:6). St Michael and other angels had also fought against him (Satan) and ascertained victory over him (Rev 12:9–15).

Today God the Almighty is a trusted Lord who could give us the power and help to recover from our psychological and physical ailments just as he gave St. Michael the power to defeat Satan the accuser. In fact, he had already done this by being crucified after being born from Virgin Mary. Just as the angel (Michael) fought against Satan in God's name in those days, we should also fight against him today in God's name. It is when we do this that Satan can be kept away. In the mean time, we should also take care of ourselves and those fellowmen of ours who are presently suffering from illnesses and other difficulties. We do this by praising God the Almighty, who delegates his angels to look after us in our life and death.

In regard to this, the Gospel has this to say: “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and so that day catches you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.” (Lk 21:34-35). A man who is overcharged with surfeiting drunkenness does not care of his death. He fails to recall any one of the commandments or the laws of God. He does not bother about his physical death, leave alone his spiritual death. However, death comes upon us without our awareness; before we confess our sins and do any penance and without taking the Holy Communion. It could come while we are seated at table for meals; it could come while we are making merriments, i.e. as we are singing and dancing; it could also come while we are committing immorality; etc. The day, on which we die in this manner, i.e. the day of our physical death is the Day of Judgment for us. We cannot undergo penance after that day; that is, there is no self punishment to be executed after we are dead. David the prophet puts this in a question form thus: “For in death there is no remembrance of you; in grave who can give you praise?” (Ps 6:5) This means that no one, after death, could learn and know, or think and believe and become righteous. It is while we are alive that we must do all this.

The phrase ‘that day’ in the statement “and so that day come upon your unawares” refers to not only the Second Coming of the Lord but also the day of the destruction of Israel. It is also a day when every one of us shall be called upon by death.

Overcharging one's heart with excessive drinking also has its own risks. A sin is committed when the sinner's heart is overcharged with excessive drinking. The mood that drives people to go to bars and to maiden cottages for sexual copulation comes about from overcharging one's heart with excessive drunkenness. It is again excessive drinking that urges people to say: "There is no AIDS after 10 in the evening." A person who has drunk too much does not fear God. A person who is drunk never thinks about his spouse waiting at home, promises made during matrimonial services, God's judgment on adulterers, and contracting HIV. As a butterfly leaps and enters into fire, a drunken person also leaps and enters the bosom of a lady whom he has no knowledge about. Drunkard people rape girls. In general, we can say that they are people whose hearts are overcharged with excessive drinking that becomes typical causes for the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Solomon the wise wrote this in his book of proverbs: "Hear, my child, and be wise, and guide your mind in the way. Do not be among winebibbers, or among gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness will clothe them with rags." (Prov. 23:19–21). What is said above is perfectly true. A drunkard or winebibber brings home illness that causes his death; he empties his purse; and so, he has no money left for medication. Finally, he dies and untimely death is not good. That is why we say let all of us keep ourselves away from beverages and other stimulant drugs. Not only should we take this advice for ourselves but also teach others to follow us.

59. HYMN: /asär gäwomu lähawar yat / [HE ADORNED (DECORATED)
THE APOSTLES] (On Sunday of Hamle 2, 5 or 10) - July 9, 12 or 17

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 6:12–20

OPENING CITATION: “He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.” (Lk 6:17)

There is one big lesson that we learn from this chapter. Jesus Christ our redeemer selected twelve men from among a multitude of people who were following him and named them ‘Apostles.’ An apostle means ‘traveler’ or messenger. They are people who travel from place to place preaching the Gospel; they are also the ones ready to carry his cross of torture, and those who made themselves ready for sufferings Mt 10:37–39). The hymn for today is entitled asär gäwomu which means in Geez, ancient language of Ethiopia, “He adorned them or He gave them gifts/prizes.” Gifts are of many kinds. To the Disciples of Christ, hardship is also a gift or prize.

The Disciples of Christ were engaged in various occupations before they became followers (messengers) of Christ. Some were farmers, others were construction workers, a few others were tax collectors, and still others were fishermen. Jesus Christ had never engaged in any of these occupations. But he mixed with them even though he was divine. This proves that he is a father of love and affection. People saw that Jesus out of love mixed with farmers, tax collectors, fishermen and other humble people. Therefore, patients suffering from various illnesses such as hatchback and blind decided to come to him to have their ill health restored. Many used to come to him and cried for help. And Jesus listening to their cry he took not a long time in providing these people with solutions to their health problems. In fact, many were back to good health by simply touching his clothes. Christ stood at the court of law in front of Pilate not only for healing the physically sick but also for those who had sinned a lot. Jesus did not stand only for the physically sick alone but he stood also for the salvation of the soul. Christ offered

assurances to several people. To recall some among the assistance given by him we find the following recorded in the Bible:

1. He restored the sight of the blind (Mt 9:27–30).
2. He assisted his disciples who were terrified and locked themselves in a house to have peace (Jn 20:26).
3. After his resurrection Jesus assisted his disciples who were unable to catch fish to be able to catch fish in abundance. (Jn 21:4)

As he who stood with the Apostles does not change, he still stands with the Church fathers today with mercy. The Lord cures us with Holy Water. He reveals his healing wisdom with the Cross.

There are many of us who worry about many things. There are people who suffer from diseases caused by HIV; there are people who suffer from disease caused by cancer; there are people who suffer from disease caused by different kinds of health problems lying on bed. The Lord is close to all if they are close to him in prayer. Because healing the sick is his nature, he restores people's health and strength. Christ does not investigate past sins in order to save new patients. If Lord God had not been generous, humble, and kind father, who would have stood in front of him? Who would have lived clean and pure before him? We have to believe that Christ still stands with the humble and with those who are discouraged. We should also call those discouraged, stricken by different kinds of diseases, to come to God for cure. The Lord stood with his disciples, who were not equal in respect with him, to be a model from whom we could understand and learn that helping people in troubles is always good.

Without him, our net cannot catch fish even if it is stretched over the sea. Without him, our fear cannot be overcome. Whosoever looks for a remedy for his/her problem he/she gets it only from God the Almighty. So he/she must come within reach of Him. He has the solution for every problem. The Lord stands among us and keeps us safe when we are exhausted with problems. He who plainly stood with his disciples during his physical existence will never change his nature; and so, he stands, today, too, with fathers for mercy. He cures us with his Holy Water. He also discloses his skill of giving relief with his Cross. Trusting that God resolves our problems with the prayer of our fathers the priests let us always go to church and tell the priests our problems, drink the Holy Water they

provide us, anoint ourselves with the ashes of the burning incense, be blessed with their crosses, and take the Holy Communion so that we could be relieved of all of our disease. This religious move makes God, the Lord of love, stand with us. We, priests, too, should have spiritual life like the Disciples of Christ that empowers us to relieve the sick from their illness with our blessings; and that allows us get solutions for all problems of believers; and that enables us beseech God to stand among his followers. There are currently many diseases that could be controlled with the effort of priests. One of these is fistulous infection which is increasing due to underage marriage. At this point, one could ask what fistula is; and what causes the infection related to it. In what follows, we look at the answers for these questions.

Fistula is an abnormal, inflamed passage leading from one internal organ, canal, or cavity to another, or to the surface of the body. Fistulous infections are usually named after the particular organ or region of the body affected. There are, for example, salivary, bronchial, and biliary fistulas which affect the salivary gland, neck, and gallbladder, respectively. Fistulas may also form between the urinary bladder and the rectum or women's genital organ. The most common fistula affecting the urinary bladder and women's genital organ is called vesicovaginal fistula. It occurs between the bladder and women's reproductive organ. It usually comes about from injuries sustained in difficult childbirth. It often occurs on women living in developing countries who labor for more than twelve hours at time of delivery for the simple reason that health facilities are scarce. It is again frequent in developing countries because girls get married underage; that is, before their reproductive organs are mature enough to carry babies. Therefore, priests can use, at least, their influence to advise the followers of the Church to stop underage marriage to prevent the misery of women from further fistulous infections.

We have seen that Jesus Christ, being influenced by love and affection, stood at equal level with farmers, tax collectors, fishermen and other lowly people to render them assistance in their problems. We have also seen that he had cured in less than a minute patients ailing on bed, indisposed sufferers, hunchback and blind ones; many, we said, were back to good health by having him touch their clothes. Christ did all this for the love he has towards the children of mankind. Thus, today too, all of us are expected of doing

what we can to enable cured patients praise the Lord in their own voices and be the witness of the miracles of salvation that God carries out dwelling in priests.

60. HYMN: /as tär - yo/

[EPIPHANY] (Sunday on Tir 21st EC.) - January 29th

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Galatians 4:1–12

Luke 1:47–57

OPENING CITATION: Epiphany

As David the prophet of God foretold saying, “As we have heard, so have we seen,” (Ps 48:8) we have witnessed the birth of the Lord from Virgin Mary by seeing him with our eyes in flesh. This was what we heard the prophets had predicted, and this is what we saw in solid reality.

The topic that we shall be focusing on is Epiphany. In Epiphany there is always somebody who can be seen and another who can see. Our concern here is one of religion. Man hears and sees; and God makes his voice heard and his appearance seen. It is to emphasize this point, i.e. the point that God would appear in flesh being born from a virgin, who has been foretold by prophets in these words: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel,” (Is 7:14). And Prophet David, the heart of God, sang saying, “As we have heard, so have we seen,” (Ps 48:8). It is this that Luke the Evangelist narrates in the New Testament, “And when the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds (who were watching over their flocks over night) said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” (Lk 2:15–20).

It is the same truth that Saint Paul preached saying: “And without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: ‘God was revealed in flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angles, proclaimed among the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory’ (1Tim 3:16). It is again this reality that Saint Ephraim described in his writing saying: “What is not known is revealed, and what cannot be seen is seen.” Saint Yared, the Ethiopian scholar, also expressed this truth in these words: “His revelation has

become real.” What is more, different books of the Bible narrate about this occurrence in different ways: “God has shown us what he told us about; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you,” (Mk 16:7). When a man sees what he heard about with his own eyes, he becomes happy, “When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them,” (Acts 11:23). Particularly, when a man gets (sees) what he longed for in life, he becomes delighted; that was the case with Abraham: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56) If one asks why and how was it that the Lord was revealed, the answer is: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost” (1Tim 1:15); “He (Jesus) came to this world to dismantle the work of the Devil (to take away sins),” (1Jn 3:5) and the work of the Devil is sinning, lying, and killing. So Jesus saved us from death himself dying, from sinning himself crucified, and from lying himself preaching the truth. In general, he came to purify us from sinning, to lift us from falling, to give us a place of abode, and to clear for us the blocked way, etc. (Lk 23:43; Mt 13:10; Lk 10:23). He also allowed us to take the Holy Communion, because he loved us that much and wanted us to inherit his everlasting heavenly Kingdom.

In turn, the Lord expects faith and kindness from us. He says, “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing God.” (Heb 13:16) Thus, we learn that faith is expressed by doing good to all children of mankind.

‘Doing good to all’ implies many things: giving alms to the poor and the destitute, feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, clothing the naked, looking after the ailing, rearing and teaching the orphans, helping the aged, etc., All these are activities that God likes. Sharing is giving a portion of what one has to the needy. The statement “... for such sacrifices are pleasing God” indicates that the Lord prefers charity to sacrifice. Saint Paul the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Romans: “Contribute to the needs of saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” Paul repeated this in his Epistle to the Philippians thus: “I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received ... the gifts you sent me, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God.” (Phil 4:18). In the earlier time, God said through the Prophet Hosea: “I desired mercy (alms) and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos (6:6)

In our society today there are people who expect charities and aids from us. Those who need charities include patients, victims of HIV and AIDS, and orphaned children who have lost their parents due to AIDS. It is true that no treatment that can cure has been found yet for HIV and AIDS other than the drugs that extends life.

As several researches shows that a society that can provide HIV and AIDS victims with good diet, ample rest, sufficient exercise, positive thinking, and supportive encouragements could assist in extending the life of the victims. On the other hand, medical people say that poverty, undernourishment, depression and hopelessness aggravate the illness.

Therefore, if it happens that those who are HIV and AIDS victims are poor and are short of food we should extend our hand and help them with what they need. They should not become disheartened. If they are not provided with what they lack tablet alone cannot help them; ultimately they can die. In order to stop this from happening, we should not forget sharing with them what we have. This is the goal for which the Lord appeared in flesh.

61. HYMN: /maharani lä-qädämunä/ [OUR PREDECESSORS TAUGHT

US] (Sunday on Yekatit 8 EC) - February 15th

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 2:24–38

OPENING CITATION: “**Lord, now dismiss your servant in peace, According to your word:**” (v. 29)

It was the Elderly Simon, who lived in Jerusalem and to whom the Holy Spirit told that he would not die before he saw the Messiah Jesus Christ, about whom he prayed to God and pleaded saying: “**Lord, now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word:**” This is interpreted as: “Lord, allow me to depart in peace from this temporal earthly life to the perpetual and eternal life.” According to the narration of the scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Elderly Simon, the translator of the book of the prophet Isaiah, was one among the seventy scholars who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek (which translation is also called Septuagint) in the time of Ptolemies II in 284 AD.

Based on the traditions of the people who lived in the era of the Old Testament, Virgin Mary and Joseph took Jesus Christ to the Temple of God forty days after his birth. There the Elderly Simon took the child into his arms thanking the Lord in these words: “Lord now, dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel” (Lk 2:29-32).

At that very moment, his blind eyes retrieved sight, his numb knees restored their strength and his life rejuvenated; and his spiritual life satiated. Simon repeatedly thanked the Lord for all this.

Simon also prophesized about Christ until Joseph and Virgin Mary became pleased and marveled. He said, “Behold, this child is destined for the falling and the rising of Many in Israel, and to be a sign that shall be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed.” (Lk 2:34-35)

Simon’s prophesy has taken place. A great many of those who were opposed to the Lord and those who did not follow him have been separated from God’s gracious gift; and those who had faith in him and followed him had their spirits and souls elevated. It is

written in the scriptures that the Elderly Simeon who was kind, honest, merciful and full of the Holy Spirit lived by the will of God until the birth of the Lord. In our time too elderly people are essentially necessary since they reconcile people who quarrel, bring together people who are separated because of different views, help people get God's physical and spiritual blessings to people through their prayers. They are also good models to young people. Provided that teachers teach well, the elderly give advice well, and the youth learn their lessons diligently from their teachers and listen to the advice given by elders, the life of the young cannot be exposed to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Besides, the young should render respect to elderly people since they deserve this under God's commandment: "Honor your father and your mother so that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex 20:12).

62. HYMN: /lä- mä konä bäälä p’ap’asat / [At a Time of Bishops’
Celebration]

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 20:28–38

OPENING CITATION: “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.” (Acts 20:28)

Saint Paul, who was often referred to as ‘the light of the world,’ spoke words of the above citation. Upon his arrival in Asia Minor Paul called a meeting of the bishops. At this meeting Paul told them that they should teach about the Church of God and his kingdom and at the same time he reminded them to be good shepherd of the flock of Christ.

Ecclesia (akilesia) is a Greek word translated into Ge’ez as /betä k r s tian / which means Church. The root meaning of the Greek word ‘ecclesia’ can be interpreted as ‘association’ or ‘congregation’ in English. Therefore, in the Bible the word Church refers to the multitudes of Christians. However, according to the Fitha Negst, the word can also refer to the building where worshipers gather for prayers (F.N.1). Since those called ‘association’ or ‘congregation’ are groups of people that have faith in Christ, so the church is an association of Christians. The Bible says: “Unto the church of God ..., to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord ...” (1Co 1:2). The founder of the Church is our Lord Jesus Christ himself (Mt 16:18; 1Co 3:11). Jesus as attested in several places in the Bible the Church is called the body of Christ (Eph 1:20-23). The Church has been spreading because our Lord Jesus Christ has strengthened the belief, enlarged the knowledge, improved the administration and ascertained the longevity of the church that he himself has founded by assigning apostles, prophets (the seventy disciples), evangelists, pastors and teachers for it (Eph 4:11). This human resource of the church is still intact. Today’s bishops and priests are substitutes of the apostles and disciples. Therefore, the task of taking care of the flock of the church is well underway.

Since bishops and priests are assigned by the Holy Spirit to safeguard the flock of the church, which Christ has bought with his own blood, their responsibility is not simple. It demands them diligence, honesty, affection, passion, charity and sacrifice. That was why, therefore, Saint Paul the Apostle warned the administrators of the church saying, “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son” (Acts 20:28).

The sentence, “Keep watch over yourselves,” is a warning to the bishops or to the clergymen that they should direct the church workers to diligently attend to the well-being of Christians of their respective time. The second sentence, which says, “Keep watch over all the flock,” can be analyzed to mean that Church officials of various time have the responsibility to diligently keep the followers of the Church so that they will not keep themselves away from faith. The task of watching over the flock can be fulfilled only when the physical and spiritual lives of the members of the Church are well maintained. This is what church officials must ascertain.

In order to ascertain that the physical and spiritual lives of the society are well kept, contemporary church officials must reckon that much work awaits them ahead. With regard to spiritual well-being, for instance, we have to note that the generation does not accept all religious teachings given without questioning. Let us not, therefore, forget that we are living in a scientific age. In order to coach the generation in religious matters, it demands the teacher or clergyman to be a person of highest proficiency in religious and scientific studies. What is more, since the time we are living in is a time of too many problems, our vigilance in herding the flock (effort in taking care of worshipers) should continue with a better strength than ever.

We have to note that the generation has become exposed to epidemic disease of HIV and AIDS. However, this disease does not spread by wind or air; it mainly attacks only those who are not careful in their life. The solution for this is abstinence from sex before marriage or confinement to a single partner after marriage. Although the medium for the transmission of the virus is mainly promiscuity it can also be contracted by careless use of sharp tools such as contaminated blades and needles. We should stop these harmful practices such as removing children’s milk teeth and cutting short

children's uvula. Hence, people should be cautious of such practices. In fact, the remedy for this is to totally abandon such harmful traditional practices.

“Feed my lambs.” (Jn 21:15–17).

Annex -1

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Calendar for feasts & fasting days

Year		Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church main Feasts & Fasts in European Calendar							
Ethiopian	European	The Fast of Prophets (The Fast following Christmas)	The Fast of Nineveh	Lent	Palm Sunday	Holy Easter	Holy Pentecost	The fast of Holy Apostles	The fast of Our Lady Holy Virgin Mary (The fast of Assumption)
2004	2011/12	Nov. 25	Feb. 6	Feb. 20	April 8	April 15	June 3	June 4	Aug. 7
2005	2012/13	Nov. 24	Feb. 25	Mar.11	April 28	May 5	June 23	June 24	Aug. 7
2006	2013/14	Nov. 24	Feb. 10	Feb. 24	April 13	April 20	June 8	June 9	Aug. 7
2007	2014/15	Nov. 24	Feb. 2	Feb. 16	April 5	April 12	May 31	June 1	Aug. 7
2008	2015/16	Nov. 25	Feb. 22	Mar. 7	April 24	May 1	June 19	June 20	Aug. 7
2009	2016/17	Nov. 24	Feb. 6	Feb. 20	April 9	April 16	June 4	June 5	Aug. 7
2010	2017/18	Nov. 24	Jan. 29	Feb. 12	April 1	April 8	May 27	May 28	Aug. 7
2011	2018/19	Nov. 24	Feb. 18	Mar. 4	April 21	April 28	June 16	June 17	Aug. 7
2012	2019/20	Nov. 25	Feb. 10	Feb. 24	April 12	April 19	June 7	June 8	Aug. 7
2013	2020/21	Nov. 24	Feb. 22	Mar. 8	April 25	May 2	June 20	June 21	Aug. 7
2014	2021/22	Nov. 24	Feb. 14	Feb. 28	April 17	April 24	June 12	June 13	Aug. 7
2015	2022/23	Nov. 24	Feb. 6	Feb. 20	April 9	April 16	June 4	June 5	Aug. 7
2016	2023/24	Nov. 25	Feb. 26	Mar. 11	April 28	May 5	June 23	June 24	Aug. 7
2017	2024/25	Nov. 24	Feb. 10	Feb. 24	April 13	April 20	June 8	June 9	Aug. 7
2018	2025/26	Nov. 24	Feb. 2	Feb. 16	April 5	April 12	May 31	June 1	Aug. 7
2019	2026/27	Nov. 24	Feb. 22	Mar. 8	April 25	May 2	June 20	June 21	Aug. 7
2020	2027/28	Nov. 25	Feb. 7	Feb. 21	April 9	April 16	June 4	June 5	Aug. 7
2021	2028/29	Nov. 24	Jan. 29	Feb. 12	April 1	April 8	May 27	May 28	Aug. 7
2022	2029/30	Nov. 24	Feb. 18	Mar. 4	April 21	April 28	June 16	June 17	Aug. 7
2023	2030/31	Nov. 24	Feb. 3	Feb. 17	April 6	April 13	June 1	June 2	Aug. 7

NB.

- ❖ Fast of Prophets lasts for 45 days/44 days in the leap year
- ❖ Fast of Nineveh is for three days
- ❖ Lent lasts for 55 days
- ❖ Fast of our Lady Virgin Mary lasts for 15 days

Annex - 2

Name of the Months in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church vis-à-vis
the European Calendar

S.No.	Name of the Month in Ethiopia	European month
1.	Meskerem	September/ October
2.	Tikimit	October/November
3.	Hidar	November/December
4.	Tahesas	December/January
5.	Tir	January/February
6.	Yekatit	February/March
7.	Megabit	March/April
8.	Miazia	April/May
9.	Ginbot	May/June
10.	Sene	June/July
11.	Hamle	July/August
12.	Nehase	August/September
13.	Pagumen	September