

BELOVED

Trilogy of Love
(Part I)

SERVANTS SPIRITUAL DAY
MARCH, 2026

"We love Him because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

PROGRAM

8:00 Matins

8:30 Holy Liturgy

10:30 Check-in & Welcome

10:45 Breakfast

11:30 Icebreakers

11:45 Talk 1 - 'Beloved Before You Serve'

12:15 Workshop

1:00 Lunch

2:00 Talk 2 - 'Beloved to Serve'

2:30 Quiet Time

3:30 Explore grounds

3:45 Closing Prayer

OBJECTIVE

To provide servants with a day of spiritual renewal centred on the theme of being “Beloved” by God, exploring how this identity transforms and sustains Christian service. Through contemplation, teaching, and group discussion, servants will be invited to examine the foundations of their service and reconnect with the love of Christ that first called them. This is the first of a series named, “*Trilogy of Love*”



AIM

1. To help servants rediscover their identity as beloved children of God before they are workers in His vineyard.
2. To explore the teaching that love is the sole criterion and true foundation of all Christian service.
3. To equip servants with practical reflections on how love shapes the way they teach, and care for those they serve.
4. To create space for honest self-examination: Are we serving from love, or from habit, duty, or self-interest?
5. To send servants home renewed, with a deeper sense of purpose rooted in the love of Christ.

THEME: “BELOVED”

The theme “Beloved” is drawn from the heart of Scripture and the rich spiritual theology of our Orthodox tradition. Throughout the Bible, God addresses His people – and each of us personally – as “**Beloved.**”

Calling His people *beloved*, is not merely an endearment; it is our identity. Before we are servants, teachers, leaders, or anything else, we are the beloved of God. The word “Beloved” (agapetos in Greek) appears at Christ’s baptism (“*This is My beloved Son*” – Matthew 3:17), and it is the same love the Father extends to every servant who answers Christ’s call.



Background

Love is the sole criterion for authentic Christian service. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself declares: *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). Service that is not rooted in a living communion with Christ – no matter how busy, how organised, how well-intentioned – bears no lasting fruit, for the branch that is cut off from the vine withers. True service begins with the servant’s own encounter with God’s love, which then overflows naturally to those being served.

Man, in his essence, is an image of God who is Love. He is always hungry and thirsty to love, and desires to be loved. Outside Love, man loses his very being. No one can satisfy this thirst for love like God Himself, for He is the Creator who takes care of His beloved creatures and the origin of all love. As St Paul prays: *“That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge”* (Ephesians 3:17–19).

Christian service has two dimensions: understanding the nature of service itself, and the ongoing formation of the servant. Together these form a complete vision of what it means to serve Christ’s Church – not from obligation or ambition, but from a heart that has been captured by divine love. The early Church understood that the servant must not merely teach about Christ but bear His features through the work of the Holy Spirit.



Welcome, Beloved Servants

Today we gather in the name of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, not merely as those who serve, but as those who are first loved. Before we ever lifted a hand in service, before we prepared a lesson or led a hymn, before we spoke a single word of counsel to a young soul – God called us “Beloved.” This is not a title we earned; it is the name He gave us before the foundation of the world.

This Spiritual Day is an invitation to return to that foundational truth. In the rush of weekly service – the lesson plans, the meetings, the pastoral visits, the quiet crises that no one else sees – it is easy to forget who we are. We begin to define ourselves by what we do rather than by Whose we are. We measure our worth by attendance numbers and programme success rather than by the unchanging love of the Father who whispered over us, as He did over His Son at the Jordan:

“You are My Beloved.”

continued...

Today, we lay down our schedules. We come not to learn more techniques for better service, but to be reminded of the one thing that makes all service possible: the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Christ will come on His own and stoop over our souls, as long as He finds good intention, humility, and love. That is all He asks of us today. For a servant who has not first been transformed by love has nothing of lasting value to offer. But a servant who knows they are beloved – truly knows it, deep in the marrow of their soul – becomes a vessel through which Christ Himself touches every life they encounter.

For true service is never born from duty alone; it is born from love. And love is not something we manufacture – it is something we receive, and then pour out again. Every spiritual practice you observe, every prayer you offer, every fast you keep, every act of service you render: let it be saturated with love for the Lord. This is the one thing that transforms obligation into offering, and weariness into worship.

May this day renew your heart, deepen your calling, and draw you closer to the One who said, “If you love Me, feed My sheep.” May you leave not with more information, but with a heart set ablaze by the ancient fire of God’s love – a fire that has burned in the hearts of the saints and fathers of our Church for two thousand years, and burns still, waiting to set your service alight.

BEHOLD THE MAN



IHC
KXC

Hymns

How Lovely

How lovely it is to get together in love our Lord teaches us
When two meet in my name together
I will always be in between their gather

O Lord come now and join us here
We ask you to come and give us cheer
Fill us with joy from Your Holy Spirit
And peace no riches can provide

The Lord is here always with us
How lovely He is, how content we are,
We talk to Him and He always listens
He'll always be with us in us

O Tell Me John O Tell Me

O tell me John, O tell me, about His radiant face
And how you were so lucky, on His chest your head laid?
Please answer me and tell me, John answered and said: (2)
He called me the beloved, in His eyes I found grace,
He said Mary is your mother, I took her to my place.
His Heart is throbbing throbbing, with love for human race. (2)

Dear Peter please tell me, about the rock of faith,
And how you were appointed, a pillar in His Church?
Please answer me and tell me, Peter answered and said: (2)
Despite all my denials, His Love for me was great,
And while I was so bitter, my sins He did erase.
His heart is so forgiving, for sinners everywhere. (2)

Can you Andrew please tell me, how five small loaves of bread,
And two fish be sufficient, over five thousand fed?
Please answer me and tell me, Andrew answered and said: (2)
It's not really any figure, that means anything to THE LORD,
His prayer to THE FATHER, on a lunch willingly brought,
A boy with cheer donated, this I never have thought. (2)

And you Thomas how did you, doubt that He is raised,
When you were not believing, He appeared for your sake?
Please answer me and tell me, Thomas answered and said: (2)
I saw with my own eyes, the piercing of the nails,
The wound between His ribs, were blood and water flowed.
All His wounds and sufferings, opened the Heaven's gates. (2)



IP

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WTHP

NIKA

The RESURRECTION

OF CHRIST ❖



Contemplation - ‘The Restless Heart That Found Its Home’

From the Life and Writings of St Augustine of Hippo

“We love Him because He first loved us.”

– 1 John 4:19

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Of all the fathers of the early Church, perhaps none understood the transforming power of divine love more personally than St Augustine. Before he was a bishop, before he was a theologian, before he wrote the words that would shape Christian thought for centuries, he was a man running from God – and God was running after him.

St Augustine spent his youth chasing every form of love the world could offer. He pursued pleasure, ambition, intellectual prestige, and human relationships with a desperate hunger that nothing could satisfy. He was brilliant, restless, and deeply unhappy. He tried philosophy and found it hollow. He tried worldly success and found it empty. He gathered admirers and companions, yet felt profoundly alone. In his own words, he was a question to himself – a man who could not understand why everything he grasped turned to dust in his hands.

What St Augustine did not yet understand was that his restlessness was not a curse but a gift. It was the voice of God calling him home. Every ache of loneliness, every moment of dissatisfaction with lesser loves, was the Beloved whispering:

“You were made for more than this. You were made for Me.”

The turning point came in a garden in Milan, where St Augustine, weeping with the weight of his own brokenness, heard a child's voice singing: "Take and read, take and read." He opened the Scriptures and his eyes fell upon the words of St Paul. In that moment, the love of God – which had been pursuing him through every wrong turn, every failed relationship, every restless night – finally broke through. St Augustine did not find God; God found St Augustine. The Beloved claimed His beloved.

After his conversion, St Augustine wrote the words that have echoed through the centuries and speak directly to every servant gathered here today: ***"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."*** This is the foundation of all service. We serve not to earn God's love but because we have been found by it. Every programme we run, every child we teach, every soul we counsel – all of it must flow from a heart that has been captured and claimed by the love of God.

In his commentary on the Song of Songs, St Augustine offers a striking image: the human soul before her unity with Christ is as black as coal. But after her unity with Christ and becoming inflamed with His holy fire, she becomes hot and radiant – transformed not by her own effort but by the fire of divine love. This is the mystery of the servant's life: we come to God as coal, dark and cold, but when we abide in His love, He sets us ablaze. And a heart on fire with God's love cannot help but ignite every soul it touches.

Thomas Kempis echoes this same truth with another image: “As iron cast into fire loses its rust and becomes glowing white, so he who turns completely to God is stripped of his sluggishness and changed into a new man.” Coal into flame. Iron into radiance. The consistent testimony across the centuries is the same: God does not merely improve us – He transforms us utterly. The love of God transforms everything; it sanctifies, amends, and changes the very nature of everything.

The servant who abides in this fire no longer fears weakness, for it is God’s strength working through human frailty. When we find Christ, we are satisfied. We desire nothing else. We find peace. We become different people. We live everywhere, wherever Christ is – in the stars, in infinity, in heaven with the angels, with the saints, on earth with people. Neither melancholy, nor illness, nor pressure, nor anxiety, nor depression – for where there is love for Christ, loneliness disappears.

St Augustine also wrote: “We cannot love unless someone has loved us first.” This is the mystery at the heart of our theme today. We did not initiate this love. We did not choose God; He chose us. And it is precisely this – knowing that we are chosen, that we are beloved, that nothing in all creation can separate us from His love – that gives our service its power and its joy.

Consider your own story for a moment. Can you trace the hand of God pursuing you? Can you see, looking back, how He was present even in the seasons when you felt most distant from Him?



YOU ABANDON
NOTHING YOU
HAVE MADE,
ONLY YOU ARE
HEAR EVEN TO
THOSE WHO GO
FAR THEST
FROM YOU.

C. GODO



The love of God is not a reward for arriving at the right destination. It is the force that carried you there, even when you did not know the way.

St Augustine spent the rest of his life pouring out for others the love he had received. He became a bishop not because he sought honour, but because the love of Christ compelled him. He wrote, he preached, he counselled, he wept over the struggles of his flock. And through it all, his message was simple: love God, and everything else will find its rightful place. For the soul trained in love will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved.

Beloved servants, let the restless St Augustine remind you: if your heart feels weary today, if service has become a burden, it may be because you have drifted from the Source. Return to the garden. Take and read. Let the Beloved find you again.

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Workshop 1

The greatest danger facing any servant is to forget that they were loved before they were called. When a servant loses sight of this truth, service becomes a burden rather than a joy, a performance rather than an offering. The Scriptures are filled with moments where God interrupts the busyness of His servants to remind them of one thing: “You are Mine. I love you. That is enough.”

Thomas à Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ*, gives us one of the most beautiful meditations on this love ever written: “Love is an excellent thing, a very great blessing. It makes every difficulty easy, and bears all wrongs with equanimity. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger or higher or wider; nothing is more pleasant, nothing fuller, and nothing better in heaven or on earth, for love is born of God and cannot rest except in God, Who is above all created things.” This is the love in which every servant’s identity must be rooted – not the shifting sands of human approval, but the bedrock of God’s own nature.

St John Climacus adds: “A holy team are love and humility; the one exalts, and the other, supporting the exalted ones, never allows it to fall.” The servant rooted in love is simultaneously lifted to the heights of divine calling and kept safe by humility’s steady hand. Without love, we are crushed by our smallness. Without humility, we are ruined by our pride. Together, they form the unshakeable foundation of the servant’s identity.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” - John 15:9-17

Question 1: Jesus says “Abide in My love.” What does it practically look like for a servant to “abide” in Christ’s love during a busy week of service?

Question 2: Jesus tells the disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.” How does remembering that God chose us change the way we experience both the joys and the hardships of service?

Question 3: Can you identify a time when your service felt mechanical or lifeless? What was missing, and what helped you find your way back?

Question 4: In verse 15, Jesus elevates the disciples from “servants” to “friends.” How does this change your approach to the people you serve?

Consider the Father’s voice at the Jordan River, speaking over Jesus before He had performed a single miracle or preached a single sermon: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Father’s delight was not in what Jesus had done, but in who He was. In the same way, God’s love for you is not a reward for your faithfulness in service – it is the very ground on which your service stands.

Life without Christ is death; it is hell, not life. Life is Christ. Love is the life of Christ. Either you will be in life or in death – it is up to you to decide.

Take a moment now to be still. Let the noise of responsibilities, lesson plans, and expectations fall away. Hear God speak your name and call you “Beloved.”

Contemplation - 'The Golden Mouth That Spoke Of Love'

From the Life and Homilies of St John Chrysostom

“As heat makes things expand, so it is the work of love to expand the heart, for its power is to heat and make fervent.”

– St John Chrysostom

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They called him “Golden Mouth” – because when he spoke, the words seemed to shimmer with light. But what made St John Chrysostom’s preaching unforgettable was not eloquence alone. It was the fire of love burning behind every word. He did not speak to impress; he spoke to set hearts ablaze. In his homilies on the Gospel of St John, Chrysostom describes the beloved disciple standing on a heavenly platform, armed not with rhetoric but with the Grace of God, presenting the message of the Lord Jesus Christ to listeners whom he yearned would be transformed into angels.

St Chrysostom was raised by a widowed mother, Anthusa, who poured into him such love and faith that even the pagan philosopher Libanius remarked: “What wonderful women these Christians have.” From his earliest years, St Chrysostom learned that love is not an abstract doctrine – it is a life poured out for others. His mother’s sacrifice became the first sermon he ever heard, preached not with words but with a lifetime of self-giving.



ST. PAUL GUIDES
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

After years of monastic solitude in the mountains outside Antioch, where he nearly destroyed his health through extreme asceticism, St Chrysostom returned to the city. He had gone into the desert seeking God and found Him. But God sent him back to find Him again – this time in the faces of the poor, the sick, the forgotten, and the struggling faithful of Antioch. It was there, in the crowded streets and churches, that St Chrysostom discovered the deepest truth about love: it cannot remain hidden. Like heat, it expands. Like fire, it spreads. A heart truly touched by the love of God cannot help but pour itself out for others.

As a preacher and later as Archbishop of Constantinople, St Chrysostom was fearless in his insistence that love must be practical. He thundered against the wealthy who decorated churches with gold while ignoring the hungry at their gates. “What is the use of loading Christ’s table with golden cups,” he asked, “when He Himself is starving? Feed the hungry, and then if you have anything left over, decorate the altar.” For St Chrysostom, love was not a feeling or a sentiment – it was bread broken and shared, a coat given away, a hand extended to someone the world had discarded.

Yet for all his boldness, St Chrysostom’s heart was tender. His homilies on the letters of St Paul overflow with warmth, encouragement, and a pastor’s deep affection for his flock. He understood that people do not change because they are scolded into submission. They change because they are loved into transformation. “Nothing so much wins love,” he wrote, “as the knowledge that one’s lover desires most of all to be himself loved.”

THE KING
OF GLORY

JESUS CHRIST

ST
MARY
THE
THEOTOKOS

ST
JOHN
THE
BELOVED



God does not merely tolerate us. He longs for our love. And when we grasp this – that the God of the universe desires us – everything changes. We must become filled, replete with the Holy Spirit. This is where the essence of the spiritual life lies. Let us open our arms and throw ourselves into Christ’s embrace, like a loved one who approaches us with open arms. It is a self-giving, a surrender, a joy-filled submission to His love.

St Chrysostom’s life ended in exile, betrayed by those he had served, marched through brutal conditions by soldiers who had no regard for his failing health. His final words, spoken from a place of utter desolation, were these: “Glory be to God for all things.” Even in suffering, even when love seemed to have been defeated, the golden-mouthed preacher chose gratitude. He chose love. He chose to trust that the Beloved had not abandoned him.

Beloved servants, St Chrysostom’s life asks us a searching question: Is our love practical? Do the people we serve encounter Christ not just in our words but in our actions – in our patience when they are difficult, in our generosity when it costs us something, in our presence when they feel alone? Love is not a topic for our next Bible study. It is the very air our service must breathe.

And when service is hard – when we feel overlooked, exhausted, or even betrayed – may we echo the golden voice: “Glory be to God for all things.”

For the Beloved is with us still, even in the exile of our weariest days.

SAINT JOHN

CHRYSSOSIOMOS

SAINT OLYMPIA

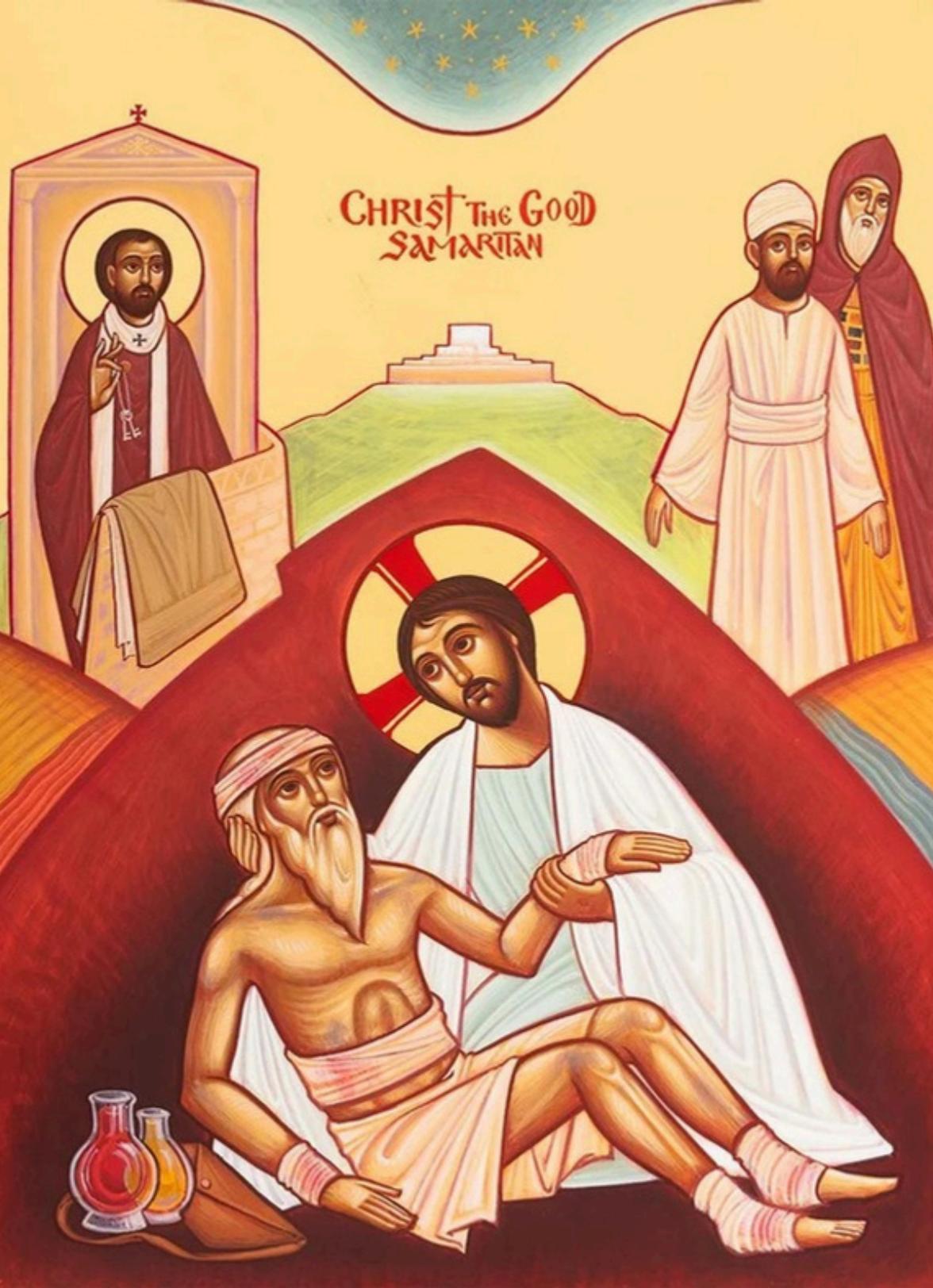
THE DEACONESS



SO RISE UP, AND EXTEND
YOUR HAND TO ME, THAT I
MAY NOT BE DISPILED, THAT
YOU SEE WEEPING,
BY RATHER, THAT YOU
ARE LIVING IN SE-
YOUR HAND TO ME,
THAT I DESIRE, THAT YOU
SEE WEEPING,

RENY & JOY...

CHRIST THE GOOD
SAMARITAN



Contemplation - 'The Pillar Of Faith Who Guarded The Beloved'

From the Life and Theology of St Cryril of Alexandria
"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have
everlasting life."

— John 3:16

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In the fifth century, when the very identity of Christ was under threat, God raised up a champion from the land of Egypt – St Cyril of Alexandria, the Pillar of Faith. He is remembered as a fierce defender of Orthodox doctrine, but beneath his theological brilliance beat a heart consumed by one truth: God became man because He loved us too much to leave us in our brokenness.

St Cyril understood something that every servant must grasp: **Theology is not an intellectual exercise. It is a love story.** When he fought to preserve the truth that Jesus Christ is one Person – fully God and fully man, united without confusion or separation – he was not fighting over words. He was fighting for the reality of God's love. For if God did not truly become one of us, then He has not truly reached us. If the Word did not truly take flesh, then love remained at a distance, and salvation was an illusion. St Cyril understood that the features of the Divine Nature exceed our understanding and comprehension, yet **through the Incarnation, God made His unfathomable love accessible to every human heart.**



ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

As St John Climacus declares: “God is love. So he who wishes to define this, tries with bleary eyes to measure the sand in the ocean.” St Cyril spent his life not trying to measure that love, but defending its reality so that every soul might plunge into its depths.

But St Cyril proclaimed what the Church has always believed: that in the Incarnation, the Beloved crossed every boundary to reach His beloved. The infinite God became a tiny infant. The Almighty took on our weakness. The Immortal embraced mortality. Why? Not because He was obligated, not because we deserved it, but because love cannot bear to be separated from the one it loves.

For St Cyril, the Incarnation was not merely a historical event but a living reality that shapes every moment of the Christian life. When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we receive Christ Himself – the same Word who took flesh from the Virgin Mary. When we serve others, we serve in the power of the same love that drove God to become man. St Cyril of Jerusalem, in words that the Alexandrian tradition embraces, teaches that through baptism, the believer meets the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom, puts on the new man, and enjoys the divine kingdom. ***The soul puts on Christ as a white robe for the wedding, wearing Him as her righteousness and the source of her holiness.***

The Incarnation tells us that God does not love us from a safe distance. He enters our mess, our pain, our confusion, our daily struggles. He sits beside us in the classroom, stands with us in the meeting, walks with us to the hospital visit.

The Beloved is never absent.

St Cyril's commentary on the Gospel of St John is filled with breathtaking reflections on divine love. He writes that when Christ washed the disciples' feet, He was showing us the shape of love – not lordship from above, but service from below. The Creator of the universe knelt before fishermen and tax collectors, took a towel and a basin, and performed the work of the lowest household servant. ***This is the love that must animate every act of our service. Not love that condescends, but love that kneels.***

St Cyril also understood that defending the truth is itself an act of love. If we teach a diminished Christ, we offer a diminished love. If we present a God who did not truly come near, we rob our people of the God who is near. Beloved servants, the people we serve deserve the full, undiminished, world-shattering love of the Incarnate God.

As servants, we stand in the spiritual lineage of St Cyril. His faith is our confession. And his conviction must be our own: that the God we serve is not distant, not indifferent, not waiting for us to perform to earn His attention. He is Emmanuel – God with us – the Beloved who crossed the infinite divide to hold us close.

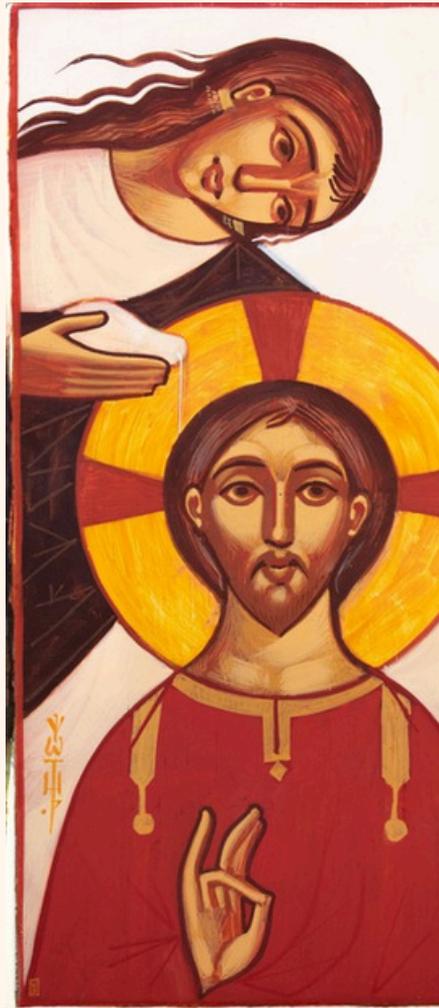
All things in creation are little loves through which we attain the great Love that is Christ. Flowers, for example, teach us of the love of God. They scatter their fragrance and their beauty on sinners and on the righteous alike. In the same way, a servant who truly grasps the Incarnation scatters the fragrance of Christ's love on all whom they serve, without partiality. Let this truth fuel your service today and every day.

Quiet Time

The true test of a servant is not eloquence or knowledge but whether the people they serve encounter the living Christ through them. The servant's life must itself become the lesson. As St Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2). The servant is a living letter of Christ's love.

Consider the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume. She did not give a lecture or lead a programme. She simply poured out what was most precious to her, and the fragrance filled the entire room. **This is the image of authentic service: love so real, so costly, so freely given that its fragrance touches everyone present.**

St John Chrysostom teaches that **nothing wins love so effectively as knowing that the One who loves us desires most of all to be loved in return.** God does not merely tolerate us – He longs for our love. When we grasp this, everything changes.



St John Climacus, at the summit of his Ladder, describes what this overflowing love looks like in the soul that has truly received it: “Love bestows prophecy; love yields miracles; love is an abyss of illumination; love is a fountain of fire – in the measure that it bubbles up, it inflames the thirsty soul. Love is the state of angels. Love is the progress of eternity.” The servant who pours out love is not depleted by giving – for the more love is poured out, the more it is renewed from its divine source.

Prayer for others, made gently and with deep love, is selfless and has great spiritual benefit. It brings grace both to the one who prays and to the one being prayed for. When you have great love and this love moves you to prayer, waves of love are transmitted and you create around the other person a shield of protection. You influence them, leading them toward what is good. And when God sees your efforts, He bestows His grace abundantly on both you and on those you pray for. This is the hidden power behind every faithful servant’s ministry.

Ask yourself honestly: When I serve, what fragrance do I leave behind? Is it the sweetness of Christ’s love, or the staleness of routine and obligation?

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”
- *1 Corinthians 13:1-8*

“Love suffers long and is kind.” Where is God calling you to greater patience and kindness in your service? What makes this difficult?

ΠΧϞ
ΠΗΑΝΕϞΥ

ΕΘΝΑΝΕΑ

"BELOVED" - Servants Spiritual Day, March 2026



Contemplation - 'A Love Poured Out to the Last Drop'

In Honour of the Feast of the Hegumen, Fr Pishoy Kamel
(1931-1979) – Recognised as a Saint by the Holy Synod, June 2022

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

– John 15:13

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If you want to see what it looks like when a human life becomes a living sermon on love, look no further than the Hegumen Fr Pishoy Kamel of Alexandria. He did not write lengthy treatises on the theology of love. He did something far more difficult and far more beautiful: he lived it, completely and without reserve, until there was nothing left to give. His fellow priest and close friend Fr Tadros Malaty, who met him as “Sami Kamel” during their university days in Alexandria in 1953, testified that from their very first meeting, Samy Kamel was characterised by “an open, loving heart with wisdom, accompanied by a simple life” – a personality attractive to believers and unbelievers alike.

Samy Kamel was a young science professor in Alexandria when Pope Kyrillos VI, in a moment of divine inspiration, laid his hand on a man he had never met and declared him chosen for the priesthood. Samy had not sought this calling. He had not applied or campaigned. He was simply going about his life when the Beloved interrupted it. And from that moment, Fr Pishoy understood something that would define his entire ministry: he did not choose this path. God chose him. He was beloved before he was a servant.



ST PISHOY KAMEL

What followed was a life of service so extravagant, so self-emptying, that those who witnessed it could only describe it as Christ walking among them again. Fr Pishoy founded churches across Alexandria and helped establish Coptic congregations as far away as Los Angeles and New Jersey. But he was not a builder of buildings. He was a builder of souls. Every person who came to him – whether a struggling youth, a grieving widow, a confused intellectual, or a wayward sheep about to abandon the faith – encountered not a priest performing his duties, but a father whose heart physically ached with love for them.

His love was never abstract. When a young servant needed books for a new parish bookshop, Fr Pishoy gave away his own church's entire stock without hesitation, asking only: "How much can you carry?" When a young man, exhausted from physical labour, came to him discouraged, Fr Pishoy did not offer platitudes. He helped him see Christ in his suffering, transforming an ordinary workday into a moment of sacred communion. For him, there was no separation between the life of faith and the life of daily struggle. Every moment was an opportunity for love.

He loved those he served so deeply that their pain became his own. When he heard that a soul was drifting from the faith, his heart broke. He would pursue that lost sheep with everything he had, pouring himself out as a sacrifice, just as Christ did. This was not professional pastoral care. This was a father's love – fierce, tender, relentless, and completely unconcerned with self-preservation.

And then came the cancer. In 1976, Fr Pishoy was diagnosed with the illness that would take his life three years later. What happened during those final years is perhaps the most powerful testimony to the theme of our Spiritual Day. Many people found greater comfort visiting him in his sickness than they had received in years of sermons. Fr Tadros Malaty wrote of those days: “God had hidden from his eyes the power of his service during his sickness. Many people found comfort in their sickness or troubles merely seeing him in pain or hearing about his patience and joy!” Fr Tadros recorded these memories not to praise – “for with heaven and its glory you are in no need of the earthly” – but because they represent “a living image of dedicated pastoral work and the constitution of faithful spiritual service.”

He slept on a thin cotton mattress on the floor. He fasted strictly even as his body wasted. He never sought praise and genuinely wondered why people loved him so much. When he could no longer stand to preach, his very presence preached. When he could no longer visit the sick, his sickbed became the most powerful pulpit in Alexandria. He taught that the Cross should be a daily desire, not a punishment to endure. He would say “***Carrying the Cross is carrying the Throne of our King.***”

A person can become a saint anywhere – at your work, whatever it may be, through meekness, patience, and love. Make a new start every day, with new resolution, with enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence – not with anxiety. This was Fr Pishoy’s way: each morning a fresh beginning, each encounter a new opportunity for Christ to love through him.



ST. PISHOY KAMEL

Thomas Kempis, centuries earlier, had written the same truth: “If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry and lead you to the desired goal.” Fr Pishoy did not merely endure his cross – he embraced it as the royal road of love. And the Cross, in return, carried him into a radiance that no amount of health or activity could have produced.

Fr Pishoy departed on 21 March 1979 – two days after the Feast of the Cross – as if God Himself was writing the final chapter: this servant, who had carried the cross with joy his entire life, was now risen on the third day into eternal glory. In the days following his departure, Fr Tadros wrote to him: “I can’t say that you have left your church and that you do not stand with us at God’s altar, at which you were ordained. I can’t say that your people have lost your care and strive for their salvation. Today you are closer to your church’s altar and your people than before.”

His wife, Tasoni Angel, honoured the last words he spoke to her: “Never stop serving.” She served faithfully for forty more years, departing on 24 November 2019 – their sixtieth wedding anniversary. Two lives, one love, poured out completely.

In the desert of Scetis, a spiritual father once wrote to his monks:

“We should always feel that we are sojourners, pilgrims seeking our eternal homeland. This feeling should not vanish from our heart, mind, or body for a single moment. We should cherish it both inwardly and outwardly, lest we inadvertently forget the state of our exile, an exile in which we feed on the inextinguishable love of God.”

Whoever wants to become a Christian must first become a poet.
You must love and suffer – suffer for the One you love.

*Love makes effort for the loved one.;
Love runs all through the night;
Love stays awake;
Love stains its feet with blood in order to meet her beloved.*

**Love towards Christ is something that is so much more,
so infinitely higher... deeper.**

Contemplation - 'The Sojourner's Heart'

On the Inextinguishable Fire of Love That Sustains the Servant

“Have you seen the one I love?”

– Song of Songs 3:3



There is a question that runs like a golden thread through the whole of Scripture, from the garden of Eden to the last page of Revelation. It is not a question of doctrine or duty. It is the question of the searching soul: **“Have you seen the One I love?”** The bride in the Song of Songs asks it of the watchmen as she wanders the streets at night, and every servant gathered here today must ask it of themselves. For if we have lost sight of the Beloved, all our service – however impressive, however busy, however organised, however established – is the restless wandering of a distressed heart that has forgotten its way home.

Ask yourself. **What is the extent of your love for God?** How deep is it? Are all the spiritual practices that you observe saturated with love for the Lord? Are your prayers filled with love? **Do you fast out of love for the Lord?** Does your reading of the Bible abound with love? Are your prostrations and kneeling done with true love and submission to Him? Have you truly come to know God? Have you become His friend and spent time with Him? Have you lived with Him and experienced His existence in your life? These questions are not meant to crush you with guilt, they are meant to awaken you – to stir the embers of a fire that may have been banked beneath the darkened ashes of routine.



For the truth is this: ***the servant of Christ Jesus is indeed a sojourner.*** We are pilgrims seeking our eternal homeland. This feeling should not vanish from our heart, mind, or body for a single moment. We should cherish it both inwardly and outwardly, lest we inadvertently forget the state of our exile – an exile in which we feed on the inextinguishable love of God. The servant who forgets that they are a sojourner begins to settle. They put down roots in the soil of routine, and ***routine slowly hardens into obligation, and obligation into resentment.*** But the servant who remembers – who keeps the ache of longing alive in their heart – that servant walks through the world with a lightness that nothing can weigh down, because their treasure is not here. Their treasure is the ***Beloved*** Himself.

And what is this inextinguishable love?

Earthly fire yields to water; but love, when it burns in truth within the heart, becomes an unquenchable flame. Neither the wound of contempt, nor the chill of indifference, nor the burden of humiliation, nor the sting of hostility, nor the sorrow of disdain can silence it; for true love suffers, endures, and yet still gives light, for it burns with a flame that is of God, and what is of God no darkness can overcome.

Even if all these bitter passions were lodged in an enemy's heart and death itself was embodied in a hostile person, even this would not quench love. This is no poetic exaggeration – but a living witness of every saint and every faithful servant who has walked this road before you.

ΠΙΤΤΑΝΤΟ

ΚΡΑΤΩΡ



Think of the martyrs, the confessors, the mothers who prayed through decades of heartbreak for a wayward child. Think of the servants who returned week after week to a classroom of indifferent faces and loved them still. What sustained them? Not willpower. Not a sense of duty. But a fire within that no amount of cold could extinguish – the fire of divine love itself, burning in a human heart.

But how does one tend this fire? How does the busy servant, stretched between lesson preparation and pastoral visits, between family obligations and church meetings, keep the flame alive?

The answer is not to add more activities to an already crowded schedule. The answer is simpler and more demanding than that:

Whoever wants to become a true Christian must first become a poet. You must love and suffer – suffer for the One you love. Not the suffering of forced labour, but the willing suffering of a heart so consumed by love that it cannot bear to be separated from its Beloved, even for a moment.

Love defies measurement because it comes from the One who is infinite. And yet – and this is the great paradox of the Christian life – this immeasurable love makes its home in the smallest and most fragile of vessels. It dwells in your heart, beloved servant, if only you will open the door.

In your spiritual life, engage in your daily contest simply, easily, and without force. The soul is sanctified and purified through the study of the Fathers, through the memorisation of the psalms and of portions

of Scripture, through the singing of hymns, through the quiet repetition of the Jesus Prayer. These are not items on a checklist. They are the breath of the sojourner – the air that keeps the fire burning.

And when the fire seems to have gone out? When the servant sits in the ashes of burnout, wondering whether any of it ever mattered?

Here is where the witness of the faithful is most consoling. However weak your spiritual life may be, do not despair. **Desperation is one of the enemy's weapons by which he seeks to weaken your resolve and stop your resistance.** Even if you despair of yourself, never despair of the grace of God. If your own efforts do not lead you to repentance, God's work for you will. He wants only one step from you. Take it, and He will lead you to the next. Make a new start every day, with new resolution, with enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence – not with anxiety. For Christ will come on His own and stoop over your soul.

Sometimes the hearts of people are hard and stiff and cannot be entered quickly or easily. If you have tried hard to earn the hearts of people and could not, do not be upset. If you have entered a person's heart and did not find the same level of love, do not be sad – for this happened to Christ, and He is the source of love, and He continued treating people with love.

The servant who understands this is free. Free from the need for results. Free from the tyranny of metrics and attendance numbers. Free to love without return, because **love itself is its own reward – for it comes from God and returns to God, and nothing in the circuit is wasted.**

St John Climacus gives the servant one final image to carry in their heart: “Repentance is the daughter of hope and the denial of despair. The penitent is an undisgraced convict. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord.” If you have wandered from the fire, you have not been expelled from it. You need only turn around. Repentance raises the fallen. With humility you attract the grace of God. You surrender yourself to the love of God.

The door was never locked. The Beloved was never far. He was waiting, all along, on the other side of your turning.

Beloved servants, we are sojourners. This world, with all its beauty and all its pain, is not our final home. Our homeland is the heart of God. And the road that leads there is not paved with achievements or accomplishments. It is paved with love – the small, daily, unremarkable loves that, when gathered together, form the great Love that carries you home. Every kind word spoken to a struggling child. Every prayer whispered for a soul you will never see again. Every moment of patience when your own heart was breaking. These are the cobblestones of the pilgrim’s road. And at the end of that road, you will hear the voice you have been longing for since before you were born: **“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”**

Until that day, walk on. Keep the fire burning – and never forget: you are not walking alone. The cloud of witnesses surrounds you – St Mary, St Mina, St Augustine, St Chrysostom, St Cyril, Fr Pishoy Kamel, they all walked this road before you. They kept the fire alive – they are cheering you on, **beloved sojourner**, all the way to our heavenly home.

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Closing Message

Go Forth, Beloved



Beloved servants, we have walked together today through a landscape of love. We have sat with the fathers of our faith – with St Augustine, who taught us that our hearts are restless until they rest in God; with St John Chrysostom, who showed us that love must expand the heart and overflow into action; with St Cyril of Alexandria, who reminded us that God loved us so fiercely that He crossed the infinite divide to become one of us; and with the saintly Fr Pishoy Kamel, whose life was a living gospel of love poured out to the very last drop.

Through their witness and the witness of the Church Fathers who illumine our path, we have tasted something of the width, length, depth, and height of divine love – dimensions that cannot be expressed in words or letters, nor measured by any standard. Even the movements of the heart could drown in the depths of this love and become drunk, losing control and awareness.

Christ is our friend, He is our Creator, He is whatever is beautiful and good. He is everything. But most of all He is our friend, and He cries out to each of us: “I love you. I want you to enjoy life with Me.”

Here is what we pray you carry: the unshakeable knowledge that you are loved. Not because you are useful. Not because you are talented. Not because you show up every Sunday without fail. Not because you have sacrificed your time, your energy, your Friday evenings and your Saturday mornings. You are loved because you are His. You were loved before you ever lifted a hand in service, and you will be loved long after your service on this earth is done. This is not a truth that depends on your feelings. It does not waver when you are tired. It is the bedrock beneath your feet, the ground that holds you even when everything else shakes.

The saints we have contemplated today were not superhuman. St Augustine was a broken man who spent years running from God. St Chrysostom was exiled and died in desolation. St Cyril faced fierce opposition and painful controversy. Fr Pishoy Kamel suffered agonising illness and died young. What made them extraordinary was not the absence of suffering but the presence of love. They allowed God's love to reach them in their brokenness, and from that brokenness, rivers of living water flowed to the world.

And with humility you attract the grace of God. You surrender yourself to the love of God, to worship and to prayer. It is love and humility together that carry us home – into the heart of the prayer our Lord prayed for us on the night He was betrayed:

“That they may be one” (John 17:11, 22).

This is the final destination of all love, all service, all sacrifice – the unity of the beloved in the Beloved, gathered into the embrace of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

We do not leave with an answer. We leave with a question – one that is not meant to be resolved today, but to burn quietly within us, the way a censer fills a room long after the liturgy has ended:

If this truth descended from your mind into the marrow of your being – that before you ever opened a Bible to teach, before you ever stood before a class, before you ever gave a single hour of your life in service – our Lord God, our Heavenly Father, had already looked upon you and whispered:

“You are My Beloved”

How would that change the way you walk into your service tomorrow?

How would it change the way you speak? The way you listen?

The way you carry the weight of what is asked of you?

The way you approach God when you stumble – not as a servant afraid of his master, but as a beloved child running back into the arms of a

Father who never stopped waiting?

And the way you extend that same mercy to those who wound you – forgiving as you have been forgiven?

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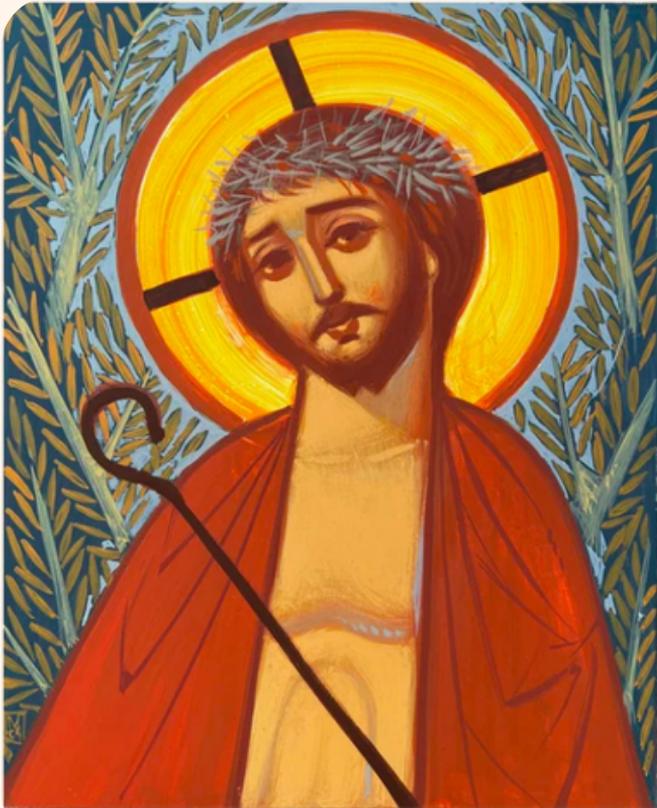
Go in peace, Beloved. Go in love.

The One who called you will sustain you.

The One who loved you first will love you to the end.

And His love never fails.

The servant who has not yet been *wounded* by
this love has not yet begun the journey of the
Beloved.



A Word for the Road

Carry these words with you beyond this day.



St Augustine, after a lifetime of searching for love in every wrong place, finally found the One his heart had always sought. And this is what he told us: “If nothing were said in praise of love throughout the pages of Scripture – if nothing whatever throughout all the other pages – and this one only thing were all we were told by the voice of the Spirit of God:

‘God is Love’ – nothing more ought we to require.”

Nothing more ought we to require. And yet we do require more – not because love is insufficient, but because we are forgetful. So the fathers speak again and again, in every generation, the same word in a thousand different ways, hoping that this time it will lodge not just in the mind but in the marrow of the bone.

St John Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth, once told his congregation in Constantinople: “He is the true Lord, who seeks nothing from us. And yet – woe to us if we seek not Him!”

Think on this, beloved servant. The God who needs nothing from you has chosen to need you.

He who sustains the universe by the word of His power has entrusted a portion of that universe – a child, a family, a congregation – into your trembling, imperfect, beloved hands.

St John Climacus, from his monastery on the holy mountain of Sinai, wrote: “Love is a fountain of fire – in the measure that it bubbles up, it inflames the thirsty soul.” You are that thirsty soul. And you are also that fountain. For God has placed His fire in you so that others might come and be warmed. Do not hoard the flame. Do not hide it beneath the ashes of exhaustion or discouragement. Let it burn. Let it be seen.

The world is cold, and the children of God are shivering, and they need the warmth that only a heart set ablaze by divine love can give.

From the Egyptian desert, a spiritual father wrote to those who served God in exile: “He who is governed by divine love is elevated above the world and all its turmoil and anxiety. He can penetrate the darkness of this age as an arrow of light that no darkness can overtake.” You are that arrow. Not because you are strong, but because the Love that governs you is stronger than any darkness you will ever face.

Beloved, let charity within have no intermission. Let the offices of charity be exhibited according to the time. Now this, now that. These things are taken in hand, and they stop.

But love – the love that commands all the forces within – neither has beginning nor ought to stop.



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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

By the grace of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the prayers of our beloved Church Fathers, this booklet was prepared as part of the *BELOVED* Servants Spiritual Day (Mulgoa), 2026 - to serve as a small offering for the edification of the servants of the Church and as part of the Continuous Spiritual Program (CSP).

The content, reflections and writings contained within draw from the rich wellspring of Coptic Orthodox teaching—the Holy Scriptures, the lives of the saints, the wisdom of the Early Church Fathers, and the tradition of sacrificial service. It reflects the call to shine not with our own light, but with the light of Christ, through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and love.

We pray that it has been a source of spiritual encouragement and renewal. May the Lord who began this good work in you perfect it, strengthen your journey, sanctify your service, and grant you to shine with His light, bearing the fruit of the Spirit in all things.

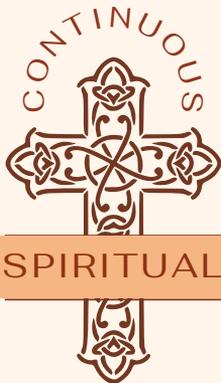
To God be all glory, honour, and worship, now and forevermore. Amen.



**“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”**

– Jeremiah 31:3

*Go now, beloved sojourner. You are loved. You are called. You are sent.
And the One who sends you will never leave you.*



PROGRAM
(CSP)