

Holy 50 Days

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2025-06-01: 6th Sunday - I have overcome the world

Salutation

We celebrate today three Feasts of the Lord and you can see the icons for them

Blessed Feast to you all

Background

The Church arranges for us the readings of the Holy 50 Days about our new life in the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead. The Lord Jesus in His incarnation, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension, did all of this for our sake. In order to give us a new life - a life free from the slavery of sin, slavery to the world, and slavery to Satan. A life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- In the 1st week, the Lord confirms the faith of the disciples and reveals to them with Thomas, His Resurrection
- In the 2nd week, the Lord tells us I am the Bread of Life - he who eats shall never hunger
- In the 3rd week, the Lord is the One who gives us the everlasting water - the Holy Spirit - he who drinks shall never thirst
- In the 4th week, I am the Light of the World - that whoever believes in Him shall not abide in darkness
- In the 5th week, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life - that through Him we go to the Father.
- So in this new life, we will not hunger or thirst, we will abide in Light, we are united to the Lord Jesus and through Him come to the Father.
- Then, this past week on Thursday, we celebrated the Feast of the Ascension. Abouna gave us three points last night about the Ascension and why the Lord ascended.

Introduction

Now it is the 6th Sunday and the gospel ended with the Lord telling His disciples: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

These verses are actually the end of the final discourse the Lord has with His disciples. After the Lord washed the feet of the disciples, and they ate the Last Supper, the Lord starts to speak to them and tell them about the Father, and about the Holy Spirit. He gives them warnings of what is to come - "the world will hate you but it hated Me first" - "they will put you out of the synagogues" - "they will kill you" - and He gives them a message of hope that they will have joy.

The conclusion of this whole message is the verse that we ended with today: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Tribulations

We will have tribulations. That's guaranteed. And they will take different forms:

- I might be rejected from a job or an internship or a specific school
- I might have financial trouble
- I might get in arguments with my spouse
- I might have children that are straying away, or who don't listen
- I might have parents who don't understand me
- I might get sick
- I might have a sick family member
- I might struggle with a sin
- I might struggle with an addiction - to drugs or alcohol, to social media, to my phone, to pornography, etc.
- I might struggle to make friends
- I might have friends that take me down a wrong path
- I might be persecuted
 - Many of us think the time of persecution is over... that was something that happened in the old days a thousand or two thousand years ago. Or we think the place of persecution is far away - now we are in the USA with freedom of religion, and modern Western Society... When we think of tribulations, sometimes we think of the stories of the martyrs: the tortures, the rulers who tried to tempt them. Or we may think of more modern history of the tribulations faced in Islamic countries: not able to practice your faith freely, or having limitations in social life because of your faith.
 - But we have persecutions in this country and in this day and age. If I'm not conforming to the ideologies of the world - homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, marijuana, sports gambling... I may be discriminated against, or I may be called extremist or homophobic or transphobic or anti-women or any other such names. This is the modern day persecution, and it is one of the tribulations we WILL face.
- I might have easy access to sin
 - It used to be difficult to cheat, not worth the effort - now I can just type my class prompt in ChatGPT and be done with the assignment, and I think no one will notice.
 - It used to be difficult to gamble, especially if you are underage - now I can just download an app on my phone.
 - It used to be difficult to look at explicit media - now it's in every Movie, TV Show, Advertisement and App.
 - It used to be difficult to get into drug use - now it's handed out in schools by peers.
 - This easy access to sin in our modern society is one of the tribulations that we face.

All of these tribulations and many more might come upon me. And the Lord told us "In the world you will have tribulation." These tribulations come to those who are Christians (believers) and also to those who are non-believers. But what is different is HOW we deal with those tribulations.

The Lord told us today: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"

His Victory is My Victory

I have overcome the world - I have triumphed - I am victorious.

But what does that mean? In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Imagine if a teacher went to his students and said "look, the exam is very very hard... but don't worry, be of good cheer, I passed the exam." What might the student say? Okay you passed the exam... so what? I'm the one who has to take it, how does that help me?

The answer comes to us in today's Pauline Epistle. The first verse in the Pauline Epistle today: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

When the Lord says "I have overcome the world" - "I have victory over the world" - we can take that to be our victory, as St Paul told us. When the Lord Jesus Christ conquers, then WE conquer - because we are IN the Lord Jesus Christ. We are UNITED with the Lord Jesus Christ. We ABIDE in Him and He in us.

In the last five weeks, we had message about our new life in Christ and today we see what that means. His victory is our victory.

How do we abide in Him? How do we unite with Him?

In the Sacraments

- In Baptism, we "take off the old man and put on the new and superior one" () - St Paul says (Ephesians 4) And we are putting on Christ (Romans 13)
- In Confirmation, we receive His Spirit to dwell in us
- In Repentance & Confession, we are transformed and renewed and our sins are forgiven
- In the Eucharist, we eat His Body and His Blood and we "abide in Him and He in us."

In a Personal Relationship with Him

- In Prayer
 - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)
 - Prayer is the relationship with God
- In Scripture
 - "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17)
 - "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you."

So when we live the sacramental life, and strive in our spiritual life - prayer, scripture, fasting, prostrations, spiritual books, spiritual canon; we are united with the Lord, we abide in Him and He in us, and in this way, we share in His victory, and we can overcome the world.

That in Me you may have peace

"These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace." (John 16:33)

This is a very important concept - that in Me you may have peace. Overcome the tribulation doesn't mean that it will end. The tribulation may never end. It might - but it might not.

But at the very least, the Lord wants us to have peace in tribulation. And He spoke these words to the disciples, in order that they would have peace when the tribulation came (of His death and waiting for His Resurrection).

So how does the Lord equip us to overcome tribulation? How does the Lord equip us to endure tribulation when we have His peace?

We'll discuss 4 points

1. The Lord Gives Us His Joy

One of the ways that the Lord equips us to overcome tribulation is by giving us His Joy.

In the Catholic Epistle today, St Peter writes "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (1 Peter 1:6)

We read in Nehemiah that "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

The person who has the joy of the Lord, is strong and is able to conquer. You meet some people like that who are always joyful despite anything that's going on.

We remember when St Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi and not just imprisoned, but they were beaten with rods and laid with stripes and then their feet were put in stocks (see image). What do we read in the Book of Acts?

- ²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

Despite their tortures and beatings, Paul and Silas had peace. And they overcame their tribulation by praying and singing hymns. They were joyful! They were not complaining, they were not afraid - and when their chains were loosened and the door opened, they didn't run out and try to escape. No, they had peace. Actually, the one who didn't have peace was the jailer - and he was going to kill himself. But they comforted him and he asked what must I do to be saved, and he was saved.

So because of the peace of Christ, they overcame the tribulation. They were not weighed down by being in prison, or dismayed, or afraid. But they were in peace.

Maybe, for example, I am struggling with a family member who is ill. Let me put it my struggle in the hands of the Lord, and as I live the sacramental life and continue in my spiritual life, and pray and sing hymns with joy, the Lord will give me peace to endure and overcome the tribulation.

2. The Lord Gives Us Purpose

One of the ways that the Lord equips us to overcome tribulation is by giving us Purpose. God is the One who created us, so He is the only One who can give us Purpose.

We remember the story of the righteous Joseph in the Book of Genesis. Joseph is thrown in a pit and then sold to slavery by his brothers. Then he is falsely accused in Potiphar's house and sent to jail for several years. Finally he comes out of jail and interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and we know the rest of the story. He becomes second in command over all of Egypt. His brothers, feeling guilty, were afraid that he would retaliate against them - and this is a tribulation. But Joseph understood his purpose. He said to them: "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

He understood how God had used his tribulation for the safety of his family, and all the land of Egypt and the surrounding lands. He understood how God was using him.

Have you heard about Nick Vujicic? He was born without arms and legs. But we don't see him in despair, we don't see him complaining about his arms or legs. But the tribulation gave him a sense of purpose - he can walk, swim, answer the phone, type and do many things and he goes around preaching Christianity to people. He goes around speaking out against the ideologies of the world like abortion. And he has overcome the tribulation. Did his arms and legs grow back? No, but he overcomes the tribulation with his sense of purpose.

We read in Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The Lord may reveal to us His will, our purpose through a tribulation, and this will give us peace to overcome the tribulation.

3. The Lord Gives Us Faith & Hope

In the Catholic Epistle today, St Peter writes "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Christ." (1 Peter 1:6)

We remember the story of Abraham - Abraham suffered much tribulation in his life. For a long time, he and Sarah his wife were not able to bear children, but the Lord made a covenant with him that he would have descendants like the stars of heaven. And it was 30 years after that, that he had Isaac. So he endured this tribulation for 30 years. How? Faith. Faith and hope in the promises of God.

Then finally after Isaac is born, the Lord gives Abraham another tribulation - take your son Isaac, your only son whom you love, and offer him up to me as a burnt offering on the mountain of which I tell you. How did Abraham endure this tribulation? How did he take his son and go on a three day journey knowing where he was going and what he was going to do there? Again, with faith. St Paul tells us: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Abraham had faith that God would raise Isaac from the dead. And this faith is what allowed him to endure the tribulation.

When there is a tribulation that is out of my hands completely - an illness, a natural disaster, etc. then I have no choice but to have faith in the Lord and in His wisdom and to pray that His will be done. The Lord gives me faith as a way to overcome tribulation. And by faith, I will have peace.

4. The Lord Gives Us Repentance

Finally, the Lord gives us repentance. I can overcome tribulation by repentance. Throughout the Old Testament, we saw this happening with Israel - they reject God, they are taken under tribulation by another nation, they repent, God delivers them. It's a cycle in the Book of Judges and throughout the books of the Kings.

An example of this repentance is King Manasseh. King Manasseh was one of the very evil kings, he did not walk in the way of his father the righteous King Hezekiah. He undid all of the good things his father had done - he built idols and altars for Baal and every evil thing that could have been done.

So the Lord brought a tribulation on Manasseh - the Assyrians came and they took him with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters and carried him captive to Babylon.

"Now when Manasseh was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God." (2 Chronicles 33:12-13)

How did Manasseh endure the temptation of being in captivity? By repentance. And when he repented of all his sin, then he found peace and the scripture says "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God."

One of the ways to overcome tribulation in the world is by living a life of repentance.

Some tribulations are a direct result of our own sin - self-inflicted suffering. If I am trapped in a habit, a lifestyle, a relationship or a friendship that is keeping me far from God. The simple way out is repentance.

Other times, we might be facing a tribulation and we don't realize that God is trying to get my attention! I might say "I can't find a job!" and that's a real tribulation. But maybe at the same time,

I am involved in a relationship that I know is not blessed. Maybe the Lord is using the tribulation of the job to guide me out of the sin of the relationship. Maybe the Lord is waiting for my repentance to deliver me.

There is no blessing in living a life of sin. And there is no peace without repentance.

If I choose to live the life of repentance, then I will be reconciled with God and I will have the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will be able to endure and overcome the tribulations.

Summary

The Lord said to us today "In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When we live a Sacramental Life, a life of Prayer, and a life of reading the Scripture, then we will be united with the Lord, abiding in Him. And so His victory over the world becomes our victory.

Being united with Him will give us peace. He equips us with joy, purpose, faith, and repentance to **overcome the world**.

Concluding Prayer

May the Lord grant us to have peace in Him and to "be of good cheer" in the joy of His Glorious Resurrection and His Ascension into the Heavens, and may we conquer the tribulations of this world with Him, in Him and through Him.

Glory be to God, forever. Amen.

2026-05-10: 4th Sunday - Reading the Scripture

Introduction

Christ is Risen!

Good morning, dear beloved, blessed Holy 50 Days as we continue to celebrate the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord.

During these Holy 50 Days, the Church arranges for most of the Liturgy Gospel readings to be from the Gospel of John - even on the weekdays and Saturdays. And on Sundays, the Church takes us on a journey.

1. 1st Sunday: Thomas Sunday, the Lord confirms our faith
2. 2nd Sunday: He is the Bread of Life; He gives us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink for salvation and remission of sins.
3. 3rd Sunday: Samaritan Woman, He gives us the Living Water which is the Holy Spirit
4. 4th Sunday: He is the Light of the World
5. 5th Sunday: He is the Way the Truth and the Life
6. 6th Sunday: He has overcome the world, so we are joyful
7. 7th Sunday: He sends us His Spirit to dwell in us, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth

Background

Today the Church is speaking to us about Christ, the Light of the World

And since He is the Light of the World, so He came to enlighten our minds, our hearts and our understandings (1st Hour).

Light:

- Overcomes darkness and confusion
- Wisdom - when you say someone is "enlightened" what does that mean? That they have some knowledge, some wisdom
- Shows the right path

And the light is the Word of God.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

The Word of God:

- Comforts me when I abide in it
- Is a weapon, sharper than a two-edged sword; a weapon used in our warfare against the devil
- Gives us the heavenly mind
- Gives me the sound doctrine
- Gives me enlightenment
- Gives me guidance
- Teaches me the fear of God

Unfortunately, we don't give the Word of God its due. We:

- Read it quickly
- Read it without understanding
- Read it just as a routine

If I ask any group of youth to recite the verses they know, or to list the minor prophets, or tell me the theme of one of the books, or to give me the map of the Gospels... very rare. When we have a Bible Study, we have low attendance. When we hear confessions - most of the time there is a struggle with reading the Scripture. And unfortunately, because we don't know the Scripture, so many fall away from God and from the Church in their youth...

St Augustine, before he was "saint" Augustine, lived a life of confusion and sin. He was with the wrong crowds, he was confused by the various teachings, and he lived in sin. And his mother, St Monica would pray for him with tears, she went multiple times and talked to the bishop, St Ambrose, and put her tears at his feet. What changed him in the end? What caused him to go back to the Lord? He opened the Scripture and he read two verses from Romans 13. And he felt that his heart was flooded with light. All it took was one little flame to give light in the darkness. And he was baptized and became a Christian and became the saint that we know and we learn from.

This is the importance of the Word of God in our life, and this is the light that the Word of God gives us.

So how do we read the Scripture?

How to Read the Scripture

- Prayer before reading (short prayer)
 - See examples of Litany of the Gospel, Inaudible Prayers before the readings
- Reverence while reading
 - Wearing an esharb
 - Sitting up straight
 - Holding the Bible
- Consistency
 - Imagine a flashlight turning on for a second and then waiting two weeks to turn it on again - you will stumble for two weeks
 - Imagine a flashlight that's always on
 - Consistency has the power to transform

- Memorize
 - St Mary did this!
- Spend time to understand

Techniques for Understanding the Scripture

1. Read the Chapter
2. If there is a verse you don't understand, read a commentary on it (Coptic Commentary app, Anba Youssef, Fr Daoud, Fr Antonios Fikry, Fr Tadros)
3. Ask the Six Questions
4. Write a Contemplation
 - Turn the reading into a prayer
5. Take a verse to memorize

Six Questions

1. Is there a commandment for me?
 - Something that I need to start doing or I need to increase in it
 - "Love your enemies"
 - "Bless those who curse you"
 - "Pray for those who spitefully use you"
2. Is there a sin to repent?
 - Something I need to STOP doing
3. Is there a promise?
 - "Do not fear little flock for it is Your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"
 - "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"
 - These promises give me hope - in a time when the devil attacks me with despair
4. Is there a benefit for me?
 - "No longer do I call you servants but friends, for a servant does not know the will of his master"
5. What qualities (or names) of God do I find in this passage?
 1. Good, Long-suffering, Merciful, Slow to Anger, Fair, etc.
 2. Father, Good Shepherd, Teacher, My God, My Light, My salvation, My joy, My glory, etc.
 3. So when the devil comes and attacks me and makes me think something evil about God... someone might say "God lets bad things to happen" - "God does not love me" - "God is not fair" - I will recall those stories and verses and passages
6. Is there a character I can learn from in this passage?
 1. St Mary, King David, Ruth, Esther, St Paul, etc.
 2. Where can I put myself in this story?
 3. And it doesn't have to be on of the saints - it could be someone like King Saul. His end was not good, but there is much that we can learn from him. Or Judas... his end was not good, but we can learn from him what not to do and not to despair.
 4. Or it could even just be someone random and unnamed in the Scripture! When I read the feeding of the multitude, maybe I put myself as one of the 5000... if I was one of the 5000 and the disciples came and tried to put me in a group of 50, what

would I have done? I would have complied? Or I would have said no I want to be in this other group? And then they start to distribute 5 loaves and 2 fish... and I see how many people there are. What would I have done? Waited patiently, having faith? Or I would have ran to the front to get some food before it runs out? And when the disciples go and pick a leader for each group of 50 and I don't get picked, I go and complain and say it's not fair? Where am I in this story? What would I have done in this story?

In every passage, you will be able to answer at least a few of these questions - not all six, but at least two or three of them.

Conclusion

May the Lord grant us

2025-05-24: 6th Sunday - Ask in My Name

Introduction

- "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24)
- "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)
- "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:14)

These verses contain two things:

- Commandments - Ask, Seek, Knock
- Promises - I will do it, your joy may be full, it will be given to you, you will find, etc.

And it's easy for us to hear these verses and think... I asked before and I did not receive. Or I sought and I did not find. Or I knocked and it was not opened for me. And this could be something I am struggling with... does God hear my prayer? And if so, why doesn't He respond?

- It might be that He didn't respond yet.
- It might be that He responded but I didn't like His response.
- It might be that He responded but I didn't recognize His response.

But how should I pray? What should my posture be? How should I approach God with my troubles, my anxieties, and my requests? What does it mean to ask in Jesus' name? Some people end every prayer with "In Jesus' name we pray. Amen." - is that what this means? Or does it mean something else?

Six points:

1. Ask, Believing
2. Ask Obediently
3. Ask Persistently
4. Ask for God's Will
5. Ask with Pure Motive
6. Ask Humbly

1 - Ask, Believing

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22)

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting..." (James 1:6)

- Faith is not demanding outcomes from God, it is trusting the One we ask
- "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;" (James 1:6-7)
- Example:
 - Centurion who wanted Christ to heal his servant
 - "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." (Matthew 8:13)
- Counterexample:
 - St Peter walking on water: "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." - "When he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid..." and he started to sink

2 - Ask Obediently

- Faith (Believing) includes works because faith without works is dead
 - Umbrella example
 - What are these works?
 - Pursuing Godliness, reading the Scripture, hearing sermons, asking myself "what is God asking me to do?" Live a certain way, follow His commandments
 - Consistence in Spiritual Disciplines
 - Consistence in Liturgical Participation
- "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3:22)
- Example: Elijah
 - "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." (James 5:16-18)
 - St James tells us that Elijah, because he was a righteous man, his prayer was heard and accepted
 - We see the same in St HH Pope Kyrillos VI - the righteous man whose prayers did miracles
- Counterexample: Saul
 - "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets." (1 Samuel 28:6)

3 - Ask Persistently

- "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18:1)
- Persistence changes us before it changes circumstances
- "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" (Luke 18:7)
- Sometimes we think of it backwards...
 - If I keep asking and it doesn't happen, that means it's not going to happen
 - God says the opposite... be persistent!
- Example:

- Friend at Midnight
- "And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs." (Luke 11:5-8)
- Sometimes we hear from people that "repetition in prayer is bad"
 - Christ prayed the same prayer three times!
 - St Paul asked three times for the thorn in the flesh to be taken away! And the Lord told him "My grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness."

4 - Ask for God's Will

- "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14)
- The best prayer is to say "Lord, let your will be done."
- Sometimes we ask for things that are not the best for us; not in our best interest
- When we pray the Unction of the Sick prayer, Abouna is praying a lot for the person in front of him to be healed and forgiven; healed in body, soul, spirit. We say Lord, as You raised the widows son and the official's daughter and raised Lazarus, raise up Your servant... and then silently, inaudibly, Abouna prays this part: "And if You advocate that his soul be taken, let it be by powerful hands of angels of light to save him from the demons of darkness. Transform him to the Paradise of joy to be with all the saints." - why? Because maybe it is not God's will to heal him. Maybe it is not God's will that he continues his life in this world. God's will is better. God's will is for our salvation!
- Example:
 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
 - Nebuchadnezzar is compelling them to worship his idols and he asks "And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."
- Counterexample:
 - Moses - he asked God to let him enter the Promised Land.
 - "I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.'
 - "But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the Lord said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter.'" (Deuteronomy 3:25-26)
 - Of course, the Lord had something better in mind for Moses - he would see the Promised Land with his eyes, and then He would see Christ the Messiah and the Fulfillment of all with his eyes in the Transfiguration

5 - Ask with Pure Motive

- You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures" (James 4:3)
- Not every desire is holy merely because it is prayed
- Example: Solomon
 - "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days." (1 Kings 3:9-13)
- Counterexample: Simon Magus
 - "And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:18)
 - He wanted to have the power so he can be great in the sight of the people again - when he was a sorcerer, he would astonish the people and they would heed to him
 - St Peter rebukes him
 - "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." (Acts 8:21-23)

6 - Ask Humbly

- "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)
- Example & Counterexample
 - Pharisee and Tax Collector

Conclusion

May the Lord grant us to offer prayers persistently, with a believing heart, doing the works of obedience, with a pure motive and with all humility. May He accept our prayers and answer them according to His will.