

# Servant Coordinator Conference

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# 2023 Conference

# Lecture 1 - Continuing Education of Servants

## Processes and Events

### Why should I self-discipline?

- I am following my Lord
  - The servant in Exodus 21 is the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom God the Father entrusted the Church as a Bride and us as His children
- I am following the True Shepherd
  - John 10:11
  - Hebrews 13:20
  - Ezekiel 34:15

### How do I self-discipline to learn daily?

- One day in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal day for us as servants
  - (Gospel of St Mark is portraying Christ the Servant, so His deeds are important more than the words that He spoke)
  - Mark 1:16-45
    - It's not the first time the Lord saw them - He saw them in John 1
    - They left their nets
      - What are the nets we must leave in order to cleave?
      - Whatever we are relying on
      - Whatever we think can take the place of self-discipline and perseverance in learning every day
      - Human resources, not divine resources
    - They left their father and the servants
      - Our relationships
    - The Lord entered the synagogue and a demon-possessed man was there
      - Spiritual warfare
    - He called fisherman
      - Levels of Leadership (in order from lowest to highest)
        - Position - one who has the position and is followed simply because he has it
        - Permission - the people permit him to lead because they like him... but nothing gets done

- Production - you bring results
- People Development - you invest in people (rather than in events)
- The Lord chose people who were uneducated and undeveloped, so that He would develop them
- He healed Simon's Mother-in-law
  - You will be attuned to the needs of others
- Everyone was looking for Him
  - We will be swayed from our service
- He said "let us go into the next towns"
  - He is not allured by the crowd or the fame, but he did not regard the simple services of the next town
  - It is a plan; a process; an investment in the Twelve - it's not simply an event
- The Leper came to Him and He healed him
  - When we have a purpose, we will not see things as inconveniences but as opportunities
- Acts 4:29
  - The disciples apply all of what they learned from their Master (in the Gospel), in the Book of Acts

## Education

- Language of Society includes SEO (Search engine optimization), AI (Artificial Intelligence), etc.
- The time of saying "This is what it is" or "this is how it is" is passed
- **Tracing Origins is Crucial**
  - In any credible scholarship, it is necessary to study what and how others have tackled in the field of study
  - E.g. if we want to understand the theological depth of a specific liturgical prayer, we must study the liturgical development of that prayer
  - We must inquire of the past to comprehend our present and predict our future
- **Studying is Spiritual!**
  - St Gregory Nazianzen says "We must not then dishonor education..." (Oration 43)
    - Some people ignore education in order to remain stagnant and hide themselves and escape their want of culture
  - Some people will say "We need spiritual talks..." as if academic talks are not spiritual!
- Διδαχή - The Teaching
  - Exegesis - what you take out of the text (then, them, there)
  - Hermeneutics - how is it applied to now (here, us, now)
  - Sometimes we give "what we do" as "what we believe" - but "fasting x days" and "staying x hours in Good Friday" have nothing to do with **what we believe**
  - Four words used for teaching:
    - κήρυγμα (Kerygma) - teaching of the Gospel without argument or defense... "This is what we believe"
    - Evangelism - to tell the good news

- Martyrdom - to bear witness
  - Διδαχή (Didache) - teaching must be preceded by Kerygma. Explanation of that which was proclaimed
  - Παράκλησις (Paraklesis) - exhortation to accept the Christian faith and live the Christian life
  - ὁμιλία (Homilia) - General discussion of any subject in the light of Christian faith
- We lump all of these together and call them "Education"
  - HH Pope Shenouda used to say that a good indicator of a good sermon is if the hearer comes and asks "What shall I do?"
  - It is important to not make assumptions about what is known or not known before teaching
- Improve the Feed
  - Farmers spend their time studying how to improve the feed and not how to get more cattle to come to be fed
- How did the service come to a point of mediocrity?
  - We started with the Great School of Alexandria founded by St Mark!
  - But what happened after that? Chalcedon... Arab Conquest... Burning of Patristic Heritage...
  - French Conquest in Egypt... British Conquest in Egypt... and then finally Habib Girgis got us out of this ignorance...
  - But we're faced with Western Missionaries and ideas like Sola Scriptura and Prima Scriptura
    - 2 Thessalonians 2:15 - "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."
    - 2 Thessalonians 3:6 - "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us"
    - In those two verses, in Arabic, the word tradition is "ميليعة" (instructions)
- Universal Language of God (θεόπνευστος)
- "But beyond these sayings, let us look at the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic (Universal) Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers kept. Upon this the Church is founded, and he who should fall away from it would not be a Christian, and should no longer be so called" - St Athanasius Letter to Serapion on the Holy Spirit

# Lecture 1 - High Gain Questions

## Question 1

If you were a "typical" Sunday School servant in your church, what would your expectations for the continuing education program of your church be?

## Discussion

- Note that the question asks about the "program" not just the "servants meeting"
- Educational - Church consecrates more on "pure spiritual topics" - Repentance, Confession, Sacraments... which is great. But in Servants Meeting something more academic
- Friendly atmosphere between the servants (sometimes this may cause someone not to attend the servants meeting)
- "I wanna hear something that's gonna make me serve better..." - something practical. How to do a certain thing in Sunday School... how do I prepare a better or nicer or more engaging lesson?
- More education on the psychosocial aspect of teaching (how to deal with kids who have complex issues, mental health issues, etc.) to have the toolbox to know how to deal with kids of all different mental health situations
- Continuing education for servants should be part of the Church goal, purpose, vision. Church should have a plan for developing the whole congregation and servants are part of that plan. Every church is different and can't have the same plan. An assessment based on the needs of the children and the servants is needed to see what is best for them.
- Continuing education should be integrated with all the other activities of the Church
- Should have a curriculum to build off of, or follow over a certain number of years.
  - How long should that curriculum be?
- Breadth of teaching (Church History, Liturgics, Patristics, etc.)
- Dealing with parents and kids and how to connect parents and kids, deal with family issues, etc.
- Continuation of Pre-servants in the sense that it is the same topics but on a deeper level
- Writing papers, research papers that can serve the rest of the community
- Have the servants take a task themselves of teaching so it is not the same person every time

- In any field of work, they try to keep you up to date with what is happening in the world... we should have the same in the field of service. What are our children being exposed to, being taught, etc. We should be on top of it and teach the servants right away. In touch with Contemporary Issues
- Big gap between old servants and young servants... young servants were raised in a completely different way from older generation. Younger generation is not used to lectures and sitting and listening. We need a vision for the younger generation of servants to help them in a different way
- "typical" is a Sunday School servant that prepares the lesson and gives it. Beyond education, we need to understand the age group that you are serving - how to reach them, connect with them, etc.
- Discipleship - for younger servants to have a mentor to look up to and who can follow up with them
- Servants are too busy? With work, children, etc. Reading, studying, serving, etc. takes a lot of time
  - It is true that adding another hour or two hours per week for continuing education may not be practical for the "average" servant
  - It is good to make the weekly servants meeting that is known to be required, a good use of time
- Is the word program appropriate? Program means clear start and end? Maybe process is better?
- Continuing education should be open-ended as it is needed by everyone
  - It would be nice to have diocese programs for continuing education in the regions centralized and disseminated to all the churches, given by experts at a high quality
- Computer Modules assigned to every servant and they can finish at their convenient time. The job of the coordinator or priest is to follow-up, see the outcomes, discuss in Servants Meetings, gather feedback, etc.
- Self-service, catalog of materials, minimum requirement on a yearly basis (e.g. 3 credits, 4 credits, etc.)
- Hands-on, workshops, how do you deal with this situation, case studies, etc.
- Re-apply and live it - kids see what we are doing as a lecture... why come to Servants Meeting if I'm gonna hear the same thing I heard before? How do I live it? How do I redirect when I'm lost? Etc.
- It needs to be updated on a regular basis. It cannot be the same for 10 years. We cannot be blind to what is going on around us.
- Use the skillset of the servants or congregation more broadly to deliver expertise
- Hybrid Program: Some modules, some in person. Servants retreats have good feedback for bringing servants together
- Continuing Education usually depends on some base knowledge... but in service, Servants nowadays are all over the place. Some servants don't know anything and some know a lot. What is the standard that we build on before talking about continuing education. Is the process of selecting servants part of the continuing education process?
  - People cram and then forget everything
  - Ladder of service - most of what I learned in service is from the experience of serving and learning "on the job"

- May need to emphasize the fact that your preparation is part of your independent learning to fulfill your goal
- In smaller churches, there is no time for pre-servants but servants are needed immediately! And sometimes they are overwhelmed or scared, and may leave the service. We should think "outside the box" for better ways
  - Continuing Education Process may look very different in a large established church, than in a smaller community or new church
- Young servants have the time to gain but don't know that they need to gain; by the time they know, they are too busy!
- Improving the feed - people will willingly come
- Large churches may be able to help small churches (e.g. to send a servant to come and teach the servants and help improve the feed)
- Lesson Preparation and Review can be a big part of identifying someone's areas of improvement or talent
  - Review can be a good chance to teach or to guide
- To take example from the field of Engineering - There is an Engineering Conference every year which was a continuing education for the whole engineering community in the area

## Summary

- Variety in topics (Staying on top of social issues and trends)
- Variety in delivery environments (e.g. retreats, servants meetings, online modules, discipleship)
- Variety in delivery methods (e.g. tailored to groups of servants, tailored to individuals)
- Integrated with the whole service and goal of the Church

## From the Fathers

- If we have a purpose, we will see opportunities and not inconveniences
- Continuous education must be very effective to the point of seeing a true change in the service
- Continuous education needs dedication from all of the servants

## Question 2

As a church servant, how can you overcome the three biggest barriers to your active participation in the continuing education program of your church? What role does the church play in this process?

## Discussion

- Time
- Motivation



- how do you get the servants motivated to come often and not just on their scheduled service day
- Needs interesting topics and more interactive with variety in speakers
- Give a feeling of ownership to the service - feeling of ownership will cause someone to use paid time off, make a priority
- Needs variety in environment - increase the sense of community through social interactions that are outside of the process but knits the service together
- Lack of seriousness in the service in general
- What's in it for me?
- Lack of Communication
- Some churches may have issues with getting husbands in the service
- Don't feel the need to learn
  - I already learned everything I need in Pre-Servants
  - Resources are everywhere... I can learn from YouTube or from anywhere else
- There should be an expectation set for the servants to do their continuous education and have consequences for not
- We live in an age of immediate gratification
- Communication and Reminders
- Move Servants meeting into a conference room around a conference table and starts with "How was Sunday School today" And Servants meeting becomes more like a meeting. Invites engagement
- Child care during the meeting
- Look past Sunday - other days may work better

## Summary

- Time
  - Being sensitive to (and accommodating) the needs of the servants (on a group level or on an individual level)
  - Effective Communication
    - Setting expectations
  - Variety
- Motivation
  - Giving tools to those who are responsible for the service for how to motivate
  - Motivation happens on an individual level
  - Effective Communication
    - Show appreciation
- Resources
  -
- These ideas are general and solutions should be applied based on the needs of the church and servants

## From the Fathers

- Reiterate to the servants their purpose in the service... you may be the only proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ in this child's life. There will be sacrifice. There will be a need for

patience. This expectation should be set even before servants preparation.

- Acts of Mercy (e.g. visiting children in a hospital, nursing home, battered women shelter, homeless shelter, etc.) will connect what the fruits of service are. The people we are serving will have a desire to go out and serve their community.
- This can combat the impatience and the need for instant gratification in the service

# Lecture 2 - Technology Use

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12)

In this generation, we can definitely say that we have been brought under the power of our phones.

## Risks

- Health and Wellness
  - Addiction - devices and screen use are as addictive to children as cocaine
  - Increased Depression and Anxiety - the feeling of not living up to the standards of what you see online, the feeling of always being in the spotlight
  - Sleep Disruption - blue light disrupts sleep cycle; during COVID many kids were sleeping all day and up all night
  - Less physical activity
- Emotional
  - Less connected to family
  - Loss of social skills for how to interact with and accommodate their peers
  - Online predators/exploitation
  - Bullying
- Ideological/Intellectual Risks
  - Exposure to inappropriate content
  - Indoctrination to certain belief sets or agendas
  - Tracking and monitoring activity for advertisers and social media companies
  - Illegal activity - it is easier to do illegal activities online
- Unknown Risks
  - We are living in a social experiment - the smart phone came out in 2008; the people who are now driving have lived their whole lives with the smart phone and we have not seen a generation of adults that lived through this yet.

## Screen Time Recommendations

- Babies 0-18 Months
  - None except video chat with an adult
- Toddlers 18-24 Months
  - Less than one hour co-watching educational programs with a caregiver
  - Not sitting by themselves; still engaging with a parent or older sibling; making the process active rather than passive

- Children 2-5 Years Old
- Kids 6-17
  - CDC average usage is 6 hours a day of screen time (recreational and non)
- Adults 18 and older

## Content Concerns

- Many shows targeted to children are pushing a liberal agenda
  - E.g. Arthur had an episode a few years ago where the whole episode was the wedding of a gay character to his husband
  - There are subtle hints in programs such as characters wearing pride flag colors
  - Media companies are celebrated for pushing "queer" characters
- Even classic television shows - if they are still in production, then they will start to introduce this content
- This content is being pushed to children
  - E.g. Muppets had a transgender muppet
  - E.g. Thomas the Train Engine has a bi-sexual train

## Social Media

- Every new service is going to have a social component
- There's no way of getting away from social-media-like content
- "The Social Dilemma" on Netflix
  - How social media platforms design their algorithms to maximize engagement and essentially increase addiction
  - The recommendations don't care about truth, your well-being, etc. but are targeted towards keeping you engaged to stay on the platform and they can sell advertising
  - Many executives in these companies do not allow their own children to use their product (reminds us of drug dealers)

## Exploitation Online

### Dark Web

- A way to mask online activity
- Anonymity allows people to do all kinds of things that they wouldn't do if their identity was known

## Technology Solutions

### How the Internet Works

- You type in a web address on your client (phone, tablet, computer)
- That data is sent through your router or modem (at home) or cell tower (phone) to your internet service provider (e.g. AT&T, Spectrum, etc.).
- The data goes to a Dynamic Name Server (DNS) which gives the address to that website

- The website is sent to your device

## Router Level Features

- Most consumer routers nowadays have some control and filters for what content can be used on your network
- You can filter Adult Content, IM and Communications, P2P and File Transfer, Streaming, etc.
- This is not easy to use or trivial

## ISP Level Controls

- Cell provider and ISP can monitor and restrict device access to certain websites, etc.
- Some of those providers will charge a monthly fee

## Ecosystem Level Controls

- Tailored to a specific "ecosystem" but is deactivated after 13 years old
  - Google Family Link
  - Apple Content and Privacy Restrictions
  - Microsoft Family Safety

## 3rd Party Parental Control Apps

- Can be installed on several devices and platforms
- E.g. Qustodio, Bark, Kaspersky Safe Kids, Net Nanny, etc.
- Can be disabled by kids easily

## Specialized Devices

- E.g. Troomi, Pinwheel, Gabb, Bark - these companies make phones that are targeted to children and teens
  - Some don't have web browsers, or no social media
  - Some don't allow deleting text messages
  - Some block addictive games
  - Some have caregiver portals
  - Some need approval to send images to certain contacts
- Devices like the Light Phone that doesn't even have a blue light screen

## Strategies

- Technology (above) is a **PART** of the solution but not the whole solution
  - All of the above are not enough on their own
- Limit technology use **EARLY**
  - Putting up with the fight when they are little will help us be able to deal with it when they're older

- **TALK** to our children about dangers
  - They trust their parents, and should be talking about how there are dangers and we want to protect you
  - Having a time limit or a limit on what they can do will be something they are accustomed to
- **MONITOR** use
  - Don't use screens as a babysitter
  - Don't let your children watch anything that you haven't watched first
- Gradually increase access when they show **RESPONSIBILITY**
  - Like driving... they have to sit in a car seat, then a booster seat, then back seat, then front seat... and one day they'll sit in the drivers seat with an adult... then they can do that by themselves but only during the day... then at night... then they can let someone ride with them... eventually they can even drive while having kids in the car with them
  - But if you simply hand them the keys to the car when they're 14, it can be fatal
  - If you hand your child an unlocked iPhone as soon as they say "well all my friends have it" - it can be fatal
- **PUT DOWN** our own devices
  - Apply the same rules to ourselves as we apply to our children
  - If we are mad at our children for having their phones at the dinner table, then we can't answer calls or respond to emails or catch up on the news during dinner time
  - At the very least, we would show them that it is possible for them to put the devices down because we can

**There is no substitute for engaged parenting**

## Sunday School Application

- As Sunday School Coordinators, how do we compete with the attractive YouTube videos, games, etc. that are competing for the attention of our youth
- His Eminence gave a presentation on an idea that was presented to HE by an engineer in Egypt called "Joy City"
  - It is directed to all ages to deliver the message of the Scripture through a video game

# Lecture 2 - Breakout Rooms

## High Gain Question 1 - Red

What is the role of the Church in helping control and structure the technology use of children and youth?

1. Partnership between priest-servant-parent
2. Share resources among churches
3. Find an alternative to tech use
  - Interest groups (e.g. camera team)
4. Giving a voice to children to know they are being heard
5. Educating parents one on one
  - Open house before Sunday School year, talk about expectations; Geek squad at church to help setup phones

## High Gain Question 2 - Green

What are the three biggest challenges parents face regarding their children's technology use? How can the church help?

1. Lack of knowledge
  - Kids are ahead of parents/servants in technology
  - For churches that don't have resources, we may want a shareable list of contacts that have IT expertise
2. Time
  - Lack of time
  - Parents might say "I don't have time to spend time with the kids" or "I have to take an extra shift to support the family" etc.
  - Some newcomers may not understand what work can or can't force on them
  - Church can build family activities for the families to come as a unit (as opposed to just an activity for the kids and just an activity for parents/adults)
  - New parents need to understand that the kids are a shared responsibility
3. Misguided understanding of freedom and culture

- Parents don't understand the culture and think they will "overstep the freedom of their kids"
- Encourage parents not to give up
- Parents and servants should be examples to the kids and only use phones when appropriate (e.g. cases of emergency)

## High Gain Question 3 - Orange

How are the challenges of new immigrants in monitoring children's tech use unique?

### Challenges

1. Language
  - Even when encouraging the parents to actively engage with their kids, they may be sitting with them blind
2. Priorities
  - New immigrants' priorities are to meet the basic needs of their family (food, shelter, job)
3. Technology use requires being proactive
  - This is difficult if you are constantly playing catch up with the basic needs of your family
4. Lack of awareness
  - Because of the above three, they don't know what they don't know
5. Denial
  - Your kid did xyz... "no no no my kids are good!"
6. Peer Pressure
  - New immigrants may feel more pressure to fit into a society as opposed to someone who was born here
  - They have certain assumptions about what it's like in the West based on TV and Media

### Solutions

1. Ongoing parent meeting (potentially open to all, but catered to newcomers)
2. Online parent corner on the diocese website where different churches can share resources that are up-to-date. Like Axis but including Arabic language resources



## High Gain Question 4

Describe the three biggest challenges in monitoring/controlling the technology use of teens.

### 1. Lack of knowledge of parents

- Lack of knowledge that there is even a danger; lack of knowledge of how to protect
- Educate the parents and equip them with how to protect your children
- Educate them EARLY
- Continue to educate them
- Open Wifi in the church should also be protected
- Things are happening every day and it's hard to keep up

### 2. Engage with children

- I want kids to have freedom to explore, but without stifling them - how do I encourage exploration within bounds?
- What alternative am I giving the kids? If I ask them to put the device down, they will ask "what else do you want me to do?"
- Having creativity in engagements - what creative alternatives do you have to keep them engaged physically, mentally, socially?
  - Swimming
  - Biking
  - Going to a park
  - Playing sports
- Needs to start early
- Leading by example - learning is a lifelong process
- In the class, can get the kids to use technology to answer questions, research, etc.
- Engage every moment and don't leave time for talking or phones or even breathing!
- Boredom

### 3. Youth feel that their value is in social media and technology

- Standing in tasbeha wearing my veil won't get me any "likes" on TikTok
- How do we introduce other things as valuable to you and edifying to you
- We should give weight to other activities - the Eucharist is life-giving... is this TikTok video life-giving?
- Value proposition

### 4. There is no one leading by example

- "Well so-and-so does it"
  - Can redirect to a better behavior and show that that behavior is fruitful
- Well this older deacon is using his phone in liturgy
- Leading by example
- We need to speak their language and come to where they are (e.g. through games, language, etc.)

To what extent should we limit the use of phone (e.g. "you're not allowed to bring your phone on this trip, or to this outing, etc.")

## High Gain Question 5 - Black

What are the key features of an "ideal" program to help educate parents of young children about how to teach their kids healthy technology use (from infancy onward)?

### What does the program look like?

1. No sermons, but rather hands-on activities for the parents
2. Guest speakers (younger that seem to understand their kids) that are experts
3. Reach out to parents via phone calls so they can feel that we are seeking them to connect with their kids
4. Targeted for a specific age group (i.e. not talking about HS when parents have elementary kids)
5. SetupIT/Geek Squad at Church
6. Servants leading by example (especially in Sunday School... how can one give the lesson while another is on his phone? Use liturgy books and Agpeyas (old fashioned) during liturgy)

### What alternatives can we teach parents to offer?

1. Having timers for going outside together
2. Encourage screen time to be a family interactive screen time
3. Set a time for the kid to look up a recipe and prepare the meal for the family
4. Turn off blue light on your phone and use "night mode" all day
5. Use games as a time together
6. Teach kids to have good values and morals

## High Gain Question 6 - Purple

What practical steps can parents take to ensure that their children's technology use progresses gradually in a healthy way from infancy to adulthood to help them realize age-appropriate benefits of technology while protecting them from unacceptable risks?

1. Engagement
  - Playing with your kids
  - Family time
  - Physical interaction

- Communicating
- Leading by example and putting down your own phone

## 2. Education

- Educate parents and kids
- Internet is not a bad tool but we have to know how to use it in the right way
- Follow through on education

## 3. Alternatives

- Not "because I said so"
- VidAngel
- Coptic Apps (Upper Room Media, CYC, etc.)
- Putting a schedule that gives earned time
- Church Community

# Lecture 3 - Breakout Rooms

## High Gain Question 1 - Red

Imagine you are a young person growing up in America whose parents were raised in Egypt. What are the three biggest challenges you would face in developing and being comfortable with your identity as an American Copt?

### Challenges

1. Peer Pressure
2. Language as a Barrier
3. What is Orthodox vs what is Egyptian

### Solutions

1. Establish healthy relationships with your kids
2. Model the behavior that you want your children to have
3. Teach that it's okay to be different; you will face persecution; and reward them when they do obey and do what they are supposed to do

## High Gain Question 2 - Green

What are the three best ways to increase persistent engagement among young people in the Church?

1. Know them; understand them - develop 1:1 relationships
2. Engagement - get engaged with them at the same level that they are at; give them a task, responsibility or project.
3. Help them find a purpose.
4. Help them find their interests

## High Gain Question 3 - Orange

How do the needs for relationship and and belonging among American-raised Coptic Youth differ from these needs among their Egyptian-raised parents? How are they the same?

1. The same basic needs apply to everyone - a sense of belonging, love, acceptance
  - In Egypt, the same people at school are those at church, are those to hang out with after... in the lands of immigration, you go to school with different people than who you go to church with.
  - It may become a matter of "who do I fit in with the most?"
  - Dual Identity Crisis: Identity at church and identity at school... leads to changing ideologies
2. Relationships here are done more virtually (online games, snapchat, etc.) as opposed to face-to-face
3. We have to look out for love and acceptance among everyone - even those who aren't American raised, and those who aren't Egyptian at all

## High Gain Question 4 - Yellow

What are the three most important ways that the Church can help youth who move from Egypt adjust to their lives as Coptic Orthodox Christians in America

1. Language Barrier
  - Including body language
  - Church can assist with language classes
  - We should speak to them in English and help them adjust
  - Homework help, tutoring
  - Help with job search and application
2. Culture Shock
  - How they drive, how they deal with neighbors is very different
3. Cliques and Groups
  - Find common interests
  - Give everyone a role or responsibility

In HE Metropolitan Youssef's book, he talks about the quadrant of "Positive/Negative Attitude to the Old/New Culture."

- Counseling and showing the positives of both attitudes will bring about integration
- Sometimes parents have the opposite attitude of their children which leads to a division
- We want to bring them both to the middle which will close that gap

- Teach them to be integrationists
  - There are studies about the 3rd Generation being more connected to the homeland than the 2nd Generation simply because the 2nd Generation, in rebellion to their parents,
- Four stages
  - Honeymoon Stage - he has a dream to leave Egypt, gets the Visa and feels that his dreams have come true. I will go to America, get a house and a car and a job
  - Hostility Stage - can't find a job, can't understand people (despite knowing some English); very challenging
  - Human Stage - if he is able to overcome hostility; now he can relax; before, if he made a mistake he would be very anxious. Now, if he makes a mistake, he is relaxed and can laugh about his mistakes
  - Home Stage - the home is not replacing Egypt, but their home is expanded to include Egypt and America (i.e. he would still say "we have in Egypt" and "we have in America")

## High Gain Question 5 - Black

What are the three most important ways in which the Church can help young people cope with the increasing social and emotional pressures they face in today's society?

1. Ground in the faith
  - Teaching kids from a young age how to love and be in the Church
  - Teaching how to love Christ and have a relationship with Him
  - Lead by example as a servant
2. Safe environment in church
  - 1:1 relationship between servant and kids served (e.g. no judgment)
  - Hope that they can come with their mistakes
  - Continue to educate adults in the church on how to interact with the younger age group and the youth so they don't turn them off from coming to church
  - Kids to feel our love
3. Helping to find their talents
  - Using talents during services
  - Give opportunities to serve to the youth

## High Gain Questions 6 - Purple

As a Coptic youth in the United States what three factors would play the biggest role in pushing you away from the Coptic Church, either to other church

communities or to being completely disengaged from any church group?

### 1. Friendship

- Feeling of belonging is very important; if you see the youth has a talent, let him grow in it and use it to serve in the Church
- Servant should have a relationship that is always in touch with the youth; listening to their issues, trying to help them grow, helping identify their weaknesses and how to overcome them

### 2. Education

- You can present things in an educational manner - instead of "do this because the Bible says so" something along the lines of "God loves you and wants to protect you from this evil or this harm"
- Present material in a way they understand it

### 3. Addressing Cultural Issues

- Address cultural issues not based on the culture, but based on scriptural principles
- Don't be judgmental, but make a distinction between what is Egyptian, and what is Orthodox Christianity

# Lecture 4 - Transplanting Servants

## Introduction

- Transplanting servants is like transplanting plants

## Spiritual Context

- Service is a call (Jeremiah 1:5)
  - It can be during a specific season in life
  - It can be in a specific place
  - God does not arrange things with the sole purpose of making us comfortable. God puts us in places because there is a need - either for us, or we have a purpose in the place we are, and often it is both!
  - We have to be sensitive of what God is sending us to structure and establish the service in our churches
- God equips those whom he calls to serve (Exodus 31:2-3)

## Considerations

- **Service is NOT a tool to encourage people to attend**
  - If such a person cannot engage themselves and find their relationship with God in the Church independently, how can we expect them to guide others to God in the Church?
  - We all struggle... but there are some struggles that can be accommodated in the service, and others that are fatal
- "Firing" servants is difficult
  - There are ways of "softening the blow" in hopes of not losing the person, but in the end it is difficult
  - It is easier to properly vet servants than to have to let them go later
- Know the needs of the service
  - What are our strengths
  - What are our weaknesses
  - How can we build up the service
  - Try to find people who can fill the gaps (i.e. "attract talent")
- Focus on building the servants



- Just because someone was established in another church or had a successful ministry, doesn't mean he doesn't need building up
- All servants need to be built up
- Be open to new ideas
  - It's good to have established systems and procedures, but there is a danger of missing out on good ideas and improvements (especially coming from an "outside eye" - someone who has experience in another program or system)
  - We all have blind spots... there are always things we don't see or notice. Someone coming in from outside may see something glaring that all of those inside can't see

## Types of Servants who may move into your Church

	Within the Diocese	Outside the Diocese
<b>Experienced</b>		
<b>Fresh Servant</b> (completed pre-servants)		
<b>Enthusiastic about service, but needs training</b>		
<b>High Potential</b> (may help fill a need, but hasn't expressed interest in service)		

## Experienced Servant within the SUS Diocese

- Advantages
  - Familiar with SUS "school"
    - e.g. would not come and say "Let's take the kids swimming!"
  - Bringing new ideas from previous experience
  - Easier to get feedback from previous priest/learn about their background
    - This is beneficial for the service
    - This is beneficial for the servant (i.e. continuity of care)
- Be Aware
  - Might have expectations from previous experience
- Needs
  - Familiarization with the local church "culture"
    - Some things work in one place and not others
    - There are nuances
  - Build connections with other servants
    - They are not familiar with people's roles or personalities
    - They want to find a group of servants that they can be comfortable with
  - Need pastoral care
    - This is common to all people/congregants and especially those being transplanted, whether servant or not

## Fresh Servant from within the SUS Diocese

- Advantages
  - Same as before
- Be Aware
  - Same as before
  - Level of preparation varies across the diocese
- Needs
  - Same as before
  - Mentorship from senior servants (with any new servant)

## Enthusiastic to Serve but Limited Preparation within the SUS Diocese

- Advantages
  - May be familiar with SUS "school" - but maybe not like the experienced servants
  - Enthusiasm to serve
    - This is needed in the service, but it is not sufficient on its own
    - Their motivations need to be correct
      - Someone may want to serve because it's good on his resume
      - Someone may want to serve in a specific class because his friend is in that class
    - They need to be receptive to learning
  - Fewer expectations from previous experience
  - Easier to get feedback from previous priest/learn about background
- Be Aware
  - Limited to no experience or training
- Needs
  - Same as before
  - Training/pre-servants preparation
  - Mentorship from senior servants

## High Potential (no pre-servants) within SUS Diocese

- Advantages
  - Same as before
  - With correct motivation, could be ready to learn and serve
  - Brings something needed into the service
- Be Aware
  - Limited to no experience or training
  - May be unfamiliar with the demands of the service
    - It is not simply showing up and giving a lesson
    - There are certain sacrifices that you may have to make in your personal life
    - We have a service code of conduct (e.g. you won't be dancing in a wedding if you're a servant).
- Needs
  - Same as before
  - Motivation to join the service and support

# Outside SUS Diocese

- Advantages
  - New ideas from previous experience
  - Could be well-trained depending where they are from
- Be Aware
  - May have expectations from previous experience
  - Not familiar with SUS "school"
  - May be difficult to get feedback from previous priest/learn about background
    - May not be able to reach them
    - Fathers may not be familiar with SUS "school"
    - The person may point you to one father who will say all the nice things about him, without pointing you to the father that he had issues with e.g.
- Needs
  - Evaluate suitability for service
  - Familiarization within SUS "school" and local church "culture"
  - May need additional training (mentorship by established servant, pre-servants class...)
  - Build connections with other servants
  - Pastoral care

# 2024 Conference

# Module 1: Fruitfulness in Service

## Holy Spirit Brings the Fruit

The Lord told the disciples "go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**." Imagine being a disciple and hearing this command... all nations? How? We can't even speak their language. The Lord answered them on Pentecost and they spoke in tongues.

But how can they minister to all nations if there are only twelve of them? So the Lord on Pentecost had 120.

Did the disciples forget when the Lord told them to cast their net and they caught hundreds of fish? The same on Pentecost when St Peter cast his net and with one sermon brought 3000 people. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in St Peter.

## The Servant is the first-fruit of his service

Many times when we think about fruits in service, we become frustrated... I am serving for so many years and until now, I don't see any fruits.

The person trying to move the huge rock... maybe the rock doesn't get moved, but the servant becomes stronger. The first fruit of the service is the benefit the servant himself gets from the service.

When I feel this frustration in service, I need to pray and God will move the rock in front of me.

If you want to bring fruits, you need to have trust in God and obey Him even if His commandment doesn't make sense to you.

Look at the fruit in your heart.

## How do we measure the fruit in our ministry?

How do you measure the fruit in your ministry? Effort? Faithfulness? Fruit? - If you are measuring the success of your ministry based on the fruit, it will be a big dissatisfaction for you.

Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life

Others labored before you and you are reaping what they are sowing... so if I am reaping fruits now, don't think these are your fruits and fall in vainglory. Maybe these are the fruits of another faithful servant who planted and watered before you. If you are serving and planting and watering and not seeing fruit, don't be frustrated - someone may come after you and reap the fruit that you planted.

Faithfulness in service is the measure of success. Not the fruits.

The story of the Tree of Obedience? St John the short planted a stick and was faithful in watering it for three years. At the end it became fruitful. He was faithful in watering it every day, regardless of whether it would bring fruit or not.

I may think a youth in my class is a hopeless case (like this tree). I called him several times, I tried to visit him, I texted him, he never answered. **Continue to be faithful.** As the Lord was able to bring fruit from this stick after three years, He will be able also to bring fruit from this person even after so many years.

There is an example in the TCR (Triumphant Christian Retreat) of many cases that were "hopeless" in our eyes - but not for God. People who testify of themselves that they came without any hope, but the Lord restored them.

For a tree to bear fruit, it must have deep roots to absorb the water and nourishment for the tree. You, and your faithfulness in God, are the ROOT of the barren trees. Maybe he doesn't believe in God, or angry with God, or disappointed with God - but you, as the servant, can be the root that connects him with the True Root (God) in his life.

Bearing fruit takes time. Be patient.

## Three Stages of Working the Land

### 1. Plowing the Land

- Sometimes the land is very dry, and the Lord prepares the Land
  - e.g. St Moses who said "maybe there's a God" - "maybe the sun is God" - "maybe the moon is God"

### 2. Sowing the Seed

- The parable of the sower, he sowed the seed everywhere (as St Paul said - neither he who sows nor he who waters, but God brings the fruit)
- Some servants sow only in the good land and neglect the "bad" land or the "difficult" land
  - The Lord met the Pharisees, the Gentiles, the tax-collectors, lawyers, scribes, etc. and talked to all of them

### 3. Watering the Land

- How to follow-up
- It's not enough to speak to someone just one time about God... that's the seed. But this seed needs to be watered.
- Pray for them, speak with them, and see what kind of nutrients they need

- St Paul gave milk... and then later solid food.
- Can't just quit a bad habit, but it must be replaced
  - E.g. if you're speaking to someone about smoking, but you don't speak to him about connecting with God and spiritual habits, it will be impossible for him to quit smoking (or any bad habit)
  - Speak to him instead about the Living Water
    - The Lord, with the Samaritan woman did not even mention lust, fornication, destruction to the soul, etc. But He spoke to her about the Living Water and how these other things are like salt water... you drink for a long time, but you are still thirsty.

#### 4. Reaping the Fruit

- The reaper may reap what he did not sow
- "The hardworking farmer (plowman) must be first to partake of the crops." (2 Timothy 2:6)
- Reward is not based on the fruit, but based on your effort
  - "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor 3:8)
- Sometimes we think "if I serve high school, I am higher/better/greater than the one who serves elementary" - maybe that servant who is serving elementary is the one who planted and sowed and watered, but you are just the one who is reaping the fruit of their labor.
- Even the Lord Jesus did not reap the fruits, but He left the reaping for the disciples after His ascension. He was the plowman, the Sower, the waterer but not the reaper.
- Noah did not reap the fruits
  - "and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;" (2 Peter 2:5)
  - He preached for over 100 years
  - How many fruits did he get? The seven members of his family
- Jeremiah labored a lot, with little fruit
- Some prophets did little effort and their fruit was plenty
  - Jonah

If the fruit is much, it doesn't mean you worked hard. And if the fruit is little, it doesn't mean you worked little. Just be faithful in your ministry.

We are members of the Body of Christ and in your body, every member has a role. Not only SS Servants should be preachers of righteousness, but every member should use his talents to be a preacher of righteousness

If a family loses a child, how happy are they when they find him again? The same when a Lost Sheep is found

"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" (Luke 15)

# Principles of Fruitfulness

1. Fruit comes from the same type as the seed
  - If you sow spiritual seed, you will reap spiritual fruit
  - If you sow social activity, you will reap such
2. One seed brings a lot of fruit
  - This is the power of the Word of God... one word can capture many hearts and bring them to the Lord
  - HH Pope Kyrillos did not preach a lot; we don't have many sermons by him. But he brought many many fruits (many of which came after his departure)
3. Planting or Sowing sometimes happens in secret, but the fruit is usually public
  - You see good youth in the Church but you don't know how many hours the servant spent with them; how many times Abouna remembered them on the altar; how much they were served
4. The time between sowing and reaping can be very long
  - Palm Trees take many years before you get fruits from them
  - "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)
  - Don't lose hope
5. The fruit is very precious in the eyes of God
  - When God sees us working hard, faithfully, trusting in Him, He will bring fruit
  - As the Lord told St Peter "I will make you a fisher of men" and as you caught fish today, so shall you catch men

## Q&A

### Fruits are easy to measure... but how do we measure faithfulness?

1. Do not resist the voice of the Holy Spirit
  - Know that it is the Holy Spirit Who moves our heart if we are not faithful
  - The Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, righteousness and judgment
  - So do not resist Him when He tells you that you are not visiting your children, or praying for them, etc.
2. Some parameters
  - Are you preparing lessons
  - Are you reading
  - Are you doing visitation
  - Are you praying for your class
  - Are you attending the Servants Meeting
  - Be faithful in your own spiritual life (the servant is the Root)
3. Feedback from the servants, from Abouna, from the students
  - Sometimes when I Get feedback, I get defensive. This is very destructive and we lose the opportunity to learn. The Holy Spirit will speak to us through Abouna, a servant, a student, a colleague



- I need to take the feedback seriously

#### 4. Self-examination

- Through my own reading and listening to sermons, the message of the Lord will touch my heart

# Module 2: The Role of a Servant in Dealing with Mental Health

## Introduction

See recording.

## Human Psyche

Three components in the Human Psyche, and the three are very much connect.

- Intellect or Cognition
- Affect or Mood
- Behavior or Will

If intellectually, I feel that someone will attack me. Emotionally, I will be scared or angry. And then behaviorally, I may run or fight (fight or flight). The intellect affects the emotion which affects the behavior.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy treats the three components.

## Psychiatric Symptoms

Why should we understand the psychiatric symptoms? As leaders, we will be presented with many problems.

A parent with a child who has a fever, who does not act, and the child is hospitalized or dies, the parent will be charged with neglect.

- We know much about physical problems - nausea, stomach ache, etc. I will go to the doctor.
- We know much about spiritual problems - sin, lying, etc. I will go to the priest.
- The problems of the soul (psyche) are not well known to most of us. As we are well versed in the physical and spiritual, so too must we become well versed in the psychiatric.

# Mood

- Mood refers to how I'm feeling now. Affect refers to what people see.
  - A disconnect between the mood and the affect is common in schizophrenia
- Mood can be high or low (depression)
- Depression
  - Depression means "down"
  - Diagnosing depression requires two weeks of continuous non-stop symptoms
    - Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
    - Diminished interest or pleasure
    - Significant weight loss when not dieting, or weight gain
    - Insomnia or hypersomnia
    - Psychomotor agitation or retardation
    - Fatigue or loss of energy
    - Feeling of worthlessness or excessive inappropriate guilt
    - Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
      - Remember that the mood is related to the intellect/cognition, so it can affect it
    - Recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation
- Mania
  - Opposite of Depression
  - Opposite Symptoms
    - Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
    - Decreased need for sleep (e.g. feels rested after only 3 hours of sleep)
    - More talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking
      - Circumstantial speech
      - Talking for several hours (even through text, emails, YouTube, etc.)
    - Flight of ideas or subjective experience that thoughts are racing
      - Giving extreme details, losing track of what he's saying
    - Distractibility (i.e. attention too easily drawn to unimportant or irrelevant external stimuli)
    - Increase in goal-directed activity (either socially, at work or school, or sexually) or psychomotor agitation
    - Excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences
      - Buying sprees
      - Sexual indiscretions
      - Foolish business investments)
- Causes of Mood Disorders
  - Genetic predisposition
    - Most common cause
    - Exterior Stressors may bring up the issue
  - Hormonal
  - Neurotransmitters
  - Medical Problems
    - e.g. Low thyroid or high thyroid

- Stressors
- Drugs
  - Stimulants can bring manic disorders
  - Some medications can cause depression
- Treatment of Mood Disorders
  - Mania/Bipolar: Mood stabilizers
  - Depression: Antidepressants

## Psychosis (Intellect)

- Psychosis is anything related to a disturbance in reality testing
- Biggest Symptoms
  - Delusions
    - False and fixed belief that does not conform with culture, circumstances, etc.
    - Paranoid Delusions
      - Persecutory (someone is after me)
      - Grandeur (e.g. someone who thinks they are St Mary)
      - Influence (e.g. someone who believes that his thinking is being controlled by some satellites, some agency, etc.)
    - A delusion, by definition, is FIXED - you cannot talk them out of it
  - Hallucinations
    - I can have a hallucination in any of the five senses
      - Auditory
        - Most common
      - Visual
        - Usually from drugs, delirium
      - Tactile
        - E.g. feel things crawling on your skin (like with cocaine use)
      - Gustatory
      - Olfactory

## ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)

- 10% of kids have ADHD (some measures say 20%)
- 85% of cases caused by genetics. Other 15% is caused by medical illness (e.g. brain infection, head injury, etc.)
- ADHD is NOT overly diagnosed. This is a theory
- Symptoms
  - Inattention (six or more of the following)
    - Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
    - Often has difficulty sustaining attention
    - Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
    - Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace
    - Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities

- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities
- Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Is often forgetful in daily activities
- Hyperactivity/Impulsivity (six or more of the following)
  - Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet or squirms in seat
  - Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected
  - Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is inappropriate, or, in adolescents or adults, often feels restless
  - Often unable to play or engage in leisure activities quietly
  - Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor"
  - Often talks excessively
  - Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed
  - Often has difficulty waiting his or her turn
  - Often interrupts or intrudes on others
- ADHD when mistreated leads to anxiety and low self-esteem
  - Imagine driving a car without brakes... and everyone is telling you to hit the brake, or putting you in time-out or yelling at you because you're not hitting the brakes.
  - Kids without treatment end up in very big trouble after:
    - Anxiety
    - Low Self-Esteem
    - Rebellion
  - We have to break the cycle

# 2025-02-11: Committee Meeting Minutes

## In Attendance:

- Fr Simon
- Ts. Marina
- Ts. Sherry
- Sally
- Mary
- Morcous

## List Finalization:

- Fr Simon to follow-up with priests at the priest meeting next week (via administrative meeting, or 1:1). Ts. Sherry to follow-up with them as well
- List should be finalized by end of next week

## Coordinator Zoom Meeting with HE:

- Fr Simon to ask HE for a time that HE can meet with the General Coordinators on Zoom
- HE can give his vision for the role of the General Coordinator, and how the annual meeting falls into that role
- We can provide a general structure for the meeting and emphasize that it will have an Administrative portion which is a chance to hear and give feedback in the presence of HE Anba Youssef
- The meeting would be used to encourage people to register
- Tentative Structure
  - HE to open with his vision for the role of the Sunday School Coordinator
  - HE to discuss the importance of the annual meeting
  - Fr Simon to discuss the structure of the meeting
    - Including the Administrative Portion as being a forum for Service Coordinators and an opportunity to discuss their challenges and needs with HE present and importance of feedback in advance (as available)
    - Including the Educational Topic, Pastoral Topic, Spiritual Topic and the importance of their feedback for the theme

## Coordinator Meeting Structure:

- Administrative Portion

- Ask HEMY and HGBB and HGBG if they have agenda items for an administrative meeting
- Ask Coordinators for feedback or questions to bring up in administrative meeting
- Unifying theme for the three topics:
  - Educational Topic
  - Pastoral Topic
  - Spiritual Topic
- Potential Themes
  - Life as a youth - What is distracting our youth outside? Why are they lukewarm about their spiritual life? How can we attract them to spiritual life and the Church?
  - Linking service back to liturgy - How are my church's services linking back to the liturgy? How is my sports ministry, Sunday School, etc. linking back to the Liturgy?

## Communication with General Coordinators:

- Need to make a new Signal Group with General Coordinators
- Communicate to them about the Zoom Meeting
- Ask them for feedback or questions to bring up in administrative meeting (future)
- Ask for feedback about unifying theme (Ts. Marina to create the form)

## Actions:

- Fr Simon & Ts. Sherry - follow-up with priests at priest meeting
- Ts. Sherry - create new Signal Group
- Fr Simon - contact HEMY about Zoom meeting with Coordinators
- Ts. Marina - to make Google Form for collecting theme ideas - "What are the biggest struggles that you face in your capacity as the general Sunday School Coordinator and what topics would be valuable to discuss in the Coordinator Meeting? Which topics could we address that would help advance the service in your church the most?"

# 2025-03-11: SUS General Coordinator Zoom Meeting

## Role and Responsibilities of the Coordinator - HE Metropolitan Youssef

All of the below are with communication and agreement with the Father the Priest

The Church with strong deacons and strong servants will be successful.

1. Curriculum of the Diocese is followed and make recommendations for the Diocese Curriculum
  - e.g. missing lessons (like AI)
  - e.g. a lesson is too high for an age group
  - Also Extracurricular Activities (e.g. Bible Study, Research, Books to Read)
2. General Planning for Sunday School
  - Number of classes, combined classes, how many servants in each class
  - 4-5 servants per class makes them rely on each other
  - HE vision is that a class has maximum 2 servants



3. Choosing of servants and choosing of those who will enter pre-servants  
Preservant Class is extra (does not replace Sunday School)
  - How to pick people for preservants (2 schools of thought)
    - 1 - Recommendation from Abouna, Servants who serve them, etc.
    - 2 - Allow everyone interested in 9th grade to join
      - So he can graduate in 2 years and serve 2 years before College
  - Criteria for Choosing the Servant
    - Examples
      - Attendance 10%
      - Consistent in Confession 10%
      - Final Exam x%
      - Project x%
    - Setting a system of grading from the beginning avoids arguments later (esp. with parents)
  - **Prayer should precede selection**
  - **Servant has four responsibilities:**
    - Lesson Preparation
    - Attending Sunday School
    - Attending Servants Meeting
    - Visitations
4. Sets the vision for Preservants
  - What are they studying? What rotations? What opportunities?
5. Selection of the Coordinators (e.g. primary school, middle school, etc.) to assist him and he work with him, and he follows up with them.
6. Summer Activities
  - Follow-up and make sure that every class is participating
  - HE used to have a summer activity when he was young: Library - come to church, sit and read for 2 hours
7. Trips, Conventions and Retreats for all classes
  - Following up with them
  - Encouraging children and servants to be active in them
  - Diocese Conventions, Local Conventions, Church Conventions
8. Servants Meeting
  - He sets the curriculum, arranges speakers, encourages servants to attend and follows-up on their attendance
9. Spiritual Edification of the Servants and Coordinators
  - Conventions for servants
  - Spiritual days for servants
  - Time for meditation, time for reading, time for discussion, liturgy, etc.
  - **Commitment and modeling behaviors for the servants** (including visitations,

attendance of church services, etc.)

#### 10. Mosab2at (Bible Contests)

#### 11. Gifts

- Kids have enough secular gifts (balls, etc.)
- Give spiritual gifts - books, crosses, icons, agpeyas, bibles, etc. to help him build a prayer corner

#### 12. Visitation for the Servants and Coordinators

- Check on their life, not just their service
- How is your school, how is your family, how is your finances - Confidential way

#### 13. Prayer Meetings

- If not weekly, then monthly at least

#### 14. Resolving issues and problems in service

- Problems between servants, between coordinators and servants, between servant and servee, etc.
- Be present and address them immediately

HE Recalls Ostaz Ezzat Fawzy (may the Lord repose his soul) who did all of these points and more. He was a role model for all of the servants, and no servant in that generation went without benefit from him. He would check on them, give them advice, visit them, teach them, take care of them as a father or a big brother.

### **The General Coordinator is the Servant of the Servants**

## Overview of the Annual General Coordinator Meeting - Fr Simon Dawood

- Emulate the meeting after the Diocese Priest Meeting
  - Fellowship
  - Beneficial discussions over meals and free time to learn from one another
  - Provide a similar atmosphere for the General Coordinators that we be edified together and edified from one another
- Four Components
  - Administrative Component (Friday)
    - Subject to feedback from all coordinators
  - Spiritual (our own spiritual building)
  - Pastoral (how do we relate and care for those we serve)
  - Educational (AI, what are our children facing in schools, conditions of society, etc.)
- Committee is still deciding on the main theme, but needs YOUR Feedback
  - Google form will be sent by email and Signal Group

- Each of us has thoughts about what is relevant and important, and what challenges are faced by the Coordinator. The goal of the meeting is to be as relevant and beneficial for each of you as possible - best way is to receive your feedback ahead of time, and before and after the meeting
- The more feedback you can give, the better it will be for us
- Stimulate Fellowship
  - Working meals (e.g. seated with coordinators with the same region, or other times different regions, given discussion topics, etc.)

# 2025-03-11: Q&A All Coordinators with HE

## Q&A

- It would be good to try and learn from each other as coordinators
  - HEMY Response: Maybe at the convention, we can pick a certain number of people to speak 15min about the service in their church
  - Fr Simon: We can let each of them share 1-2 of the coordinators share what has worked well with them that is unique. We can do it via Zoom as well.
  - Sherry: The description of the Signal Group has a link to our resources folder
- Trying to build opening service
  - HE: Agpeya should be part of Sunday School. HE, himself, learned the Agpeya from Sunday School. HE agrees that we need reform in our songs that match the ears of our children. Maybe we can make a committee in the diocese for songs and song curriculum (committee with good taste in lyrics and music, and well established in Orthodoxy). Committee needs to keep the curriculum updated. It should include hymns from the church. HE when he was young learned some hymns like Apenchois Pimairomi from Sunday School.
- Can HE discuss two servants per class without overburdening the servants?
  - HE: To be committed to Sunday School will never overburden the servant... to attend Sunday School, Servants Meeting, Visitations, Prepare the Lesson... if you are not willing to prepare the lessons or do visitations or attend servants meeting or attend Sunday School, then why do you want to be a SS Servant?
  - Release of the Spirit HHPS: We perceive ourselves as servants BEFORE teacher/accountant/lawyer/engineer/physician
  - Service takes the #1 priority in their life. That's why that generation (students of first SS Movement) came out in one generation? HHPS, Anba Youannis Gharbeya, Fr Pishoy Kamel, Fr Tadros, Anba, etc. They are the fruits of Sunday School because they were serious.
- Commitment and Seriousness: In smaller churches, who you choose from is limited. Sometimes we have candidates that have best of both worlds (skill, knowledge, personality, commitment) but some candidates are doing good in skills and knowledge, but not good in commitment or spirit of servant, and some vice versa. If we have only two candidates and each one is the opposite, which is better to choose?
  - HE: The committed one will be committed to learn. But the opposite one will not be committed

- Are churches doing background checks and requesting recommendations from fathers of confessions or church fathers before allowing someone to serve?
  - HE: Yes, we ask FoC, but why do a background check on someone who grew up in the church, was served by us, we watched him grow, etc. If I have doubts or considering to do a background check, I shouldn't choose him... I need to know him first and I will know if I need it. Not everyone who doesn't have a criminal record is fit for service.
- Preservants candidates need to have recommendation from Abouna, SS Servants, etc. This is not what happens in our case. We open for everyone, but not everyone who finishes the program will be servant. Is this okay?
  - HE: No, I said there are two ways (see notes).
  - O. Ezzat would put the Sunday School list on the altar for a month before the selection of servants, so that the servant selection would really be from God. Prayer should precede selection (as the Lord did)
- We typically say the most important service in church is visitation. Service of visitation for the servants is a difficult challenge to push on them. Some servants push back and say "a phone call is enough" What is YE's advice?
  - HE: Visitation is important and phone call is not visitation; it is a reminder to attend SS. Visitation should be in person, in the house. Modeling the behavior is very important. Growing up, every Thursday HE's SS Servant would come and visit him (SS was on Friday) even though HE attended regularly. And that was the case for everyone. HE loves to do visitation now because growing up he saw his SS Servants and Priests were visiting him. He learned from the modelled behavior. General Coordinator and Subcoordinator needs to visit the servants regularly for them to learn the behavior.
    - If servants are slacking, the Coordinator can take them and go visit together. And show them that it is possible, and how much of an impact it makes
- Preservants: They transitioned to a system of grading and scales with quarterly reviews (shared with parents) and it was very successful.
- There is a lack of commitment and seriousness by servants to the love of service (including visitation, etc.). How can we build that?
  - HE: We need to choose committed servants.
    - Even make it 40% of the grade
    - A committed person can learn
  - HE: We need to be role models
    - During one meeting in Priest Meeting, many priests didn't come so HE told them "I don't want anyone to complain about the commitment of the servants when you aren't attending!"
      - How can you expect the servant to visit someone when he has never been visited?
      - How can you expect a servant to attend liturgy from beginning when the coordinator comes at the end?

- How flexible should we be in all the things we discussed regarding the servants? If they have young kids, jobs, schools, etc.
  - A youth in HS or College has more time than a married person with children, family, work, commitments
  - Most of the service was picked up by youth
  - Preservants should start from 9th grade so he can start serving early - you make an army of young servants.
  - The more flexible we are, the more people will not be committed. The more strict, the more people will be committed. Strict with understanding.
- I have preservants that if I gave grades like YE is saying and one has 90% but my experience with that person is not committed at all, or I know things with him that I cannot reveal... how do I handle it?
  - If your grading system is based only on tests and attendance, you'll have that problem
  - If your grading system has FoC feedback, behavior, etc. with a high percentage, you won't have that problem
  - If I find out someone has a girlfriend, I need to tell him clearly - you cannot be a servant and have a girlfriend. If I'm his FoC then I have to follow-up with him, and if I'm not, maybe his FoC should. Someone should confront him for his salvation.

# 2025-03-25: Committee Meeting Minutes

## Potential Topics

### Pastoral Topics

- Engaging Parents
- Engaging Servants
  - Overcoming Barriers to Becoming an Engaged Servant
- How do you build connections with new servants? How do you encourage building connections with those being served?
- How to establish and grow a SS Program
  - Potential Speakers to be recommended by HEMY from experienced coordinators
- How to deal with servants at the different stages of their life (e.g. winter)
  - Potential Speaker: Fr John Ghali

### Educational Topics

- Staying Current in the Modern Era (e.g. AI - potential speaker: Jan Guirguis (St Rebekah))
- How to tailor a common diocese curriculum to the needs of the church, the needs of the place and time, etc. (potential speaker: Dr. Mary M Soliman)
  - Teach servant coordinators **how to train their servants** to make the curriculum work across place and time, needs, etc.

### Spiritual Topics

- Spiritual Warfare - what kinds of warfare, temptations, struggles, are common to the role of General Coordinator
  - Fr John to reach out to their graces to request them to give spiritual topic

### Administrative Meeting

- Need to harvest ideas (from our Zoom Meeting, from the Feedback Form, etc.) to prepare for the Administrative Meeting
  - Common Database - maybe we need to discuss SUS Portal (potential speaker: Sandy Naguib)
  - Mentorship Program - put that to Sayedna

## Potential Themes

## Seasons of the Service

- What are the seasons in the service of the Church? Spring, Winter, Summer, etc. - this could be relevant to both small churches and large churches
- Small Churches might be in the Fall - maybe there are growing pains and they're in Winter - maybe they're at the medium size where they have sufficient servants and not too large classes and it's spring - maybe they're a big church starting to feel the difficulties and they're in summer, etc.
  - Need to flesh out the seasons
- Much of the feedback came from smaller churches or new coordinators - we may want to get some experienced coordinators (with guidance from HE) who started the Sunday School program, grew it until it was successful, etc. to give some feedback and wisdom about how to develop a program - what are the spiritual components? What are the educational and administrative and pastoral components

## Scheduling

- Friday: Administrative Meeting
- Saturday: Educational and Spiritual Topics (3 hours each)
  - Breakout Groups? Scenarios?
- Sunday: Pastoral Module (two people @ 1.5 hours each)
  - Not lectures, but some other format (e.g. panel discussion, etc.)