

St. Mary & St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, Syracuse, NY
Servants Meeting
October 8, 2017

17 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ²as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should^[a] give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

- Eternal life for us and for our children is in our knowing the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ – the knowledge of the Father who gave up His Only Begotten Son that whoever believes in him may not perish but have everlasting life, and the knowledge of the Son Who gave Himself as a sacrifice for us to save us from eternal death and reconcile us to God His Father.
- In the prayer above, our Lord says that He has "given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." He continues and says 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."
- The children of God live in the world and with the sons of the world, and it is impossible to isolate ourselves from the children of the world who did not Glorify God and His Only-begotten Son in their hears, thoughts and actions.
 - In Egypt and the Middle East, the children of God face the challenge of Islam and persecution
 - In the West where freedom and a high quality of life exist, we face the challenge of the wrong use of freedom, and so on...
 - In Communist countries, the children of God face the challenge of Atheism and wrong ideas and philosophies
- St. Paul says "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what partnership has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). What is therefore the practical way to protect ourselves and our children who will come after us?
- The Church is responsible in front of God to teach, shepherd and take care of the children since a very young age, and to raise them in a true Christian fashion. The best way to achieve this is through EXAMPLE.
- We, as parents, have to be examples to our children in sanctifying the day of the Lord, coming to church to worship and partake of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, in reading Scriptures, prayer, etc..

- We need to learn how to dialogue with our children in love and simplicity and with an open heart. We have to welcome their questions. This dialogue has to be at a level that suits each development phase in the life of our children.
- During the youth years, our children face several challenges and are easily influenced by other ideas. This is the age when they start questioning the beliefs they received from their parents, and we have to be ready to answer their questions.
- St. Paul says to his disciple St. Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,[b] in faith, in purity." He also asks him to 13 "Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and them that hear you.
- He also tells him "And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Therefore Scriptures are capable of making our youth wise unto salvation. Our children need to learn Holy Scriptures, love them and live them. In Scriptures, we see the example of Moses and how his upbringing at the hands of his mother made him willing later in life to lead His people.
- In the First Epistle of St. John, he writes.
 - I write to you, little children,
Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.
 - 13 I write to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.
 - I write to you, young men,
Because you have overcome the wicked one.
 - I write to you, little children,
Because you have known the Father.
 - 14 I have written to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.
 - I have written to you, young men,
Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked one.
- When our children know the Father and the Son, they are strong and the word of God abides in them so that they may overcome the wicked one. They are strong in knowledge and understanding, in love, faith, and learning..they are strong in holiness and purity, strong in thought and capable of challenging every foreign thought.

- With respect to evil one, St. Paul says

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,[c] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

This is the whole armor of God for us and for our children everywhere and at all times so that we can live in peace and security. May our Lord who said "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" grant us all His victory over the world, the devil and sin, and to Him is all glory Amen !