



The Church of Alexandria and Preaching Code: 11/FE/4

1. General Aims of the unit

To Celebrate the feast of the Apostles with more understanding of the efforts of our Church to spread the Good News.

2. Special aims of the lesson

1. To emphasise that preaching is a fundamental principle of Christianity , and Christianity requires by definition the sharing of our belief, faith and love of God with others.
2. To highlight the role of the Church of Alexandria in preaching the true faith.
3. To elaborate on the difficulties faced in preaching the word.
4. To highlight the joy and glory emerged from preaching the good news

3. Outcomes:

By the end of this lessons the teens are able to:

1. Share in a debate about the contribution of the Coptic Orthodox Church in spreading the good news in the early stage of Christianity , and her role now specially in Africa.
2. Contribute from their money and efforts to support the missionary work.
3. Make the missionary work a part of their daily prayers and petitions.
4. Accept to be soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ spreading His word of life to their families and friends.
5. Give a biblical support for the necessity of preaching .

6. Verses :

Matt 28:19-20 , Mark16:15 , Acts 1:8 , Acts 4:29-31 , 1Cor.9:16

6.References :

1. The Coptic Orthodox Church as a Church of Education and Theology Fr. Tadros Malaty,
2. Come across and help us HGB Antonius Marcos Vol 1 , 2
- 3.Attached Notes

Preaching in the Church of Alexandria

Introduction:

The Church obeyed the command of our Lord Jesus Christ “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature....*” (Mark16:15), and preached the gospel to everyone. They started in Jerusalem , and when the Priests and the Jewish elders persecuted them after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) they scattered outside Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit guided them to preach in Judia and Samaria and to the end of the earth according to the words of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8) . The word of God spread with the mighty hand of the Lord. All the civilized nations at that time either in Asia , Africa or Europe heard about Jesus Christ the Savior. The 12 Apostles , Saint Paul , the seventy , and their disciples filled the world with the salvation of Christ through His crucifixion and resurrection . Saint Mark share was to preach in Libya and Alexandria . He established the Church of Alexandria .Before his martyrdom , he left to the young Church ; the gospel ,a Bishop , 3 Priests , 7 deacons , the Liturgy of Eucharist , and the Catechetical school of Alexandria. But more importantly he left them the fiery zeal of spreading the good news to everyone either in Egypt or outside it.

1. Preaching inside Egypt

- ❖ The majority of the Egyptian were idols worshippers, a minority of Jews were believing in God . Egypt was ruled by the Roman Empire . In Alexandria there was the famous school of Alexandria which was the center of education and philosophy in the world. In its library there were hundreds of thousands of manuscripts in all the branches of knowledge.
- ❖ The young Church had a tremendous task to attract the Egyptian to the faith in Christ .The Clergy and the Laity aided by the power of the Holy Spirit (fiery life , words of wisdom , martyrdom ,Christian behavior and love , wonders and miracles) preached the good news for every category of the people; the peasants , the educated , the philosophers , the poor , the rich , the slaves , the masters , the rulersetc.
- ❖ The school of Alexandria played a crucial rule . This school mainly started to teach the catechumen the basis of faith to prepare them for baptism. But later on it was involved deeply in philosophy to attract the philosophers to the faith. Many great philosophers left their philosophy and followed the great philosopher “Jesus Christ” as ‘Athenagoras’ ‘Pantaenus’ , St. Clement’. The Holy Spirit worked in them to attract many of others to the faith. The dean and the teachers of the school were living a true Christian life . They were teaching , and preaching Christianity inside and outside the school.
- ❖ Pantaenus – the dean of the school between 181 and ~190 AD- introduced the Coptic Alphabet , by using the Greek letters added to seven letters from the ancient Demotic letters. His aim was to translate the Holy bible to the language of the normal Egyptian so they are able to read their bible , understand it , and attract a lot of Pagans to faith.
- ❖ The normal people by their true Christian behavior and love attracted many Pagans to faith as we know from the story of conversion of Saint Bakhomios (He joined the army to fight in Ethiopia and in his way they passed by a city called ‘Essna’ ~ 310AD .They were very tired and starved. The people there accepted them cheerfully and offered them food and shelter. Bakhomios was touched by their behavior and asked about their identity. They told him that they are Christians . So he decided that when he returned back from the war ,he would accept the faith. And as the troops were ordered to return home , he did not return to his village but

to another village where he was taught about Christ and baptized .Then he consecrated his life to serve the Lord.)

- ❖ The lists of Catechumen people in the Churches at the first four centuries in Egypt were a good indication about the number of people who accepted the faith through preaching.

2. Preaching outside Egypt

1. Missions to Africa

- ❖ The Copts in the first four or five centuries proved to be extremely active in the spreading of their faith beyond their frontiers in practically every direction.
- ❖ In north Africa mainly Cyrenaica or Pentapolis (Libya now) , The Church there was established by St. Mark . It seems that he was accompanied by Alexandrian helpers during his visitations from Alexandria. The natives of these countries were looking for education in the Catechetical school of Alexandria. Since the council of Nicea in 325 AD ,Cyrenacia had been recognized as a part of the see of Saint Mark . We know from history that Theophilus the Patriarch of Alexandria in 410AD ordained ‘Synesius’ a bishop for Cyrenaica .
- ❖ Copts had more impact in the upper valley of the Nile ‘ Nubia’ . Two factors helped in steady flow of Christian missionaries . First , the persecutions which gave the initial incentive to Christian to flee to the oases of the Western Desert and to the south into Nubia. Secondly , the rise of ascetic monasticism which penetrated the southern regions as soldiers of Christ. Recent archeological excavations in the lower Sudan prove that Christianity was rooted there by the fourth century. In the fifth century , good relations are recorded between monastic order of great St. Shenute in Suhag and the Nubian tribes of the South. By the six century the ancient temples were converted into Christian churches, and new churches were constructed. Moreover numerous monasteries were found on the edge of the valley , as that of St. Simeon (Anba Hedra) which stood short distance across the Nile from modern Aswan.
- ❖ Christianity was spread into Ethiopia in the fourth century , when the authentic evangelism of the kingdom took place. Two brothers ‘ Frumentius and Aedesius’ from Alexandria but residents of Tyre, boarded a trading ship going to India and were shipwrecked on the Red sea coast of Erythria . They were picked up by men of Ethiopia monarch and serve in the king’s palace . Frumentius became the King’s secretary and tutor to the young crown prince, to whom he doubtless gave a Christian education. When the prince became the king of Ethiopia , he declared Christianity the official religion of the state . Frumentius went to Alexandria to convey the news to the Patriarch Pope ‘Athanasius’ and to plead with him to consecrate a special bishop to watch over the spiritual progress of those Christians. The Pope ordained Frumentius himself under the name of ‘Anba Salama’ which means ‘the father of peace’ in ~356 AD. Anba Salma returned back accompanied by presbyters to help in the establishment of churches in this country. Since then the Coptic church send the Bishop of Ethiopia who oversee the church there , till recently when they got the right to ordain their own bishops.

2. Missions to the East

- ❖ The Copts were involved in the missionary fields in Asia , but on a modest scale. They moved freely to many parts of Palestine , Syria , Cappadocia , Caesarea , Arabia , and they reached India.

- ❖ In 190 AD, Pope Dimetrui I , elected Pantaenus the dean of the school of Alexandria for a Christian mission to preach in India . After accomplishing his mission and in his way back he preached in Ethiopia , Arabia and Yemen.In his journey he brought the Gospel of St. Matthew written by his hand in Hebrew, brought by Bartholomew the Apostle.

3. Missions to Europe

- ❖ Very little is recorded about the role of the Copts in breaching in Europe, but here some information:
 - ❖ St. Mauritius from the Theban legion went to Switzerland in 285AD. He refused to sacrifice to the idols and earned the crown of martyrdom His statue stands in one of the public places of Saint-Moritz. His three companions hid themselves in the dreary wastes of the land of Glarus and ultimately reached the Lake of Zurich, where they baptized converts until they were seized by the emperor's men and tortured and beheaded . An icon of the three saints with their heads in their hands is an evidence of the story. Similar story with little variation told about St. Victor who is the Patron of the town of Solothurn in Switzerland .
 - ❖ Coptic missionaries reached as far as British Isles long before the coming of St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597AD. Seven Egyptian monks are buried at Disert Uldith and there is much in the ceremonies and architecture of Ireland in the earliest time .

4. Mission in the 20th. century