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*Saint Mark's Church
Sunday School*

Sunday School Movement & Habib Guirguis

Code: 11/SA/5

1. General Aims of the unit

To study the contemporary history of our church and the lives of her Heroes . How they change the face of the church and follow their path.

2. Special aims of the lesson

1. Explore the life of Habib Guirguis in details
2. Highlight his Christian Character and zeal to study more about the gospel , apply it in his personal life; study more about all the aspects of the church , history , Patrology , theology , etc. And spread all this to the whole church
3. Stress his vision in fighting the darkness in his generation.
4. Detail his struggle to build up Sunday school movement, Christian education even in public education , Coptic magazines , Patrology translation , charity organization ,

3. Outcomes:

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

1. Follow the path of “Habib Guirguis” as a youth, in consecrating their lives to the Lord.
2. Accept their mission that they are the “light of the Church” in Australia.
3. Realize that “ living Orthodoxy” is the first step to “spread Orthodoxy”
4. Follow the traces of Habib Guirguis in fighting the darkness.

4. Verses :

2Tim 4:7-8 ; Dan.12:3 ; Mat. 5:14-16

5. References :

- 1.Attached Notes

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Archdeacon Habib Guirguis is our Example
(Yr. 10-12)

Outcomes`

At the end of this session , the teens will be able to :

5. Follow the path of “Habib Guirguis” as a youth, in consecrating their lives to the Lord.
6. Accept their mission that they are the “light of the Church” in Australia.
7. Realize that “ living Orthodoxy” is the first step to “spread Orthodoxy”

Useful Verses:

- ❖ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2Tim 4:7-8)*
- ❖ *Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever. (Dan.12:3)*
- ❖ *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Mat. 5:14-16)*

Introduction

1. Run this game in the class. The aim of the game is to help the teens to understand the meaning of ‘consecration’. All the Christians are consecrated to the Lord and have to serve His Holy name regardless of their marital status, qualifications, work commitments ,or having an official career in the Church as Clergy or not.
2. The game
 - ❖ Subdivide the class into groups

- ❖ Write the following names of Saints on a sheet of paper and give it to each group and ask them to write on the back of the paper the common spiritual characteristic shared by this group of Saints. The Saints are :“Saint Mark , Saint Anthony , Pope Athanasios , Anba Rewis”
- ❖ Discuss the outcomes to the class. Hopefully you get the term ‘Consecration’ from one of the groups.
- ❖ Then ask the class for the meaning of the term ‘consecration’.
- ❖ Give a biblical meaning of the word.
- ❖ Print the following verses on a sheet of paper, give it to each group to discuss. Accept responses .
- ❖ Highlight the fact that consecration is related to the heart first before it is put to action.

The verses are :

+ *"Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine." (Ex.13:2)*

+ *"So you shall put them(the sacred clothes) on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests. (Ex.28:43)*

+ *Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land Into the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD. (Joel 1:14)*

3. Give a brief account adolescent years of Habib Guirguis.

- ❖ Mention his eagerness to consecrate all his life to serve the Lord.
- ❖ Join the newly started ‘Clerical School’ regardless of the darkness of that time
- ❖ Explore the factors that might have led him to consecration. Some of which are: his mother, his regular attendance to the Church and the stories of great Saints of his time like ‘Anba Abraam Bishop of Fayoom’(1881 –1914 A.D) ,.....

The Lesson

Information needed for the lesson

1. Habib Gurguis was born in a Christian family in 1876A.D. His father departed in 1882A.D. His mother took care of him , his brother and sister. The influence of his

mother was so great that “the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church” became his hope , joy and his whole life.

2. He joined the Great Coptic school which was established by Pope Kyrellos IV(1854 A.D –1862 A.D).He finished the primary level , then the high level.
3. At the age of 17 (1993 A.D) , he enthusiastically and joyfully joined the first group of the Clerical school, which was established in same year (this school, was reopened after about 13 centuries of continuous closure of the great school of Alexandria. One attempt , in 1875 A.D, failed to reopen but for Monks) .
4. Habib was one of 24 students who joined the school (12 priests and 12 laypersons) . Two only completed the course, and Habib was one of them.
5. All the theological topics were under one subject called ‘religion’ (which included all different theological subjects , church history , holy bible , exhortation ,traditions ,.....etc.) . The Church failed to find a teacher to teach this subject . At that time there was only one old priest (from the disciples of Pope KyrellosIV) named Rev. Fr. Pheltheos, who had good knowledge of the Bible, the theology of the Church and its rites, and was able to stand up in the Church and orate a sermon. Unfortunately at that time he was sick .
6. Habib was appointed in 1998 A.D while he was still in the final year of the school , to teach religion to all the students of the school . He went to the library of the Patriarchate and educated himself from all the available resources and manuscripts . On several occasions he would go to Rev. Fr. Pheltheos to benefit from his knowledge and experience . He felt the burden of this job , but the Lord enflamed his heart to feel that the success and progress of the school is his only duty . He felt as if he was created for the school and the school was established for him.
7. The Church was his ultimate aim . The Spirit enlighten his understanding that without nourishing the souls of the people with the word of God ,and practicing the Liturgical life in the Church , the Church would not survive and flourish . He knew that he need hundreds and thousands of consecrated hearts to preach and carry the flame. So, in practical terms, he went through these steps :
 - a) He worked without ceasing to rebuilt the “Clerical school” technically by expanding the subjects and by adding new subjects to match with the modern colleges of theology. He travelled all over Egypt to collect donations to refurbish the old building and equip it with the necessary requirement for a suitable theological school . When he was appointed as the headmaster of the school in1918 A.D , he started a major shake up in the school :
 - ❖ Preparing and appointing suitable staff to cater for the expansion of the school and the increasing number of students.
 - ❖ Built up the level of the students of the school by raising the intake level to be equivalent to year 10 and later to year 12 .

- ❖ In 1945A.D he established the evening section to cater for University graduates who would like to be qualified to serve in the Church. Accordingly, the Egyptian authority accepted it as equivalent to a college degree .
 - ❖ Rebuilt the school in a modern way , and built a church beside it so students were able to practice the Liturgical life and preaching. He also opened a special school to the singers of the Church (mainly blind at that time).
- b) He started the first Sunday School Class at Saint Mark’s Cathedral in 1900A.D in Cairo. These classes were spread all-over Egypt , Sudan , and extended to Ethiopia.
- ❖ In 1918A.D , he established the central committee of Sunday school to oversee the expansion of the movement and set the curriculum for the different stages.
 - ❖ He wrote the lessons for the classes and printed pictures for those lessons, in Germany.
 - ❖ He wrote many hymns for the children of Sunday school and also for the whole Church to fill the need of the Church in this area.
 - ❖ The Pope was the head of Sunday school organization, and Habib Guirguis was the Deputy Head. Sunday school movement was the fire which enflamed the whole church and lead to today’s Church.
 - ❖ All the present clergy (Bishops Priests and Deacons) grew up in Sunday school. The Pope himself was one of the disciples of Habib Guirguis.
- c) He started since 1898 A.D to give sermons in the Churches and the associations . He was very famous and talented. The Holy Spirit supported his sermons and led many for repentance. He spread the good news in all the dioceses of Egypt. During one of his earliest sermons Pope Kyrellos V , was very joyful to the extend that he stood behind him blessing the congregation and Habib with his cross for the duration of the sermon.
- d) He established many Christian associations to spread the good news and encouraged preaching and caring for the poor , the needy and the orphans. All these associations converted their assembly halls into churches or built new churches.
- e) He used the written word to spread the good news and educate the people.
1. He published “El Karma – the Vine” for 17 years. It was stopped for financial problems. It was the best Christian magazine , he was able to attract many

specialized and respectable writers. The magazine was the first to transmit the translations of the treasures of the Fathers of the church.

2. He wrote and/or published thirty books. Three of which are hymns and eleven on the Christian education in the public schools. The others ranged from spiritual ('The Mystery of Godliness', 'The Comfort of Believers'), Dogma ('The Seven Sacraments of the Church', 'The Orthodox Rock'), historical ('Saint Mark ,Saint Anthony & Pola'), Patrology ('The Ladder to Heaven and Steps of Virtues'), Ritual ('The Spirit of Supplication' and the Liturgy book), and General ('The Clerical School Between the Past and Present' and 'The Practical Means for the Coptic Augmentation').
 - f) He struggled to introduce the Christian education in the Public schools since 1908 A.D . He also wrote three books in 1909 A.D to suit the primary schools .These books were reprinted for the 5th. time in 1913 A.D. In 1937 A.D , he wrote eight books , four of which were for the primary stage and four for high schools.
 8. He had a very warm relationship with all the contemporary Popes, specially Pope Kyrellos V, who ordained him as a deacon and archdeacon. He was then appointed as his special deacon and the preacher of the great Cathedral. He, also accompanied the Pope on his two trips to all the dioceses of Egypt to support orthodoxy against the preaching of other churches .
 9. He was nominated by Pope KyrellosV to be a Bishop , but he apologized because of his young age. Pope Kyrellos V used to ask him to attend the meetings of the Holy Synod (normally the members of the Synod were the Bishops and the heads of the monasteries) . Later he was nominated on three occasions for the Patriarchate , and twice to be a Bishop but was rejected by the Holy Synod under the pressure of the Monks.
 10. He was elected more than once in the "Coptic community council" to support 'the education' as the main factor in the revival of the church , defend the survival and expansion of the Clerical school , and to stop against non biblical divorce (the council was responsible to run the judgements of divorce for the Coptic Orthodox).
 11. Many stood against his vision and reformations. But the Lord supported his faith and hope in the renaissance of the church. He was a great example of a Christian who lived and practiced what he taught . His great love to every one, even those who attacked him vigorously , was an evidence of his fiery spiritual life . The life of asceticism he practiced was an indication of his great love to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. His faith and hope, especially in the hard times he went through, highlights the great qualities of the man and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 12. He departed in the Lord at the age of 75 (21/8/1951)
- ❖ after 53 years in serving the Lord , as a great teacher of Theology ,

- ❖ a man of vision to the reforms in the Coptic Church ,
- ❖ the leader of education , the reformer of the Clerical school,
- ❖ the founder of Sunday school ,
- ❖ the great writer and a great man of ethics.
- ❖ The Coptic Church regained its strength and zeal to spread the good news among her children and the others.

Delivery of the lesson

1. Highlight the zeal of Habib to consecrate his life to serve the Lord in the Coptic Church against all the obstacles, disregarding all the negatives and problems . The following is a summary of the problematic circumstances:

- ❖ **Internal problems** were evident in the disputes between the Clergy and the Laity ,as the Clergy at that time were not educated or knowledgeable in the Church Dogmas or the Bible. Mismanagement of the money and land owned by the Church. Each group in the Church was looking for a better Church. Some were crying for the lost glory of the Church, some used the worldly methods like issuing a Government decree to depose the Pope , and some used accusations against others .
- ❖ **External Problems** : Other churches like ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ started to grab many of the Orthodox members after their failure to convert the Moslems. They established schools , orphanages ,and taught centers . They benefited the lack of education in the Church. They also, used the financial support to attract the poor population.

Allow the group to share in discussing Habib’s feelings and ambitions when he applied to the Clerical School , and the motives that led him to consecrate his life in this very dark era.

- ❖ Concentrate on ‘ saving everyone through the Church’ was his ultimate aim.
- ❖ The Spirit filled his heart and mind by ‘the Church revival to witness the Lord Jesus’ .
- ❖ Let each of the teens talk about (or write) his ambitions toward the Church and if he would like to consecrate his life to the Lord.

2. Highlight the environment of darkness in the Church and how Habib became ‘the light’ of this darkness.

- ❖ Explore the factors that led to the darkness in the Church on 19th. century . The main two factors were:
 - ❖ Excommunication of the Church from other Christian churches in the council of Chalcedon on 451 A.D , and the persecution of the Christian Roman Empire to the Egyptians.
 - ❖ The Arab invasion of Egypt on 641A.D , and the tireless strategies and practices to convert the Egyptians to Islam . They tried to demolish the identity

of the Egyptians . They accomplished their goal through all types of hefty fines , persecution , replacing the National language (Coptic) , and humiliation of the pride of Egyptians. The existence of the Coptic Church till now is counted as one of the great miracles of the world .

- ❖ Although there were some stars in the church like “Anba Abraam” , “Anba Sarabamon abo Tarha” , yet they were not able to quench the darkness of ignorance and lack of education of the Clergy or Laity.
- ❖ Discuss with the teens the vision of Habib Guirguis to solve the problem of darkness
 - ❖ How he analyzed the situation and came to practical solutions. How he started by himself and had the faith and courage to fight in all the frontiers . He did not blame anyone , or waste his time in mourning. Instead of cursing the darkness he lit a candle to overcome the darkness.
 - ❖ He had a very clear goal “ to guide everyone to know God through the church” . He used these techniques ;
 - ❖ Educate the leaders (the clergy) through the Clerical school
 - ❖ Teach the new generation through Sunday school classes , and press hard to introduce lessons of religion in the public schools.
 - ❖ Spread the word of God to the whole congregation through the sermons in the churches , the Christian associations .
 - ❖ Increase the knowledge by writing and publishing books in different directions, and monthly magazine.

Run a brainstorming session about the darkness of society and how they would be able, through the grace of the Lord, to light a candle to quench it .

3. Habib Guirguis was an example of true Christianity by his behaviour and Orthodox style of life before being a teacher of words , books , or magazines.

- ❖ His strong trust and faith in God made him use prayers and fasting as his tools to solve the hard situations. On one occasion the direction in the ‘Coptic community council’ aimed at closing the Clerical school for short of funds. He opposed the member, who suggest the closure, very strongly, and said to him ‘I warn you and others, if you close this school, even for an hour, you have to bear the consequences as it is not mine it’s Christ’s. Whoever stands against the school is against Christ Himself.’ . He went directly to the school , gathered the staff and students and announced a fast , prayers and vigil . And the decision was overturned.
- ❖ He lived the Church with all its sacraments , praises , and traditions . He insisted to built a church adjacent to the Clerical School , so the students were able to practice

their Orthodox faith . He wrote books about the sacraments and the Orthodox faith. He wrote many songs on the tunes of the Church hymns .

- ❖ He lived an ascetic life . He lived a virgin . All the money came to his hands he put in the funds of the Clerical School or the Christian institutions to spread ‘the word of Salvation’ and to care for the needy. One time Pope Kyrellos V , donate him a house near the Clerical college to live in. He accepted the donation as a sign of obedience .He register the house in the name of he Pope ,and then used the house as a residence for the singers . He refused totally to change his service in the Clerical School even when he was offered eight folds salary in one of the Coptic schools (his salary was 2.0 Egyptian pounds a month). He received a lot of money but he departed poor.
- ❖ He had great love ,even to those who insulted him. Never ever did he return any criticism directed against him. It happened that one of his disciples wrote a very harsh letter criticizing one of his published articles , and Habib’s response was to send a letter thanking him for the time he spent in reading the published article meticulously.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit filled his personality , speeches , books with a fiery flavor . Any one who dealt with him , listened to his sermons , or read his books was inspired to love and follow the Lord. Examples are our beloved Pope who said, ‘ I used to visit him weekly specially in the last two years of his life on earth. Whenever I went to visit him I took a small note book to record one or more of his precious advises and wisdom’. Bishop Gregorios said ‘ Many youth followed his path because he was a good example of Christ. They loved him for his sermons , his books and articles , for his appearance , in his Prayer , in his silence , in short in every thing . Many converted and consecrated themselves to the Lord because of him’

Explore with the teens how they live their Orthodoxy first and how they will be able to convince the others with its uniqueness.

CONCLUSION

1. Prepare a declaration and let each one in your class take it home , pray all the week before signing it , return it next week , put it on the altar from the start of the Holy Mass, get it back , and put it in front of him/her on his disk. This is a reminder of the teen for the consecration of his/her life to serve the Lord in the Church.

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