



The Praises and Sundays of Kiahk Encountering the Baby of the Manger

The First Sunday Of Kiahk



**Holy Silence
and the Secret Conversation
with the Lord**

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01

Holy Silence and the Secret Conversation with the Lord



As the month of Kiahk begins, what concerns the believers is staying up in the 'seven and four' praises, where everyone encounters the Savior of humanity as they praise with their hearts and minds.

This month is celebrated by staying up late in the monasteries and in many churches, especially on the Saturday vespers and the overnight praises until Sunday Liturgy.

The Sunday readings in this month take the believers on a journey with the people of God as they journey towards the child of the manger.

Silence of the Temple Child

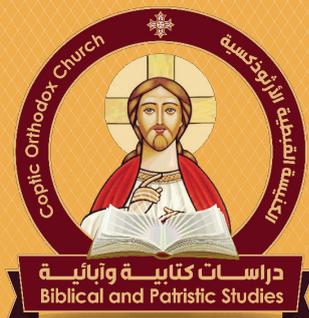
During the first week of the month of Kiahk, the Church celebrates the occasion of the presentation of



the Holy Virgin Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem, when she was three years old, because she was a Nazirite (consecrated) for

the Lord. This is because when her mother Hannah was barren, she and her husband St. Joachim were very upset. She vowed and said: 'My Lord, if you grant me a child, I will give him to the Lord to serve in the temple all the days of his life.' The Lord accepted her prayer and gave her this saint and she named her Mary. After raising her for three years, she went with her to the temple of the Lord and presented her to reside with the virgins where she grew in virtue, asceticism, and worship. She stayed about ten years until the fullness of the time when the Lord came into the world, taking flesh from this pure virgin whom He had chosen.

Perhaps one of the most important virtues that she acquired since her childhood is holy silence, as she kept silent from the conversations of the world so that her heart would be preoccupied with God's work within her. This virtue remained with her until the day she left the world. As the Evangelist repeats his saying about



her, “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19, 51). Saint Mary would not have been able to endure the exalted divine graces she had received, had the grace of God not endowed her to contemplate in her depths the mysteries of God and His gifts to her and to all mankind.

Since her childhood, this unique saint became the leader of the procession of those who would choose to be silent for the sake of the Lord, where neither the joys of this temporal life nor its temptations can take the believer's mind away from his attachment to the Lord and glorifying Him for His divine economy that He carried out for the sake of our eternal life.

Through her sacred silence, the virgin was prepared to become the Mother of God, and through holy silence the believer prepares himself to be the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in him (1 Corinthians 3:16).

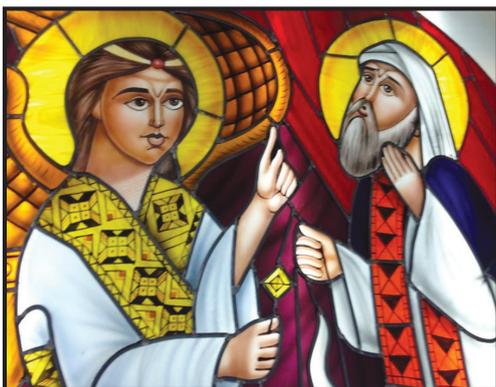
The world receives the nativity of Christ with decorations, lights, gifts, and parties. What Saint Mary offered with her sacred silence since her childhood, exceeds every adornment, gift and every celebration.

It is appropriate for us in this blessed month to evaluate our lives: Can we receive the Savior of the world in our hearts through our secret conversations with Him, without being hindered or interrupted by vain conversations?

Since her childhood, the saint has not stopped being serious in completing her mission, and this was clearly evident when she heard that Elizabeth her relative has also conceived a son in her old age. “Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth.” (Luke 1:39-40). Even though she was silent, the infant leaped in Elizabeth’s womb (Luke 1:41-44). The priest's house was transformed to a house of praise, in which even the infant would participate!

Let us be silent with Saint Mary and carry Christ in our hearts, so that the Spirit of the Lord may work within us, transforming our earth to a joyful heaven. This is the Christmas gift that delights the wonderful child of the Manger!

Silence of the Elder Priest



On the first Sunday of Kiahk, our hearts are burning with longing to experience what St. Mary, who consecrated herself for the Lord, has enjoyed since her childhood. We also long to experience the silence the Zachariah the priest has experienced as he received the annunciation of the conception of John, who prepares the way of the Lord.

Indeed, Zachariah's silence was due to his disbelief of the good news that the Lord delivered to him by Gabriel who stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). However, the beneficent God took this disciplinary action for the edification of Zachariah the priest and to spread the news of this gift that was given to him. Consequently, everyone who heard of the birth of John asked, "What kind of child will this be?" (Luke 1: 66), and they felt that the hand of the Lord was with him!

Zachariah the priest was in need of this silence to the extent he was not given a chance to even speak to his wife Elizabeth or to his relatives. How did Zachariah spend those nine months?! He had nothing to do but to praise in silence, study the Holy Scriptures and constantly pray to God to enlighten his mind, reveal to him His plan, His mysteries, and His prophecies while practicing his 'Metanoias' and his apparent and hidden worship!

Thus, at the beginning of the month of Kiahk, it is appropriate for us to pray first with our hearts then also with our tongues saying: "For with You is the fountain of life, In Your light we see light." (Psalm 36: 9). We fast, prostrate ourselves, pray and praise so that the child of the manger the Sun of Righteousness may shine upon us and we comprehend the words of the Prophet: "But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. (Malachi 4: 2).

Silent Procession

The incarnation of the Word of God, the conception of Him, and His birth in a manger, not in the house of a priest or a worldly ruler, prompts us to join the marvelous procession of the silent.

The temple did not celebrate His birth, the priests and church leaders did not go to worship and adore Him. Silence reigned over the world on that night. Inevitably, the heavenly hosts who are unable to examine His divinity and glory, stood in silence to welcome the Savior!



Who were the members of this Silent Parade?

An angel of the Lord stood before simple shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill towards men!" (Luke 2: 9, 13-14)

They did not appear to the multitude of priests or people, but to the simple men who were faithfully watchful in their

work, longing to see the Messiah (Savior). As soon as they saw and heard the angels, they set out to Bethlehem and said, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15). They were so happy! These shepherds joined the procession of the angels in silence without exploitation!

Also joining the procession was a group of Magi led by a great star, and as Saint John Chrysostom says, that the star was an angel who came in the form of a star and spoke



with the Magi in their language, the language of astronomy and planets!

The Evangelists did not mention anything to us about their conversations on the road, whether with each other or with the nations that they came across and were astonished by them. It is as though the Evangelists are calling us to join this silent procession. We do not speak with our tongues, but rather dedicate our hearts, thoughts, emotions, and actions to the King the Savior of the world!

When they reached Jerusalem, no one from the royal palace or the men of the temple accompanied them. Herod was getting ready to kill Him and what preoccupied the leaders of the temple was their fear of losing their authorities and revenues!

So let us join the procession of the silent!

Lord, let me join the procession of the silent through Your grace.

May I join your Nazirite (consecrated) child, St. Mary.

May I find my rest in your holy temple with the virgins! That I may walk in the simplicity of children.

Not occupying myself with the pleasures of the world or its temptations!

As I choose to be silent in your temple, my heart speaks with You,

And You speak with my weakness, O Holy One.

May I keep all things and ponder them in my heart, with Your mother.

In silence, may I busy myself with abiding in you.

May You dwell in me, deep in my depths, and higher than my highest!

May I Join Zachariah, the silent priest. Nothing concerns me more than Your divine word and Your divine revelations.

I will not be captivated by the murderous literality, but rather find in Your Bible the paradise of freedom,

May I pick from Your Bible the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, peace, gentleness, chastity ...

And drink from the springs of your ever-flowing love!
May I faithfully accompany the simple watchful Shepherds, that I may see that heaven
is not far from me.
And hear the heavenly hosts rejoice for my salvation.
May I Join the choir of angels and enjoy the new song.
Allow me to accompany the Magi, the gentiles.
Their hearts were burning with longing to meet You.
And as they walked on their way, they testified to You.
And they gave You what the priests and Levites could not.
May Your grace lead me, that I may not stop resisting the wicked, even if it was a king.
May I not criticize anyone, even if a priest is indifferent of Your salvation!

Let my tongue be silent, that my heart may speak,
Let my heart be silent, so You may speak within me, O Holy One!

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