

The Church Readings

“Let the Church readings show you your sins and encourage you to leave them”
– Pope Shenouda III.

The Church readings are divided in two:

Sundays:

- A reading about the work of the Holy Trinity in the Church is read every Sunday
- Teaches the reader about the theologically supported importance of unity throughout the church.

All other days of the week:

- Special daily readings are read according to the feast, saint or martyr that is commemorated on that day.
- The readings should reveal the different gifts that the church and its members have been given, and how they have strengthened it.

The Coptic year:

- Has 52 weeks:
 - 12 months x 4 Sundays = 48+1 (Nasie) = 49
 - some months have a 5th Sunday = 3
 - Total: 52 weeks (52 Sundays)
- Has 13 months:
 - 12 of them have 30 day
 - The month of Nasie, the last month of the Coptic year, is only 5 or 6 days long.
- Since Hatour is the month of wheat harvest and other winter crops, the parable of the sewer is read at the first and second Sunday of the month.
- Through great wisdom, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church fathers put together the readings of each day of the year. Their purpose is to teach us how to walk in the Lord's way, and to highlight the importance of salvation.

The readings of each month have a theme:

- **Tout:** The love of God the Father.
- **Baba:** The authority of the Saviour on the souls of humanity
- **Hatour:** The Gospel of the Saviour to His people
- **Kiahk:** The Saviour was incarnated and became one of His people
- **Toba:** Jesus Christ granting salvation to the Gentiles
- **Amshir:** The Saviour satisfies the believers
- **Baramhat, Baramoda** and the first half of **Bashans** come during the Great Lent, the Holy Week and the Holy 50 days, these events have their special readings
- Second half of **Bashans:** The Lordship of the Savior.
- **Baona:** The gifts of the Holy Spirit and Holy Communion, since the feast of the Pentecost usually falls on this month.
- **Abib:** The Saviour's aid to His disciples and the feast of Apostles
- **Mesra:** The Saviour takes care of His Church.
- **Nasie:** if there is Sunday in this month, we read about the Second Coming in Matthew 24

The Katamarus is the name of the book that has all of these readings:

Part 1:

- Describes the continuous work of God in the church and in mankind.
- He is the lover of mankind.
- He works for the good of mankind and shares its troubles.
- He is elevating mankind, inviting them to share in His eternal glory, and this is the perfect love of God to mankind.

Part 2:

- Describes the unity between:
 - The struggling and victorious church
 - The earthly and the heavenly
 - The people of the Old Testament and the New Testament
 - Men and women and between the clergy and the congregation.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Light that unites all members of His church, just as different solar bodies gather around the sun, the source of their light.
- These are not just stories to be read, they are part of the rituals of the church, and prayed using the church tune for that occasion (annual, Kiahk, sad or joyful).
- Through these readings, the church provides a full picture of the love of God and His work for our salvation.
- They also show the importance of perseverance and repentance in order to be worthy of this salvation.
- They teach us about heavenly meditation, accepting both suffering and joy, partaking in church sacraments and enjoying the word of God.
- Most importantly, they guide us on having a personal relationship with God and preparing for the Kingdom of Heaven, which God has been preparing for us since the beginning.
- The part of the liturgy in which the church readings are read is known as the Liturgy of the catechumens.
- The Katamarus contains the readings read during Vespers, Matins and the Liturgy.
- Some may find the readings repetitive; however, they are different every day and require focus and enlightened hearts to benefit from the treasures within them.

The readings of the Church are included in 4 books:

- The Annual Katamarus; which is read year round on any day
- The Katamarus of the Great Lent
- The Katamarus of the Holy Week
- The Katamarus of the Holy Fifty days; it is read from Easter until the Pentecost
- These books have been put together with accuracy inspired by God to honor the greatest events that have happened throughout mankind.

Note: There are special readings for Sundays.

Annual Sundays Readings:

- The general goal of these readings is to reveal the work of the Trinity in the Church, by discussing the continuous work of God for the Church and humanity.
- They describe the love of God for humanity and desire to lift everyone up and give him or her eternal life.
- They also emphasize the importance of the role of the Church in guiding and helping believers. The believers are blessed by: “The love of God the Father, the grace of His only begotten Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all”.

The Sundays of the Holy 50 days:

- **1st Sunday:** Thomas Sunday “My God and My Lord” (John 20:19-31).
- **2nd Sunday:** The living bread coming from heaven (John 6:35-45).
- **3rd Sunday:** The living water, the gospel reading about the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42).
- **4th Sunday:** Christ is the light of the world (John 12:35-50).
- **5th Sunday:** I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:1-11).
- **6th Sunday:** Jesus Christ has overcome the World (John 16:23-33).
- **7th Sunday:** The feast of the Pentecost (John 16:23-33).
- **The 5th Sunday of the month:**
 - If the month starts with a Saturday or a Sunday, it will have 5 Sundays.
 - On the 5th Sunday of the month, the church reads the passage from the gospel about feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes.
 - This emphasizes the satisfaction of the believers by the word of God when they hear and read it carefully with open heart.
 - If the 5th Sunday comes on the 29th of the month the readings of the 29th of Baramhat are read instead.

The Annual Readings on Regular Days:

- The church arranged the readings of the Liturgy each day of the week, except Sundays, according to the Synaxarium of each day.
- This is done to show the unity between different members of the Church (earthly and heavenly).
- If the Synaxarium has more than one saint, the church chooses readings about the one who is more known.
- In remembrance of these saints, the church has special readings for the feasts of martyrdom or departure; these are called “Special days”. There are only 55 special days.
- There are some readings that are repeated for members of the church who play similar roles to each other. For example, on the feast of the departure of any Patriarch, the Gospel of the Good Shepherd is read. On the feast of any of the apostles, the Gospel about the apostles’ ministry is read.

- On the 8th day of Tout we celebrate the departure of Moses the prophet; these readings describe the prophets and their faith and their work. As an example, here are the readings of that day:
 - Raising of Incense for Vespers
 - ❖ Psalm: “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (Psalm 105:14- 15).
 - ❖ The Gospel: “The blood of the prophets shall be required of this generation” (Luke 11:37-51).
 - Raising of Incense for the Prime
 - ❖ Psalm: “He sent Moses His servant, And Aaron whom He had chosen” (Psalm 105: 26- 27,45).
 - ❖ The Gospel: “And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him” (Matthew 17:1-9).
 - The Pauline:
 - ❖ “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Hebrews 11:17-27).
 - The Catholic Epistles:
 - ❖ “But holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-2:8).
 - The Praxis:
 - ❖ “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city” (Acts 15:21-29).
 - Psalm of the Liturgy:
 - ❖ “Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called upon His name” (Psalm 99:6-7).
 - The Gospel of the Liturgy:
 - ❖ “I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify” (Matthew 23:13-36).

- The Church will read the readings for the departure of certain prophets on the following days:
 - Tout 4 (Joshua son of Nun)
 - Kiahk 20 (Haggai)
 - Baramhat 23 (Daniel)
 - Baona 25 (Elisha)

- There is a story in the book of the paradise of Monks that explains the influence of the church readings on repentance and the sanctification of souls:
 - St. Paul The Simple came to the Church, and noticed that everyone entering into the Church had a joyful angel following him.
 - He then saw one man surrounded by many devils, who were dragging him, and his angel was following him from afar and was very sad.
 - When the saint saw this, he cried, beat upon his chest and went out of the church weeping.
 - The people asked him to go back and attend the mass, but he refused and sat at the door of the church weeping.
 - When the Liturgy was over, he looked at the people coming out and saw that the person who had entered surrounded by devils came out with a shining face, with his angel close by and rejoicing and no devils surrounding him.
 - St. Paul clapped happily and asked this person what happened that changed him.
 - The man confessed in front of everyone and said: “for a long time I lived a sinful life, and when I saw the father crying, I listened carefully to the church readings. When I heard the reading from Isaiah saying: ‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ The Lord says, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ I repented and confessed.”
 - When the people heard this, they glorified God.