

THE CONCEPTS OF THE OLIVE TREE



- 1. Symbol of settlement:** For Noah to know that the ark rested on Mount Ararat, he sent the dove the first time to see if she will return, she then returned back quick and when he sent the dove out the second time, she returned back with an olive branch in her mouth, symbolising that the ark had settled and the waters have resided. By this sign, Noah came out of the ark with his family to start his new life and re start the whole world, this only came after settlement. He then built an alter and offered sacrifices and the Lord smelled in it a smell of pleasure and this means that God cannot be pleased with a restless or unsettled heart (refer to Genesis 8 and 9).
- 2. Symbol of peace:** it is well known over the whole generations that the branch of the olive tree is a symbol to peace, even in all paintings, it expresses peace whether the artist is Christian or not. This teaches us also that the Christian should be a peacemaker and always peaceful. In the Beatitudes (mentioned in the book of Matthew), the Lord gave the blessings to the peacemaker, calling them 'Sons of God'; which is different from all the other beatitudes.
- 3. Symbol of continuous life:** The olive tree is always green all year long, it means it is always flourishing during any season of the year. Our Lord came from Egypt to Nazareth and was called a 'Nazarene' and the word Nazarene is a Hebrew word; it means "alive and flourishing tree". The true Christian is always firm and alive in our Lord, showing the true Christianity of the Lord and is always spiritually flourishing (thriving and booming).
- 4. Symbol of continuous life:** no matter when the seasons change in the year, the olive tree is always the same colour- green and is nice to look at. The true Christian never changes no matter what circumstances come upon him/her and is always nice to others and other people see them being nice.
- 5. Symbol of continuous life:** most trees in autumn and winter look dead with no green leaves on it but the olive tree is always green the whole year long; and this is a symbol to our Christian belief that our life is continuous in our Lord. Death is just a transfer from the physical status of the body to the spiritual status of the soul and spirit and St. Paul expressed it saying "for if we live we live to the Lord, if we die we die to the Lord, therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lords".(Romans 14:8).
- 6. Symbol of a comforting shade with a nice beautiful smell:** the olive tree is one of those trees that gives a nice shade with a smooth comforting smell to those who sit under it, under it people find shade and the birds nest in it and the same should be the Christian – he/she should offer good and comfort to everyone and always present the beautiful smell of Christ when dealing with others.
- 7. Symbol of the olive oil:** since the early Church, the olive oil and still till now is the main oil used in different Church rituals, prayers and blessings and it is also the main substance of the holy Chrism for newly baptised members.
- 8. Symbol of the olive oil:** Also in all Coptic monasteries in Egypt and abroad there are always in the Church oil lamps and ritually we only use the olive oil for these oil lamps to give light in the Church. The true Christian also is a light to the world as the Lord mentioned in Matthew 5:14-16 that by their "good Christian deeds, which the people will see they will glorify the Lord in Heaven".
- 9. Another symbol of the olive oil:** medically the olive oil is recommended to be best for health and never causes harm like other different oils and fats. The true Christian is a person comforting in his/her conduct and never harms anyone, even if he/she is persecuted, he/she prays for those who persecute them as the Lord teaches us: "bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you be sons of your Father in Heaven..." (Matthew 5:44)
- 10. Symbol of vanity of the world:** In the book of judges 9:7-15, the Lord gave a symbolic example that when the trees wanted a king for themselves, they asked the olive tree to reign over them, it refused but the bramble tree accepted to be a king. This teaches us that the true Christian as the Lord said "His kingdom is not of this world", he/she is a person not much immersed in this world and always rejects its vanity and his/her eyes are always looking up to fruitful deeds (this was the reason the olive tree didn't accept to be a king). Also he/she is looking up to achieve heaven where the true God and King is (refer to John 6:15) and John 18:36, and refuses the kingdom of this world
- 11. Symbol of the fruit of the olive tree:** The olives have very soft flesh outside and a very hard stone inside and I believe that everyone loves olives and eats them and it is used in the majority of foods and is loved by all. The true Christian from outside is very gentle, meek and kind ; he/she loves all and is loved by all and accepted by all, while inside him/her is a very strong faith that is not affected or influenced by the outside environment/people. He/she influences others to be good but is not affected by them to change his/her ways against the true Christianity. For this, it symbolises the true Christian with a strong faith as the Lord said "If you have faith like a mustard seed..."; the mustard seed is of the smallest seeds but it grows to be a big tree
- 12. Symbol of the stone of the olive fruit:** in Egypt since old and till now, they make beads from the stones of the olive tree and the beads are used in the Church for certain prayers and praises for counting and also in the life of the Christians and especially monks in their daily prayers to help them to count certain prayers. The bead is always a circle, full of the individual olive stones and a circle is a symbol to continuation. This means that the life of a true Christian should be a life of continuous prayers and praises, which will lead him/her eventually at the end of their life to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven with the holy angels where there is the continuous prayer.

