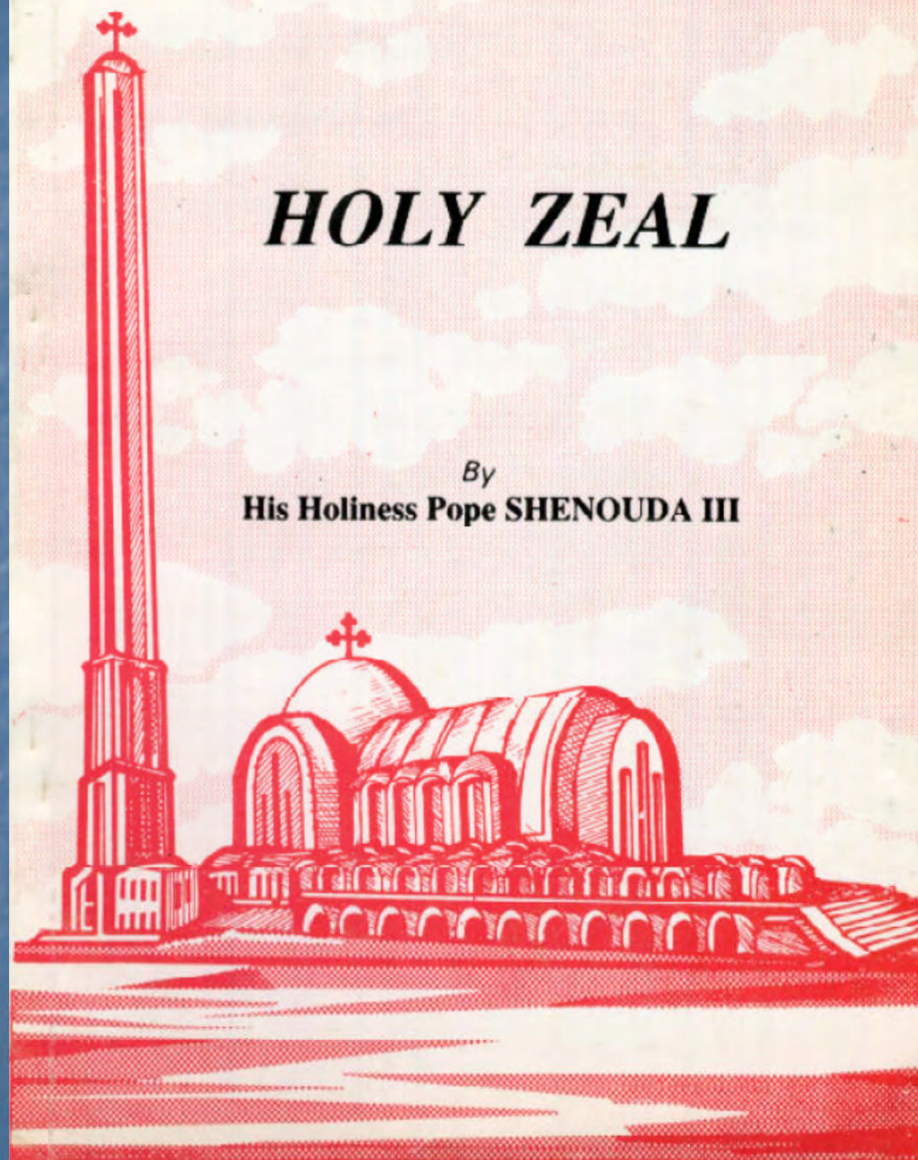


Holy Zeal:

What is it and how does it work?

HOLY ZEAL

By
His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA III



Holy Zeal

- What is it?
 - Enthusiastic devotion to a cause, ideal, or goal and tireless diligence in its furtherance
- Synonyms:
 - Determination
 - Devotion
 - Eagerness
 - Fervor
 - Passion

Holy Zeal: Spiritual Definition

- Holy zeal is a fire burning in the heart of a believer which impels him, with great enthusiasm, to strive his hardest for the purpose of saving others and building the Kingdom.
- St. Paul tells us that the Lord:
 - *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"*
(1 Tim 2:4)



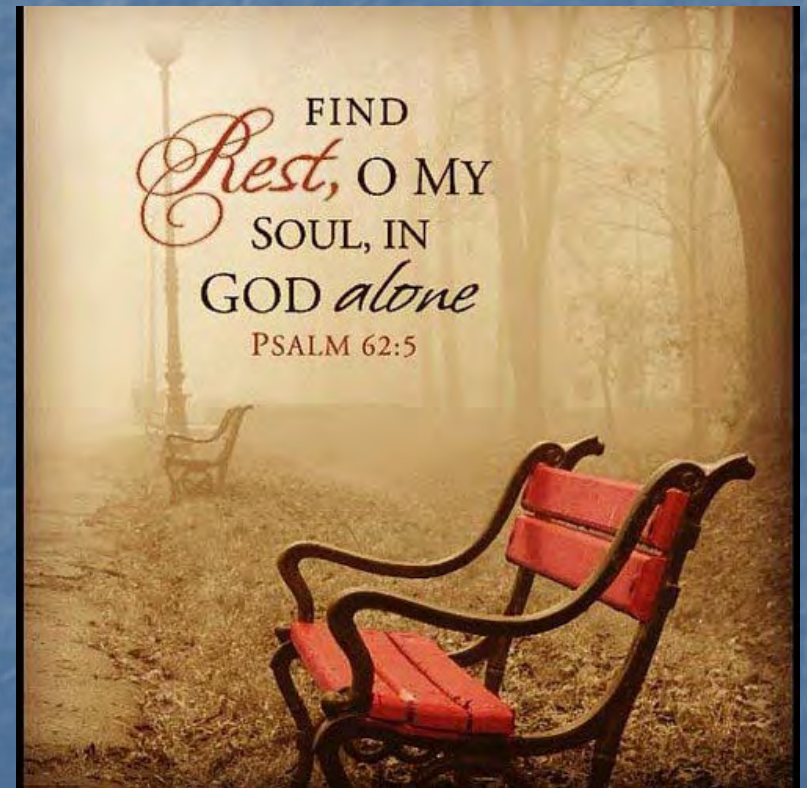
Holy Zeal: Giving My All

- When I have holy zeal, I want everyone to be saved:
 - I not only want it, but I work for it with **all** my might and **all** my feelings, **without letting up**, like David the prophet, who said:

*"Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house,
Or go up to the comfort of my bed;
I will not give sleep to my eyes
Or slumber to my eyelids,
Until I find a place for the Lord,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."
(Psa 132:3-5)*

Holy Zeal

- Thus, someone whom holy zeal has set ablaze, never lets up or rests, until he finds a place for the Lord in the heart of everyone, so that “by all means” he might “save some” (1 Cor 9:22)



Holy Zeal: The Apostles

- When the Lord wanted to send the Apostles out to preach
 - He gave them the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire
 - They preached with a passion that moved the hearts of their listeners
 - They demonstrated to everyone this holy zeal

Holy Zeal: The Apostles

- The words they spoke were like flaming arrows cutting to the hearts of all
 - Through one sermon given by St. Peter, 3,000 souls were converted, accepted the Lord Christ, and were baptized
- This is the fire the Lord referred to when He said:
 - *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"* (Luke 12:49)

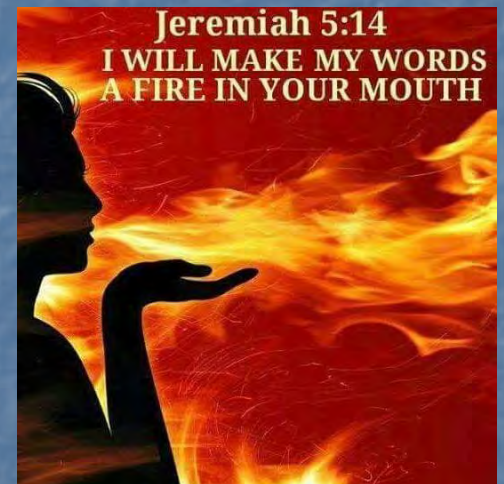


Holy Zeal: The Apostles

- It was through this holy zeal that the apostles spoke with great confidence
- They no longer feared the Jews
- They stood up to the Romans and Greeks
 - *"with all confidence, no one forbidding him"* (Acts 28:31)
 - *"and great grace was upon them all"* (Acts 4:31-33)

Holy Zeal: Jeremiah

- The word of God was also in the heart of the prophet Jeremiah *"like a fire"*, (Jer 20:9) and he could not remain still or keep silent despite all the trouble that befell him.
- The Lord said to Jeremiah: *"I will make My words in your mouth a fire"* (Jer 5:14). And Jeremiah cried out:



*"Oh, my soul, my soul!
I am pained in my very heart!
My heart makes a noise in me,
I cannot hold my peace"* (Jer 4:19)

Holy Zeal: King David

- King David spoke of this fiery zeal:
 - *"Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire"* (Psa 104:4)
- We as servants should develop this holy zeal
- We should be *"fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"* (Rom 12:11)



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Holy Zeal: King David

- His famous saying:
 - *"Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me"*
(Psa 69:9)
- It is as if he is saying that the insult directing at the Lord, the Church, the Lord's people is directed at him personally

Holy Zeal: King David

- Goliath
 - When he challenged the Lord's people and insulted the army of the living God, David took it very personally
 - He would not rest until he removed this reproach from the people of God



Holy Zeal: A heart ablaze with love

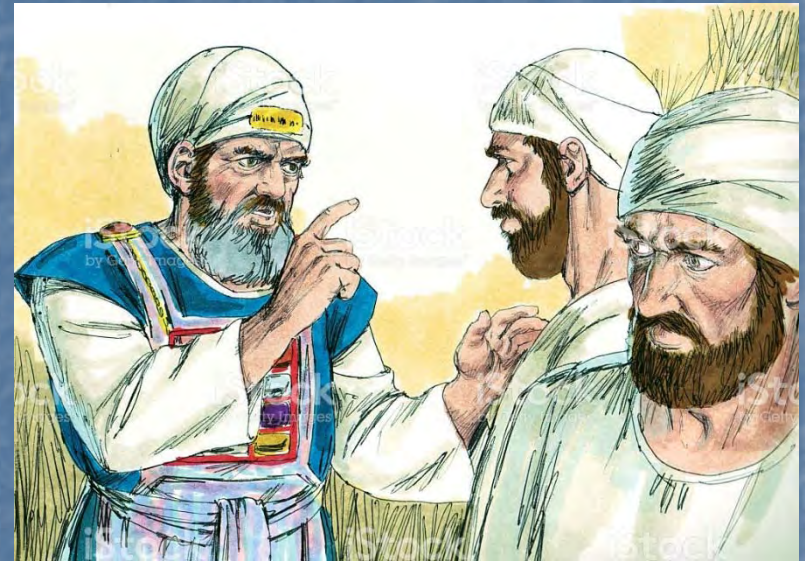
- Someone with this zeal wants God's love to reach every heart
- A person with such a heart loves God and wants all people to love Him, too.
- It wishes the Kingdom of God to spread until it embraces all people and all places.
- It wants to see faith entering every heart, so that no one loses his share in the Kingdom.

Holy Zeal: Kindled by Fire

- His speech is like a flame in its enthusiasm, and his prayers are like fire in their impact. His service to God is like fire in its effectiveness and far-reaching extent.
- By his zeal he kindles hearts, sets feelings ablaze, strengthens the will, and impels his listeners towards repentance and the Kingdom, by arousing their conscience.

Lacking Holy Zeal: Eli the Priest

- In contrast, we have those who speak in a feeble, half-hearted way which convinces no one, which yields no fruit, and which shows none of the fervor of the Spirit.



- Eli the priest and his sons:
 - *"Why do you do such things? For I hear evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons; For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress"* (1 Sam 2:23-24)

Lacking Holy Zeal: Eli the Priest

- Such words lacking seriousness, firmness or vigor, had no effect on them
- The Holy Bible goes on to say that Eli's sons, "*did not listen to their father's rebuke*" (1 Sam 2:25)
- Thus, they exposed their father to the wrath of God.

Lacking Holy Zeal: Lot

- He saw the evil ways of the people
- But he lacked holy zeal for God's commandments to do anything about it
- Therefore, when he said to them: ***"Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!"***, they did not listen
- In fact, the Holy Bible goes on to say: ***"But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking"***
(Gen 19:14)

Holy Zeal: St. Paul

- When he stood before the governor Felix:
 - *“he reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come”* (Acts 24:25)
 - Felix was afraid
- Likewise, King Agrippa was moved by St. Paul’s words:
 - *“You almost persuade me to become a Christian”* (Acts 26:28)



Holy Zeal: Among Servants

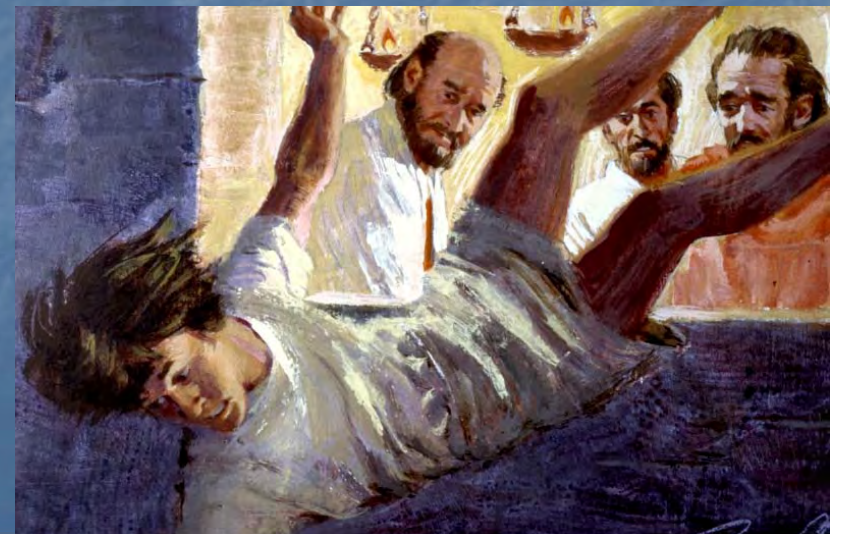
- The Holy Bible says: *"Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully"* (Jer 48:10)
- Thus, the servants of God have always been characterized by zeal, working as hard as they can, with all their might, and going to every length.

Holy Zeal: Among Servants

- The Lord said to His disciples: *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Matt 4:19)
- What does a fisherman do?
 - Searches for the places where fish might be
 - Lays the bait
 - Casts the net
 - Waits patiently

Holy Zeal: Among Servants

- St. Peter said:
 - *"Master, we have toiled all night..."*
(Luke 5:5)
 - Shows how diligent they were
- St. Paul used to preach until past midnight: story of Eutyches



Holy Zeal: Among Servants

- The Lord would preach to the people all day until sundown
- St. Paul said about his own service:
 - *"In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness"*
(2 Cor 11:27)
- Do we as servants have this holy zeal?

Holy Zeal: Caring for Others

- Perhaps, my zeal would move me to pray and weep for unbelievers throughout the world
- To weep for the millions in Asia who do not know the Lord
- The millions in Communist China, India, Japan, etc. who still worship Budha and Brahma!
- I will pray until the words of the Psalmist are fulfilled: ***"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein"*** (Psa 24-1)

Holy Zeal: Caring for Others

- Holy Zeal would move me to care for those living in sin
- To care for atheists and their eternity
- To care for those who convert and leave Christianity and betray the Lord Christ
- I would then say with Jeremiah: ***"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people"*** (Jer 9:1)

Holy Zeal: Caring for Others

- King David was overwhelmed by tears for sinners:
 - *"My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore Your words"*
 - *"Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law"* (Psa 119:136)

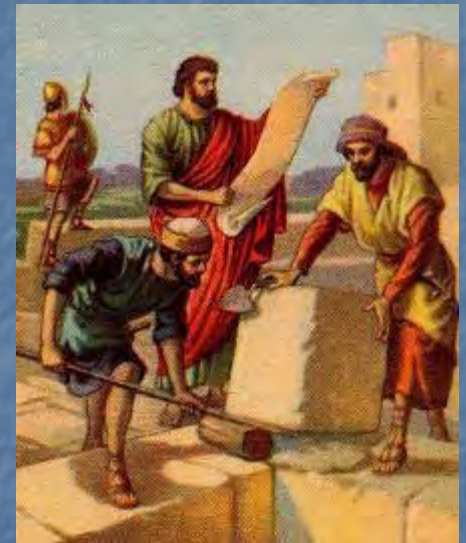
Holy Zeal: Caring for Others

- Samuel the Prophet grieved for Saul:
 - *"And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night"* (1 Sam 15:11)
 - *"Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel"* (1 Sam 15:35)

Holy Zeal: Positive Action

Nehemiah

- When he heard of the destruction of the wall of Jerusalem, he was greatly troubled:
 - *"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept and mourned for many days. I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said: ... now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power"*
(Neh 1:4-5, 10)



Holy Zeal: Positive Action

- Nehemiah did more than pray and fast
- He spoke to the king
- Traveled to Jerusalem and gathered the people to organize the task of rebuilding the wall
- During the work, he endured the insults and slander of his enemies
- Devoted himself, also, to spiritual reform and guiding his people to repentance

Holy Zeal: Positive Action

St. Paul in Athens

- “his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols”
(Acts 17:16)
- Thus he used to speak to whomever he met in the market place every day.
- Entered into discussions with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.
- He spoke at the Areopagus as well as in the Jewish synagogues.

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- When the Lord's anger burned hot against the Israelites after they made the golden calf, Moses said to Him:
 - *"Lord, why should Your wrath burn hot against Your people...? Yet now, if You will forgive their sin - but if not, I pray, blot me out of the book which You have written"* (Exo 32:11,32)
 - Moses the servant had love and zeal for his people
 - He could not imagine being saved without them

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- The Lord said to Moses:
- *"Now therefore let Me alone so that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation"*
(Exo 32:10)
- Why would the Lord say "leave Me alone"?

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- How can the Lord Almighty be restrained?
- Moses held onto Him and pleaded with Him:
 - *"Turn from Your fierce wrath; and relent from this harm to and Your people. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel..."*
(Exo 32:12-13).
 - *"Why should the Egyptians speak, and say: He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?"* (Exo 32:12)

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- This, then, is wrestling with God, which involves supplication, intercession, eloquence, conviction, love for others and holding fast to God to “prevent” Him from destroying them...!

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- Jacob said: *"I will not let You go unless You bless me"* (Gen 32:26)
- Moses, too, does the same thing:
 - "I will not let You go... I will not let Your anger burn against Your people. I will not let You destroy them, I will not let You go until You pardon them and relent..."

Holy Zeal: Wrestling with God

- This is the zeal of a heart that does not want anyone to perish, and *"who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim 2:4)
- This zeal of Moses reminds me of something St. Paul said: *"I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"* (Rom 9:2-3)

Holy Zeal: Encouraging the Weak

- How beautiful and profound are the words of St. Paul, *"comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all"* (1 Thes 5:14)
- *"Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees!"* (Heb 12:12)

Holy Zeal: Encouraging the Weak

- The Lord encouraged Jeremiah:
 - *"Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you... I have put My words in your mouth... I have made you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land... They will fight against you but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you" (Jer 1:8-19)*

Holy Zeal: Encouraging the Weak

- The Lord encouraged St. Paul:
 - *"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack to hurt you"* (Acts 18:9-10)
- When we come across a sinner who seems unable to repent, we should encourage him:
 - "The grace of God will work in you"

Holy Zeal: Encouraging the Weak

- “God will not let the devil fight you forever without mercy.”
- “God will definitely stop him before he goes too far.”
- “So do not be afraid.”

Holy Zeal: Accompanying Others

- Being zealous does not mean imposing perfection on others
- This was what the Pharisees were doing:
 - *"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"*
(Matt 23:4)

Holy Zeal: Accompanying Others

- Zeal does not mean finding fault with others for not behaving according to some ideal, exemplary standard, but rather it means helping them to keep on aspiring to it.
- This only comes by patiently going along step by step with the beginner and the penitent.

Holy Zeal: Accompanying Others

- The Apostles in Jerusalem:
 - *"we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God"*
(Acts 15:19)
 - *"But that we write to them, to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled and from blood..."* (Acts 15:20)

Holy Zeal: Accompanying Others

- Holy zeal does not mean trying to make the beginner travel the whole spiritual road at once.
- But rather it means taking him by the hand and going along with him step by step until he arrives on the right path.

Holy Zeal: Accompanying Others

- The Lord Jesus said to His disciples:
 - “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12)
- The Lord understood the concept of zeal while not overburdening others
- There is a right time and a right way to instruct according to a person’s ability.

Holy Zeal: Partnership with God

- No one can save someone without God's help
- *"we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building"* (1 Cor 3:9)
- *"for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5)

Holy Zeal: Partnership with God

- Iron and Magnet:

- A magnet can attract iron
- When the iron is magnetized, it can attract other pieces of iron
- We are able to attract others to the path of salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ through our interaction with the Lord
- So too will all our zeal be in vain if we are far away from God, who is the source of power.