Station 2: Authority of the Church

Objective:

- **What is the authority of the Church?**
- **Where did the Church get this authority from?**
- **How can I deal with this authority?**

Key Verse:

" Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls" Hebrews 13:17

Outline:

What is the authority of the Church?

- Before His ascension, the Lord Jesus gave a command to His Apostles, we call it "the Great Commission" He said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen." Matthew 28:18-20
- When we look at this command we see that that Lord Jesus declares HIs authority and gives authority to His Apostles (and their successors) as heads of the Church .. He said to them
- **"Make disciples" (Lead and govern)**
  - The Lord Jesus gave the Church the authority to "Make disciples" ... so what is a disciple? a follower of the Lord Jesus
  - The same as a mother, the Church births us (through baptism), feeds us (the word of God), nurtures us (through the Eucharist), cares for our well-being (through repentance and confession), cares for us when we are sick (through unction of the sick) and raises us up to grow in our love to our Father (through prayers, praises, and fasting)
  - Just as the mother discipline her children, the Church also can discipline us for the sake of our salvation and spiritual well being
  - It is the Church's responsibility to point out our wrongdoing in order to correct us
  - It is the Church's responsibility to give us advise when we need it
  - It is the Church's responsibility to teaches us how to behave as true disciples

    - The Church has the ultimate responsibility to lead the believers to the kingdom of heaven, therefore the Church has the authority to Convince, rebuke, exhort the believers when needed in order to put them on the right track.
    - When the Church entrusts someone to do a particular service, the Church must hold that person accountable (i.e. discuss deaconship)
- **"Baptizing them" (Sanctify (Administer Sacraments))**
    - From the grace of the New Testament is that we have the Holy Spirit in us and working with us
    - The Church was entrusted to give us the Holy Spirit and to give us the means by which we receive His grace
    - These means are the Holy Sacraments that our Lord Jesus instituted
    - The Church's role is to administer these sacraments and prepare the believers to be able to receive them
        - i.e. by fasting, prayers, etc.
- **"Teaching them" (Teaching and preaching)**
    - From the authority of the Church also is to preach and teach the word of God
    - The Church to preach the Truth and spread it and be a reference to it
        - *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15
    - The Church is entrusted to teach us the faith and to give us commandments to live by (i.e. the difference between Holy and common)
- **Binding and loosing**
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        - "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19)
        - "And when He had said this, He breathed on *them,* and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. [23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.” John 20:22-23
        - When abouna comes and tells me I did something wrong, I must listen and apply his advise
- **Judging between the believers**
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        - “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. [16] But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ [17] And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-18
        - If I have a disagreement with a brother, go to the Church, involve a servant or abouna. Don't take matters in your own hands
        - Whatever the Church both of you must obey

Why did the Church get this authority from?

- **As God, our Lord Jesus has authority over everything**

    - "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Matthew 28:18
    - And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, [23] which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Ephesians 1:22-23
- **The Lord Jesus gave an authority to His apostles**
    - "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." (John 20:21)
    - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen." Matthew 28:18-20
- **Apostolic succession**
    - The apostles gave this authority to their successors through laying of the hands (ordinations)
    - Meaning that the authority that the Lord Jesus gave to His Apostles, St Mark gave it to St Anianus,, ... all the way to Pope Shenouda who gave this authority to all the bishops he ordained (including Pope Tawadros)
    - The bishops gave this authority to the priests they ordain
    - The bishops and the father the priest give some authority to those who serve in different capacities according to their capacity
- **Hierarchy of the church**
    - From this we understand that our Church is established on hierarchy
    - This hierarchy is not like the military but one built of of fatherhood and sonship
    - Hierarchy built on discipleship
    - Hierarchy built on love and respect
    - Therefore the main authority the we have in the Church is the authority of love \
        - **Authority of Love**
            - "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18
            - The authority of love is a Biblical concept and it is the highest level of authority
            - When you love someone, you want to do what is pleasing to them, you want to make them happy
            - You obey who you love out of love and respect not out of fear
            - Responding to the authority of love is more spiritually mature than responding to any other form of authority
            - Even though that person cannot force me to do something, I listen to him because I love him

How can I deal with this authority?

- **Understand**
    - Understand that in the Church we are ONE family, we are the Body of Christ and Christ is the head

- Understand that in the Church everyone must serve the other, when you were a little child you were served by everyone, as you grow older you are expected to serve others as well
- Understand that those who serve you, serve you out of love to the Lord and our of Love towards you as God's son
- Understand that those who serve you have no other intention but the salvation of your soul and you spiritual well-being
- Understand that the Church is a hospital for sinner not a museum for the saints, your servants, your father the priest, your father the bishop, all of them are humans and have weaknesses and out of your love towards God you can love them and forgive them if they were tough or harsh

- **Love**
  - "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (Mt 10:40)
  - When we understand the intention of my father the priest and my servants is always good I will love and appreciate what they do for me
  - Pray that may God put the love in your heart towards your Church family
- **Respect**
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    - Respect God's house
      - Attire, language, actions, etc.
      - "Holiness adorns Your house, O Lord, forever." Psalm 93:5
      - Respect the service that the Church entrusted you with
  - "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and [d]admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
  - Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17
- **Obey**
  - " Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls" Hebrews 13:17
  - "He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Lk 10:16)
  - Note: Give deaconship examples
- **Appreciate**
  - Appreciate what your servants do for you, leaving their families and sometimes their jobs to serve you and create a healthy, spiritual, and fun environment for you
  - Appreciate the Church that is always open for you and welcoming to your activities at any time
    - The simplest form of appreciation is to be thankful
    - "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18
    - "Do all things without complaining and disputing" Philippians 2:14
    - "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned." James 5:9

- Conclude with the concept of **authority of love**

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