

SACRAMENTAL RITES IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

2nd Edition

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Abbot of El-SYRIAN Monastery



**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ King of Kings and
Lord of lords**

Icon designed by Dr. Youssef Nassief and Dr. Bedour Latif



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR**
Courtesy of The English EL-KERAZA Magazine



**H. H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark**

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Foreword

I am delighted to have the blessing of presenting this important ritual encyclopedia to the beloved Coptic readers.

His Grace the great Bishop Mettaous is one of the prominent scholars of Ritual Theology in our contemporary era, and all his writings are useful, necessary references, as they include a scientific spirit, an elaborate research and spiritual gratification. The church meant the rite to be a living expression of enlightened thinking and a spirit sparkling by divine love.

The “Sacramental Rites” encyclopedia is an urgent need for our Coptic Orthodox Library, as there are no elaborate references now, about this enlivening topic. So here comes this encyclopedia, a gratification for the church’s children and enrichment to the Coptic Library, at the right time, led by the Holy Spirit of God.

I do not need to elaborate about the gratifying, attractive style of His Grace Bishop Mettaous who satisfied us in his books, such as “Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Liturgy” and “The Eminence of Monasticism” as well as many other spiritual, theological and ritual topics.

We perceive a blessed, educational revival in the era of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, by books, cassettes and video films, shared by many bishops, priests, monks, servants, led by His Holiness, his direct shepherdhood and unique example.

May the Lord bless these efforts and gratify us with more writings by His Grace Bishop Mettaous, by the prayers of his Holiness Pope Shenouda III. May the grace of the Lord bless us.

Bishop Moussa
General Bishop

Introduction to the First Edition

The seven Sacraments of the Church are the channels by which we receive the graces and blessings of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has existed in the church since the day of Pentecost, when He dwelt in it according to the Lord's promise: "I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth when the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him for He dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17).

The Holy Spirit works in the church through the Sacraments, giving us His gifts, blessings and comfort, and teaches us and guides us to the way of truth. "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

The Seven Sacraments of the Church are:

- 1- Sacrament of Baptism.
- 2- Sacrament of Confirmation
- 3- Sacrament of Confession
- 4- Sacrament of Eucharist
- 5- Sacrament of Unction of Sick
- 6- Sacrament of Matrimony
- 7- Sacrament of Priesthood.

The Lord Christ instituted all these Sacraments, and the Holy Bible mentions them in detail.

1- Sacrament of Baptism

Instituted by the Lord Jesus by His Baptism in the River Jordan and by His words to Nicodemus saying: "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3), and by saying to our fathers the Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

2- Sacrament of Confirmation

Instituted by Lord Jesus when He said: “If anyone thirsts let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39). About the Sacrament of Confirmation, in the Book of Acts it is mentioned : “Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14-17).

The Holy Spirit was received by the laying of hands, but when the number of believers increased, the Apostles were unable to keep track of each individual to lay upon them their hands in order to receive the Holy Spirit. So they made the Myron out of certain oils mixed with spices; the same spices which were brought to the tomb to embalm the shrouded Christ. It was approved for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and allowed the priests to anoint the newly baptized by the Myron to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, to dwell in them, in order to become temples of the Holy Spirit.

3- Sacrament Of Repentance

Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He said to His pure disciples: “Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew: 18:18), and after Resurrection He said, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you and when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20: 21-22).

4- Sacrament Of The Eucharist (Thanksgiving)

Instituted by the Lord Jesus in the upper room in Zion, on the night of His passion when He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying, “Take eat, this is My Body. Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it and He said to them “This is My Blood of the new covenant which is shed for many” (Mark 14: 22-24).

5- Sacrament Of The Unction Of The Sick

Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He said to His disciples, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers” (Matthew 10:8), and, “Whatever city you enter ... heal the sick who are there” (Luke 10:8). The Apostles then put the Lord’s words into practice: “They anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them” (Mark 6:13). Our teacher St. James the Apostle advised believers to practice it, by saying, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15).

6- Sacrament of The Holy Matrimony

Instituted by the Lord Jesus who blessed the Sacrament of Matrimony by attending the wedding of Cana of Galilee, where, “He manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2: 1-11). Also, teacher St. Paul says, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Churches” (Ephesians 5:32). This means that the physical union between a man and his wife is a sign and symbol of a greater spiritual matter, that is, of the unity of heart and soul, resembling the unity of Christ and the Church.

7- Sacrament of Priesthood

Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He chose His twelve disciples among many of His followers, and called them Apostles. The selection was accomplished after a whole night of prayer, when the Lord Jesus went out to the mountain to pray (Luke 6: 12-13), and then sent them to preach saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7). The Lord said to them, “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). He gave them the authority saying, “Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18). After the resurrection, the Lord, “Breathed on them and said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 2:23), and to them only, He said, “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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew: 28:19-20). He gave the mystery of His Holy Body and Blood only to them saying, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19).

Definition of a Church Sacrament

The Church Sacrament is an invisible grace we receive by practicing a visible rite, and a visible sign or substance performed by a priest.

- 1- In the Baptism the substance is water by which we receive the second birth from Water and Spirit.
- 2- In the Confirmation the substance is the oil of Myron, by which the Holy Spirit dwells in us.
- 3- The sign of the Sacrament of Confession is the confessing person, who accepts the prayer of absolution at the end of Confession to gain forgiveness of sins.
- 4- The substance of the Sacrament of Communion is the bread and wine, by which we eat the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Emmanuel our God.
- 5- The substance of the Sacrament of Unction of sick is oil, by which we receive physical and psychological remedy.
- 6- The sign of the Sacrament of Matrimony is the bride and groom who receive the prayers, so the Holy Spirit dwells upon them and unites them in body and spirit.

7- The sign of the Sacrament of Priesthood is the ordained person, who accepts the prayers of the Sacrament of Priesthood and the laying of hands for a certain priestly rank, to gain the grace for starting church services - whether Sacraments or authority for various church matters and management.

Redemptive and Non-Redemptive Sacraments

There are four redemptive Sacraments out of the Seven Sacraments. They are necessary for eternal salvation, and every believer should practice them in order to gain eternal salvation.

These are:

1- Baptism 2- Confirmation

3- Confession 4- Communion

The other three Sacraments are non-redemptive and unnecessary for eternal salvation.

5- Sacrament of Unction of the Sick

Given for the remedy of those who are physically or psychologically unwell only.

6- Sacrament of Matrimony

For those who want to marry for the purpose of sharing lives and bearing children. However, there are many monks and nuns, and those who live celibate lives who gain eternal life with merit.

7- Sacrament of Priesthood

Reserved only for those who are ordained as a deacon, priest or bishop. However, the majority of the Congregation has no priestly ranks, but is called for redemption and eternal life.

Physical Medicine and Spiritual Medicine:

Physical medicine has three classes of medicine:-

Preventive Medicine: like vaccination given to children against smallpox, paralysis and others, to protect them against these diseases.

Curative Medicine: prescribed for a person after having had the doctor diagnose the reason for illness.

Supplementary Medicine: various vitamins, prescribed by the doctor to strengthen the human body, giving energy and immunity against a disease once more.

The same applies to the soul in that resembles the body; it is prone to spiritual diseases like sin, satanic warfare's and others.

Our great physician, the Lord Jesus made the church our spiritual hospital, and the priest as its spiritual physician, as St. John Chrysostom once said, "Are you a sinner? Go to the Church

which is a hospital not a court". In the church you will find the spiritual physician who is the priest. Tell him your sins, as he accurately examines everything and prescribes the appropriate cure.

The spiritual medicines are the Seven Sacraments of the Church, which are preventive, curative and supplementary.

PREVENTIVE

Sacrament of Myron: by which the Holy Spirit dwells to fortify against sin and evil, helps to overcome sin and provides victory in spiritual struggle.

Sacrament of Matrimony: protects the couple from falling into the sin of adultery.

CURATIVE

Sacrament of Baptism: provides the cure from the original sin for children, and from the committed sins of those older.

Sacrament of Confession and Repentance: for those who repent and confess, this sacrament provides the cure and forgiveness of their sins.

Sacrament of Unction of the Sick: provides cure for those who are physically and psychologically ill, caused by sin.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Sacrament of Communion: after receiving the Holy Body and precious Blood of the Lord Jesus, we gain power to help us in overcoming the evil one.

Sacrament of Priesthood: Priesthood gives the priest grace and power in his struggle as he strives to be our example in attitude, and not be a stumbling block, but rather to keep him pure from sin, and accept the great rank of priesthood in reverence. He should remember what our teacher St. Paul said: "We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

An Imperishable Feature

Certain Church Sacraments are performed with an imperishable feature, so must not be repeated again at any time.

By Baptism we are made children of God our Father, and this is imperishable.

By Chrism we are made soldiers of our great King, and this is imperishable.

By Priesthood we are made servants and priests of the great High Priest, and this is imperishable.

But the rest of the Sacraments are performed repeatedly as needed.

Conditions To Accomplish The Seven Sacraments

For every Sacrament of the seven, there are three essential and necessary conditions in order to administer them:

An adequate substance for the Sacrament like water for Baptism, bread and wine for the Sacrament of Communion, oil for the Unction of the Sick, and so on.

An ordained priest by the laying on of the apostolic hand.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit by the priest, by praying certain prayers for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and sanctification of the Sacrament.

That is why the Sacraments must be administered in a correct official way according to the order given by God, as our Good Savior instituted and organized them, placing the adequate substance and specific prayers for every Sacrament, placed by the fathers guided by the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament is not true and effective for the believers unless it is administered correctly according to God's will, and the placement of the fathers guided by the Holy Spirit, and handed over by the Church and Holy Councils.

These pages, dear reader, are a detailed study in the rituals and prayers of the Seven Church Sacraments in our Coptic Orthodox Church, according to the original situation as placed by our fathers the saints, and it is a humble trial to explain these rites and prayers, clarifying the wisdom of their organization, and also a trial to manifest the spirituality of these rituals and specific prayers of the Seven Sacraments.

We pray to God to make it a success and a blessing for every person studying these rites and every reader of this book, through the intercessions of our pure mother St. Mary and the prayers of our blessed father Pope Shenouda the III, Amen.

Bishop Mettaous
Bishop and Abbot of El-Syrian Monastery

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The First Sacrament

Baptism is a Holy Sacrament by which we are born again by being immersed in water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Baptism has the first rank among the Seven Holy Sacraments, as it is the door by which the believer enters the church and has the right to partake in the rest of the Sacraments.

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism by being baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him as a dove, anointed Him, then assured it after the resurrection when He said to His disciples: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew: 28:19), *“He who is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a redemptive Sacrament, necessary for redemption and entry to eternal life according to what the Lord said: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”* (John 3). It is one of the four redemptive Sacraments: Baptism, Myron, Confession and Communion of the Holy Body and precious Blood of the Lord. Through Baptism, the believer is reborn a spiritual birth from the Water and the Spirit; his first birth being from his parents.

The best time for Baptism is Sunday before Mass, as the priest is fasting because Baptism is death and resurrection, and Sunday is the weekly memory of the Lord's Resurrection. The wisdom of granting the Sacrament of Baptism right before the Mass, is so that the baptized person and his parents may attend the Mass, and receive the Holy Sacraments.

If the priest wants to administer the Sacrament of Baptism at night, such as during Vesper of Baptism Sunday, he must be fasting for nine or seven hours at least, as Baptism is a Holy Sacrament which must not be performed by an unfasting priest. He must also advise the parents to bring the newly baptized person to attend the Mass the following morning to receive the Holy Communion.

Considering that the Sacrament of Baptism is granted only once to the believer in life, by the priest, it is necessary for us to speak as accurately as possible in regards to how the ritual is performed.

We shall first speak about the Absolution of the Woman, the one who gave birth to the child and is presenting her child before the Lord for Baptism.

Secondly, we shall speak about the prayers of Renouncing Satan and confessing Christ and reciting the Apostolic Creed.

Then we shall speak about the Liturgy of Baptism.

And finally, we shall explain the Rite of Baptism, then the discharge of the Baptismal water.

THE RITUAL OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

This is divided into four major parts :

- Women's Absolution
- Renouncing Satan
- Liturgy of Baptism
- Baptism & Water Discharge

FIRST

WOMEN'S ABSOLUTION IF SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A MALE CHILD

40 days after her delivery, the woman would have recovered from her puerperium and tiredness. Hence, she comes to the church with her baby to ask the priest to baptize him.

The priest wears the service garment or at least the 'epitrachelion', and the deacons wear their white service garments. Then the priest, deacons, the woman with her child, and family enter into the Baptistery in order for the necessary rites to take place.

The Baptistery must be wide, furnished and clean, adequate for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, exactly like the altar.

The removal of shoes is advisable. Ancient rites mention that the adult who accepts the faith on behalf of the child, is to stand on sheep fur before the bishop or priest, and recite all that is required in a clear voice. The fur is a reminder of the leather garments which the Lord made for Adam and Eve after their fall into sin.

On the eastern wall of the Baptistery must be placed a large icon of the Baptism of the Lord Christ by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove.

Near the Baptismal Font a small wardrobe must be placed, containing three bottles of oil which are used in the Baptism. These are the Apocalypse oil, the Ghaliloun, and the Chrism.

Every bottle is marked in clear handwriting. Also the ritual books and the cross specified for Baptism are placed, and a clean box containing the red ribbons that are placed around the baptized. If possible, a special crown is also placed therein.

In the Baptistery, a table must be placed, covered by a clean cover for the child to be placed upon during the anointing of the Holy Myron. The baptized person is signed with 36 crosses of Myron after Baptism.

The first procedure performed by the priest is the prayer of absolution of the woman, and it signifies permission of entry to the church and receiving the Holy Communion after the period of giving birth and puerperium, however, it does not replace the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession. The woman has to sit down with her confession father, to confess her sins done

during that period, then he gives her the adequate instructions and finally prays for her the absolution (for forgiveness of her sins). At the end of the Liturgy she receives the Holy Sacrament with her recently baptized son, as it is not correct for her not to receive Communion with her baptized son.

NOTES:

The woman enters the church and carries out the Sacrament of Confession and receives the Holy Communion if she does not have a monthly period. We advise that the woman choose the days when she does not have her period to request Baptism of her child, so as to be able to receive the Holy Sacraments with her child and accomplish her joy.

If she is menstruating, she is not allowed to receive Communion or any other ecclesiastical Sacrament, but she keeps reading the Holy Bible, fasting and praying with the Agbia in her house.

The order of the Absolution Prayers of the woman is as follows:

The priest says: Aleyson Emas (Have Mercy Upon Us O God the Father Almighty).

The Lord's Prayer.

The Thanksgiving Prayer with its responses, and upon doing the signs of the cross, he anoints the woman saying, "...and for Your servant ..."

The priest performs the Pauline round of incense after he places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer, and with the known signs, says the Pauline mystery :

"O great and eternal God, with no beginning or end....etc." He raises incense on Baptismal font and blesses the attendants. One of the deacons read the Pauline (Hebrews 1:8-12). Speaks about the only Son Jesus Christ, *"Whose throne is forever and ever, with a scepter of righteousness and justice, who have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness"*, and who said in challenge, *"Which of you convicts me of sin"* (John 8:46).

The priest wishes that the baptized child resembles the image of Lord Christ in righteousness and truth, loving virtue and holiness and hating vice and evil.

The hymn of the Trisagion is recited then the priest prays the Prayer of the Gospel, and a deacon reads the Psalm 31:1,2, *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered..."*

By Baptism we get remission of original and actual sins and God forgets them, so we become as pure as Adam before the fall.

Then the Gospel : Luke 2:21-35. Where the circumcision of Jesus is narrated, it is exchanged by Baptism in the New Testament, as Baptism is a spiritual circumcision, as our teacher St. Paul says: *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting*

off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11,12). In Baptism the old nature is completely removed, not only a small part of the body as in the Old Testament circumcision. As man is born with the old nature contaminated by Adam’s sin. Also the purification rite is mentioned, which was done for the woman after forty days of her delivery, and which was accomplished by the Lord Jesus and His Mother the Virgin, despite that He does not need such purification as He is the Holiest of Holies, and was born of the Virgin St. Mary by the Holy Spirit, unlike all humankind. He instituted the law and accurately accomplished the law.

The Three Major Litanies are prayed: Litany of Peace, Litany of the Fathers and Litany of the Congregations, then the Orthodox Creed.

The priest asks God to look upon the woman, fill her with the Holy Spirit, and purify her from all sins.

The attendants pray the Lord’s Prayer...and the priest prays the Three Absolutions and the blessing while placing the cross on the woman’s head.

The priest anoints the woman by the simple oil (Note: It is mostly composed of olive oil, unlike the Myron oil which is composed of some thirty kinds of fragrances. The simple oil is the Apocalypse Oil).

The woman is anointed to be healed from any disease, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10). Then the woman becomes ready to enter the church and receive the Holy Communion after the Sacrament of Confession.

NOTES:

The same rite of absolution of the woman is done for a woman who aborted a child involuntarily due to an accident or other, but voluntary abortion is considered murder and necessitates a law of repentance first.

ABSOLUTION OF THE WOMAN IF SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A FEMALE CHILD

The woman comes to the church with her baby daughter after eighty days of delivery, to baptize her. The eighty days for the female child, and forty days for the male child is identified in the Book of Leviticus, Chapter Twelve. Although there may not be an explanation for this difference in the New Testament, we must obey this commandment without argument or complaint, as the Christian Church obeyed this divine order through all eras, and let us remember also the obedience of the Virgin Mary to this divine order. Despite her conceiving Christ by the Holy Spirit in all purity, and delivering Him in a miraculous Virginal birth, she did not come to the temple before completing the days of her purification according to the law of Moses, which is forty days for the male child (Luke 2: 22-24).

NOTES:

The parents must be committed to the period of forty days for the male child, and eighty days for the female child, and must not surpass them for any reason, so they do not sin against their children. This means disregarding the idea of making a vow for Baptism in certain remote places, or at certain feasts which are months away. The child must be baptized at the specific time, and if a vow is made, they fulfill it at the right time, without delaying Baptism.

The forty days period for the male child and eighty days for the female child, exists in normal circumstances but if the new-born is sick and his parents are afraid the baby will die, they must request the priest to baptize and anoint the baby with the Myron, even if the child is one day old, and under any circumstance (as the priest may not be fasting or unable to baptize him by immersion); the baptism must be carried out quickly, so that the child does not die without Baptism and is deprived from entry or sight of the Kingdom, according to the words of our beloved Savior (John 3). The method to be followed is that someone, except the mother, should take the child to the church to be baptized. If the baby lives, the Baptism is correct and should not be repeated.

If his parents neglect the Baptism, and the child dies without Baptism, it is the right of the church to impose a punishment on the parents for a period of one year, of prayers and fasting with prostration. They may also be forbidden to receive the Holy Eucharist during this whole year.

But the rite of the woman's absolution is as follows :

After eighty days the woman brings her female child to church for Baptism.

The priest prays Aleyson Emas, the Thanksgiving Prayer, and places five spoonfuls of incense into the censer with the known signs, then prays the Pauline mystery, "*O Great and eternal God...*", he then raises the Pauline incense on the Baptismal font and blesses the attendants.

The deacon reads the Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:12-14), which speaks about how the believing woman is a blessing for her husband.

The hymn of the Trisagon is chanted, then the Prayer of the Gospel, and Psalm 44 : "*The queen shall be brought to the king*", these specific words from the Psalm are chosen, because the child that is to be baptized is female.

The Gospel of Luke (10:38-43), speaks about Mary and Martha who were exemplary in their love of God, hearing and practicing His commandments, and offering the service of sacrifice. The priest asks God that the newly baptized female child may emulate them by choosing the right path..

The Three Major Litanies: Peace, Fathers and the Congregations, are said, followed by the Orthodox Creed.

The same previous prayer is said where the priest requests God to fill the woman with His Holy Spirit, and purify her from sins.

This is followed by the Lord's Prayer, and the priest prays the three absolutions and the blessing while placing the cross on the woman's head.

The priest anoints the woman by the simple oil or Apocalypse oil, which is present in the Baptism room. Hence, the woman is ready to enter the church and receive the Holy Communion of our God Emmanuel.

SECOND

PRAYERS OF RENOUNCING SATAN

Absolution prayer for the child's mother (whether male or female) : The priest places the cross on

the woman's head and prays asking God to absolve and bless the child's mother and make her worthy to share in the Holy Sacraments without falling into condemnation. The woman who gives birth to a child should not receive Holy Communion before her child's Baptism. Hence, this will motivate her not to delay the child's Baptism according to the law (40 days for the male child and 80 days for the female child). In this way, she will receive the blessing of absolution of the woman related to the child's Baptism before their Communion, and this absolution is the legal permission for entry to church and receiving the Holy Sacraments after delivery. He also supplicates unto God to bless the child, and keep him/her to grow in grace, stature, faith, hope and love.

The priest prays the known litany of the Catechumens.

The priest prays for the children proceeding for Baptism while placing the cross on their heads, asking God to forgive their sins and make them worthy of the pure Sacrament of Baptism, and to enlighten their hearts to see in purity the way of eternal life, and glorify God all the days of their lives.

The priest prays on the Apocalypse oil bottle, asking God to let this oil undo the works of devils and their magic, and so become an anointing oil for faith in Christ.

Another prayer on the oil is done, asking that this oil becomes a sermon oil to cast away all evil deeds.

First, the priest asks the mothers that they have removed any jewelry from their children. He then takes the bottle of oil to anoint the children (males then females) as follows :

He anoints the forehead saying, "I anoint you (Name of the Child) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. A sermon oil for (Name of the Child) in the church of God, one Holy, Universal and Apostolic, Amen.

Then he anoints the heart (chest), hands and back saying : "*This oil abolishes the power of the adversary Amen.*" The deacons respond, "*We ask this from God.*"

The priest says a prayer where he glorifies God for His great love to humankind, as He has taken us from darkness to His splendid light, and asks Him to write the names of those children who came forward for Baptism, in the Book of Life, counting them amongst His believers, preparing them temples of the Holy Spirit and granting them growth in faith and grace and free them from the bondage of corruption, to the freedom of the glory of God's children.

The priest asks about the names of the baptized then prays saying: "We also ask the Almighty God...for your servants whose names are presented (it is preferable to mention the names ([II](#)) individually) make them worthy to win grace which they require, purify them from sins of the world and free them from bondage of corruption..."



The deacon says: "*Pray for those whose names are said so that the Lord may make them worthy of the Holy Baptism for the forgiveness of their sins*". The congregation

answers, *“Lord have mercy.”* The priest prays to ask God to make the children worthy of grace. The mother kneels down facing the East whilst carrying her child (if the person being baptized is old enough, they must kneel). Then the priest prays :

“We also ask perseveringly...God to open their hearts and enlighten them by the light of knowledge.”

“For by calling Your Holy Name, all the powers of the evil adversary perish.”

NOTES:

We kneel during these prayers to signify our contrite souls asking of the Lord to free us from the bondage of Satan, like the Phoenician woman who knelt at the feet of Jesus and asked Him to cast out the demon from her daughter (Mark 7:26).

The priest places his hand on the child’s head saying :

“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, I prepare this body for purification...”, the deacons respond : “Amen.”

“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, may he/she be free from all the devils...”, the deacons respond : “Amen.”

“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, may he/she be purified from all devils...”, the deacons respond : “Amen.”

RENOUNCING SATAN AND RECITING THE ORTHODOX CREED

I. RENOUNCING SATAN ...

The mother undresses her child and holds him/her with her left arm, looking towards the West and lifts her right hand, reciting after the priest the following statements of Renouncing Satan (if the baptized is not a child, he recites the Statements personally) :

“I renounce you Satan and all your profane deeds, and all your evil followers, and all your bad debts, all your power, and all your detested worshipping, all your evil traps and your army and your dominion and the rest of your deceit. I renounce you, I renounce you, I renounce you”.

NOTES:

Undressing the child reminds us of the nakedness of Adam and Eve when they obeyed Satan and disobeyed the commandment of God, so they were put to shame before Him and hid from Him (Genesis 3:7-10) when they realized their nakedness. Such is what sin and Satan do to human beings, they strip them from all virtues and the protection of grace, and hence put them to shame before others.

Facing the West symbolizes exile and separation from God, and submission to the dominion of Satan, who was the first to be exiled and separated from God; falling from his angelic rank due to pride.

The direction of the West signifies the end, death and darkness, just as how the sun sets in the west. Also, we say about the deceased that the sun of his life has set. The ancient Egyptians built their cemeteries facing West. We notice this in the historical city of Aswan; all the temples are along the eastern banks of the River Nile, while all the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, are situated on the western bank of the River Nile. Likewise, the Pyramids at Giza, which were the once tombs of kings, is situated along the western bank of the River Nile.

The West symbolizes darkness, for once the sun sets in the west, the sky is replaced with the darkness of night.

The West symbolizes night and darkness which signify sin and evil. In the Greek language the word for evil : K a K I a, and the word for darkness : X a K I, are quite similar.

Sunset signifies darkness of sin which leads to grief, as the Psalmist said, "*Weeping may endure for a night, (weeping of repentance and remorse) but joy comes in the morning*" (Psalm 30:5). Joy, because of the acceptance of our repentance, and partaking in the Mass and Communion of the Holy Sacrament, and life in the light of Christ.

Renouncing Satan means that we are breaking the covenant with him, which is the covenant of obeying him, which he had with our first fathers. When Adam and Eve submitted to his will and obeyed his evil counsel, they disobeyed God and fell from grace, just like Satan. Hence he grabbed them to do his will. Adam and his descendants became slaves of Satan, after breaking the commandment of God, and thus fell from grace and divine comfort.

Renouncing Satan means that the person is refusing to remain under the bondage of Satan, and so refuses all his profane deeds and all his plans and deluding tricks, all his deceit, and deadly lies.

Renouncing Satan means casting him out of our lives, and cleaning the body and heart, so that the Holy Spirit can dwell in the pure body and pure heart (which had previously been contaminated by the devil), and so the body becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit.

Renouncing Satan means that we are ending all relations with him, hence we shall not accept from him any guidance or seduction or tricks, and we do not accept Satanic deeds, or deal with such people, such as clairvoyance, magicians, and so on.

The priest breathes three times on the child, and orders the profane spirit to come out from this child's life, by the order and power of the Holy Spirit. The mother or guardian father should take special notice of this, in order that they may not allow Satan to enter the child's life or have any share with the child in any way.

2. *CONFESSING CHRIST AND RECITING THE ORTHODOX CREED...*

The mother looks towards the East with her child on her left arm, and raises her right hand to repeat after the priest:

“I confess to you O Christ my God and to all Your redeeming laws and enlivening service and Your life giving works.

I believe in one God the Father the Almighty, and His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ and the Life-Giving Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the body, and the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church, Amen”.

The priest then asks her three times : “*Do you believe on behalf of this child?*” And three times she responds, “*I believe.*”

NOTES:

Facing the East signifies new birth, as the day starts by the rising of the sun in the East, and with sunrise a new day begins.

Facing the East signifies light, “For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

As life and light are strongly related, the East became a symbol of life and we encounter this relation in the words of the Psalmist : “*For with You is the fountain of life; In your light we see light*” (Psalm 36:9), and, “*Christ is life and the dayspring from on high*” (Luke 7:78), and to enlighten those sitting in darkness, He visited us and redeemed us from sin. “*The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned*” (Matthew 4:16).

The one who leaves the direction of the West and faces the East proves that he hates and renounces sin and its darkness, yearns for holiness and light which are granted in Baptism, a new

pure life renewed day by day according to the image of his Creator.

He who faces the East proves that he seeks the first heavenly life, as the first paradise was planted by God, a garden eastward in Eden (Genesis 2:8).

Christ is the light that shone on us. “But to you who fear My Name the Son of righteousness shall arise” (**Malachi 4:2**).

The Wiseman saw the star of Christ in the East at His birth: “*We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him*” (Matthew 2:2).

Isaiah said: “Glorify the Lord in the dawning light” (**Isaiah 24:15**), “And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East” (**Ezekiel 43:2**).

When the mother or the guardian father says, “*I believe for this child*”, they mean they believe in the grace that is granted to the child in the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the grace of sonship to God and the spiritual preparation for the Kingdom of God. This also means that they undertake to teach the child the principles of faith, church tradition and dogmas, as if engraving on stone.

The raising of the hand and the Covenant with the Lord Christ

When the baptized or the child’s parent faces the East and raises their right hand, repeating the words of the covenant with Christ, they are praying for God’s help to fulfill this holy covenant.

NOTES:

Some people say, when the mother turns from the West to the East, she must change her child from her left arm to her right arm, hence this means that she will raise her left hand during the confession for Christ and the reciting of the Orthodox Creed. I believe this is not correct that she raise her right hand while renouncing Satan, and her left hand while confessing Christ. The Baptismal Rites does not imply this, and therefore, I believe the correct position is for the child to remain on the mother’s left arm in both cases, and thus her right hand is raised in both cases.

Raising the hand has various implications. We shall mention a few :

When the person requiring Baptism raises the right hand while looking towards the West and renouncing Satan, they must open the palm of their hand as if avoiding Satan as an enemy and destroyer.

When the person requiring Baptism raises their right hand while looking towards the East and

reciting the Orthodox Creed, they undertakes before God to keep what is said, and hence the raising of the hand signifies the undertaking of an oath, just as in court and oath is taken to indicate the seriousness of what the speaker says and the necessity of commitment to this undertaking.

After the Rite of renouncing Satan and the confession of Christ is completed, the deacon says :

“From God we ask for the blessing of Baptism for the child.”

“From God we ask for the baptized to complete his life in rejecting Satan and his evil thoughts and destructive counseling.”

“From God we ask God’s providence for the baptized for his struggle as a servant of Christ, keeping His commandments and practicing His will, as he lives truly according to the Gospel of Christ.”

“From God we ask providence for the mother or guardian father to accomplish their duty in bringing up the child in the fear of God, and warning them to follow in God’s path throughout their life.”

3. *OTHER PRAYERS*

The priest prays asking God to : “Establish the obedience of your servants ... give them the power to abandon their past sins, reinforce their faith so nothing will separate them from You. Prepare them on the foundation of Your Apostolic faith, call them to Your pure light. Make them worthy of Your great grace...”.

They kneel down and the priest prays for them, placing the Cross on their heads saying : “Enlighten their understanding by the light of knowledge, cast away every magic, seduction and evil deed, and may they deserve the intimacy of the new Baptism and the incorruptible garment and the forgiveness of sins, as You prepare them to be a temple for Your Holy Spirit”.

NOTES:

Kneeling for the second time may mean a thanksgiving bow for the grace of freedom from the dominion of Satan and sin, and the acceptance of the soul in the Church Community, just as the leper did when he was healed from his leprosy which denoted his sin, “*He returned and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks*” (Luke 17:15,16).

The priest takes the holy oil (Ghaliloun) and anoints the baptized on their heart, back and arms with the sign of the Cross saying : “*I anoint you (the baptized Name) by the ointment of joy, opposing all the deeds of the adversary to implant you in the pleasant olive tree, in the One Holy Universal, and Apostolic Church of God*”.

NOTES:

We notice there are three kinds of oil used in Baptism :

Simple oil 2. Ghaliloun Oil 3. Myron

Simple Oil: pure olive oil, most probably the oil upon which the Apocalypse Vigil of Easter Saturday was prayed. It helps the Baptized to accept the Word of God and understand the Gospel, and simply accept faith.

Ghaliloun Oil: called an ointment of joy, which helps the soul to rejoice in the Word of God, the acceptance of faith and entry to the Church Community.

Myron Oil: is the Seal of the Holy Spirit, and it is with this oil that the child is anointed after Baptism, on the body; the senses, joints and heart. All the body's organs are sanctified, and hence the body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. The anointing of the Myron are like a royal seal, signifying that this body is a possession of the True King and Lord Jesus Christ. The devil cannot approach it to dwell in it or possess it, as he has no dominion over it. It is possessed by the Lord Jesus and sealed by His Seal, that is, the sign of the Cross.

The priest prays the prayer of the laying of hands on the catechumens (coming for Baptism) after anointing them with the Ghaliloun saying : *“Search the hearts of Your servants who came to the intimacy of Your grace, and if the evil of Satan is hidden in them, declare it, cast it out from the souls and bodies of Your servants, renew their lives so they may wear the garments of salvation and the weapons of undefeated faith, to become Your flock and sons of Your heavenly shelter and heirs of Your incorruptible eternal Kingdom of Christ.”*

Then the priest prays : *“Save Your creation from the bondage of the enemy. Accept them in Your Kingdom. Open their hearts to shine by the light of the Gospel of Your Kingdom, and may their lives be accompanied by the angels of light to save them from every conspiracy and every arrow that flies by day and the pestilence in darkness and the terror by night, and cast away from them all intrigues of the profane souls. The wicked soul that worries their hearts, cast it away, make them sleep in Your Holy flock of Your Christ, pure members in the Apostolic Church, pure vessels, blameless souls and children of the light and heirs of the Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ...”*

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THIRD

SANCTIFICATION OF THE BAPTISMAL WATER

INTRODUCTION

It is called The Liturgy of Baptism, and is similar to the Liturgy of Eucharist. It includes the Thanksgiving Prayer, readings from the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, the Book of Acts, from the Psalms and Gospels. Then the Litanies are said, followed by an inaudible prayer said by the priest while kneeling before the Baptismal Font. The prayer is very moving and spiritual : *“Send Your power from on High and help me to perform the service of this great heavenly Sacrament, and may Christ be imaged in those granted the anointment of the new Baptism from me. Build them on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets that they may never perish. Implant within them truth in Your One Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church to progress in worshipping You ...”*

The prayers continue similar to the rites of the Liturgy of Eucharist, with the priest, deacon and congregation, until such a time when the priest pours the Holy Myron in the Baptismal Font accompanied by three signs of the cross. This is the moment of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and the sanctification of the Baptismal water. Psalm 150 is then chanted while the priest baptizes the child. Baptism here replaces the Communion in the Rite of the Eucharist.

Sanctification of the Baptismal water, through prayers, is done to prepare for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and pouring the Myron oil into the water causes the water to become living water, capable by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to grant new birth to the soul and body, and become effective in the salvation of the baptized, enabling them to walk along the path of salvation, and hence enter and see the Kingdom of God. It also gives the baptized the right to become a child of God and the Church, having the right to partake of all the other Sacraments, such as Repentance, Communion, Matrimony and Priesthood.

St. Cyril the Great resembled the Baptismal water at the moment of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to a bowl with water which is placed on the fire so it gains heat. Likewise, the Baptismal water gains the power and reflection of the Holy Spirit, to be born of God and the Church as spiritual children.

St. John the Baptist says, *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”* (Matthew 3:11). Sanctification of the water is accomplished through the prayer of the gathered church (priest, deacons, congregation), the reading of the Word of God, the signs of the Cross, and finally by the pouring of the Myron into the Baptismal water so that the Holy Spirit dwells on the water grants the baptized person a new nature. *“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, so God created all the creatures, the light, the ferment the earth, the seas, sun, moon, grass herbs, trees, animals, birds and concluded by creating man on His image and likeness. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”* (Genesis 1).

In Baptism, man is void of any virtue, and his soul is empty because of the original sin, so the Spirit of God hovers over the Baptismal font in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of truth; just as the first creation was from water and spirit, so also the new creation is from water and spirit, the Baptismal water upon which dwells, the Holy Spirit.

THE RITE OF THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE BAPTISMAL WATER

The baptismal font is filled the clean water. Then the following steps and prayers take place :

1. The priest takes the simple oil or Apocalypse oil, and pours it into the Baptismal water three times with the sign of the Cross, and with every sign of the cross, the deacons say, “*Amen*”.
 2. He prays inaudibly or quietly : “Call Your servants to the pure light, make them worthy of this great grace of the holy Baptism, fill them with the power of Your Holy Spirit...”.
 3. Then after bestowing peace, he prays the Thanksgiving Prayer.
 4. He places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer together with three signs of the cross, then prays the mystery of the Pauline incense, “*O God the Great and Eternal*”.
 5. One of the deacons read the Pauline epistle to Titus (2:11-38) which talks about the difference in attitude of a person before Baptism, in ungodliness and worldly lusts, and after Baptism, living righteously in love and peace with all people. He calls Baptism, “*The regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (3:5).
 6. The priest prays the second Pauline mystery, “*O God of knowledge, giver of wisdom...*”, asking God to grant us a mind free of wandering, and a clear understanding that we may learn and understand the teachings of St. Paul, so that we may emulate him in deed, struggle and in faith and receive the glorious imperishable crown.
- Then he prays the Catholicon mystery, asking God to help him and his people to walk in the steps of the apostles, and to imitate and share in their struggle for God’s sake, in order to spread the faith and proclaim the good news of the unsearchable riches of God’s mercy, and to bless this vine which His right hand has planted through His holy apostles teachings, preaching and epistles.
7. Meanwhile one of the deacons reads the Catholicon from the First Epistle of St. John (5:5-14), which speaks about overcoming the world by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and about the three witnesses : the spirit, water and blood, and all these are present in Baptism. Baptism is founded on the Blood of Christ and the atonement of the Cross, the font is filled with water, and by prayer the Holy Spirit dwells upon it. Hence, the presence of all three - the Spirit, the water and the blood - causes Baptism to be correct and effective.
 8. The priest prays the Praxis (Acts) mystery, asking God to accept from him this sacrifice of incense, and send down upon him and His congregation in return His abundant mercy, making them pure from all sin, and making them worthy to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. One of the deacons read the Praxis from the Book of Acts (8:26-40), which mentions the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was baptized after he proclaimed the true faith in Jesus Christ saying: “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:38), and so St. Philip baptized him by immersion in the nearby river, and then they came up out of the water, just as the Lord Jesus on His baptism, “*Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water*” (Matthew 3:16).
 9. The Trisagon is sung and the priest says the Prayer for the Gospel with its relevant responses.

10. A deacon then reads Psalm 31 (1,2), blessing those whose sins are forgiven and transgression is covered by Baptism. Then the gospel is read from St. John (3:1-21) which narrates the meeting of Nicodemus with the Lord Jesus, and the speech of Christ about the importance of Baptism and His definite assurance of its necessity for salvation and entering the Kingdom of God, saying: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again (from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God”* (John 3:3), and, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven”* (John 3:5), *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6), and, *“We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 15:5), but the spiritual person born of the Holy Spirit.

11. During the Gospel reading, the priest prays the mystery of the Gospel : *“O You, who are long suffering, abundant in mercy and true, receive our prayers...”*.

12. The priest then prays the Seven Minor Litanies, as in the Laqqan Prayer, and the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick, and others. These are :

The Litany of the Sick

The Litany of Travelers

The Litany of the air of heaven, or fruits, according to the season. In the period between 12 Baounah to 9 Baba, the Litany of water is said as it is the flood season. In the period from 10 Baba to 10 Tubah, the Litany of plants is said as it is the season of plantation. In the period from 11 Tubah (Epiphany) to 11 Baounah, the Litany of air and fruits is said, as during this time plants bear fruits and need adequate environment so it flourishes. Then comes the harvest.

The King’s Litany

The Litany of the Deceased

The Litany of Oblations

The Catechumens Litany where the priest asks God to have mercy on them and let His Word abide in their hearts, and make them worthy of the New Birth (Baptism) for the forgiveness of sins, and preparedness for them to become holy temples for His Holy Spirit. These litanies are prayed by the priest raising incense.

13. The priest prays a short prayer saying : *“Send Your holy power to precede the Baptism and prepare Your servants to receive this pure Baptism for the remission of their sins.”*

14. The priest prays for the laying on of hands, that is, he places his hands on the head of the baptized saying, *“Dwell upon them Lord, walk with them and help them in every good deed”*.

15. The priest kneels humbly before the font, resembling the River Jordan. Then the priest

prays saying : “Cleanse my soul and body’s profanity, purify me completely. Send Your power from on high and strengthen me to perform the service of this great heavenly sacrament. May Christ be formed in them, who are being granted the seal of new birth, from me a sinner”, as if saying with St. Paul : “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19), “build them on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”, as if saying with St. Paul, “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

16. The priest then prays the three Major Litanies.

17. The attendants pray the Orthodox Creed.

18. The priest takes the Holy Ghaliloun oil, pours some of it into the Baptismal font three times with the sign of the Cross to sanctify the water.

19. The priest prays, “We ask You our King for Your servants, sanctify them and strengthen them so through this water and oil You abolish all the power of the adversary and wicked spirits, prevent them from perishing...”.

20. He breathes three times in the water while praying, “Sanctify this water and this oil to cause new birth, amen. Eternal life, amen. An incorruptible garment, amen.”

21. He makes the sign of the cross on the water three times saying, “O God the Pantocrator, touch this water so by it and by Your Holy Spirit You may renew the birth of Your servants.”

22. The congregation chants the Aspasmos, “Hail to John the forerunner ... Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Saint Mary”, then the Liturgy of Baptism Starts.

THE LITURGY OF BAPTISM

1. The priest, while signing the water, says : “*The Lord be with you all*” And the congregation responds, “*And with your spirit*”.

The priest says : “*Lift up your hearts*”. And the congregation responds, “*They are with the Lord*”.

The priest says : “Let us give thanks to the Lord” And the congregation responds, “It is right and worthy”.

The priest continues : “We lifted our eyes to You Lord ... You split the springs and valleys ... You ordered the rock to overflow water for your people...”

These three sections are prayed by the priest, following the example of the three prayers which follow the bestowal of peace with the sign of the cross : “*The Lord be with you all*”, in the Liturgy of Eucharist.

2. the priest says “Agios” three times with three signs of the Cross in the water, followed

by “Holy, Holy, Holy, truly O Lord You are Holy ... grant the water the grace of the Jordan, the power and heavenly comfort. Upon the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit, grant it the blessing of the Jordan, amen ... give it power to become life-giving water, amen..”.

3. He makes the sign of the cross three times on the water saying, “Your servants who offered their children to You, receive them ... Keep them in the Orthodox Faith all the days of their lives, grant them imperishable love...” The congregation responds, “Our Father who art in Heaven...”, followed by the priest saying the three absolutions.

4. The priest takes the holy Myron oil and pours a little into the Baptismal water three times, each time with the sign of the Cross to sanctify the water. He does this while saying the three known signs similar to those of the Offering. The deacons respond each time with “*Amen*”. Here the Holy Spirit dwells upon the Baptismal water, and is capable of granting new birth to the baptized person and to purify them from their sins.

5. The priest says the following verses from the Psalms (28: 2,3; 31: 5; 65:11; 50:7,9,10; 132:13), while moving the water with the Cross. The deacons respond after every sentence with, “*Alleluia*”, followed by, “*Glory be to God...*”.

NOTES:

The priest stirs the water with the Cross while reciting the Psalms, resembling the angel who was stirring the water of the pool of Bethesda to gain power of healing, “*For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water, then whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had*” (John 5:4).

6. The congregation sings the Communion hymn, Psalm 150, during the Baptism.

FOURTH

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

- 1. The deacon or guardian takes the naked child from the West and brings them to the baptismal Font to the left of the priest and gives the child to him.**
- 2. The priest holds the child from under the arms while facing the baby is towards the West.**
3. He gradually dips the child into the water, until the child is completely immersed, while saying: “*I baptize you ... (if the baby’s does not have a Christian name, the priest must give them a name from the Holy Bible, or a saint’s name) ... in the name of the Father...*”, and this is the first immersion.

4. He lifts the child from the water and breathes into them, then immerses the child again saying: *“And the Son...”*, this is the second immersion.
5. Then he lifts the child from the water and breathes into them again, then immerses the child for the third time in the water while saying: *“And the Holy Spirit”*, and this is the third immersion. Then he lifts the child from the water and breathes into them for the third time.
6. **The priest lifts the child by his hands above the Baptismal font with his face downwards so that any water in the baby’s mouth or nose may come out. If the child delays in breathing, the priest may shake them gently, and breathe in their face to regain normal breathing.**

NOTES:

1. We see the priest receiving the child from the left, and then after baptism giving the child to the mother from the right side. This action signifies that Baptism transforms us from the side of rejection, which is darkness, to the side of acceptance, which is the light. The Syrian Fraction mentions, *“Instead of the sin permeating the world, the Son died on the Cross and restored us from the left to the right providence”*.

2. The three immersions in Baptism is in the name of the Holy Trinity : The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the Lord Jesus taught His saintly disciples, *“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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:19,20).

As Baptism is death with Christ and resurrection with Him, through it the believer is granted the blessings of salvation that is accomplished by the death of Christ on the Cross, and as Christ died and was buried for three days, so also immersion of the baptized occurs three times in the Baptismal water, then the child immerges from the Baptismal font as Christ the Lord came out of the tomb. *“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:12).

3. **The priest must be careful with the Baptismal water during Baptism, when taking the child from the Baptismal Font, and handing them to the mother, so that no water spills out from the font and is trodden by feet.**
4. **The mother must take care of the water that is used to wash the towel the baby is wrapped in after baptism, and the baptism clothes the child wears following baptism, as well as the water that is used to bath the baby after the baptism. The water should be disposed of in a spring or well, so that it not be trodden on, for the water contains the holy Myron oil.**
5. **When both male and female children are presented for baptism, the male child is baptized first, to symbolize man being the head of the woman.**

THE RITE FOR DISCHARGING THE BAPTISMAL WATER

If the priest wants to discharge the Baptismal water after Baptism, he washes his hands with some water to clear what clings to them from the Myron oil, then washes around the Baptismal font what was sprinkled from the Baptismal water that contained some Myron, and pours it into the font.

Then the priest prays, “We ask and entreat Your goodness, O Philanthropic One, O Lord, to return this water to its first nature to be restored to the earth...”

Then he opens the plug below the Baptismal font so all the water trickles into the reservoir in the ground. Thus the Baptismal rite ends.

NOTES:

- 1. It is not advisable to keep the Baptismal waters which contain the Apocalypse oil, Ghaliloun oil and Myron oil, without discharge for a long time, otherwise the water, due to the oils, may rot. It is advisable for the Liturgy of Baptism to be prayed at each Baptism and for the water to be immediately discharged after Baptism. In extreme conditions, the water must not be kept in the Baptismal font for more than three days.**
- 2. It is wrong to add new water to the Baptismal water after its sanctification, as we do not add wine to the chalice after the sanctification and transubstantiation.**
3. When building the Baptismal font, care must be given to make it deep and wide enough to contain adults of other denominations, who join our Church and are baptized, or certain persons whose baptism, for various reasons was neglected by their parents. Hence during baptism, the priest says, “*If you ... were not baptized, I now baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”, and immerses the person three times as usual.
If the Baptismal font is not spacious enough to contain an adult, it is possible to provide a large container big enough to make it possible to completely immerse the person according to the Baptismal Rite by immersion. Following the baptism, the container must be broken or only specified for this purpose as it is sanctified and ordained by prayers and Myron poured into it.
- 4. It is better to build a sink near the Baptismal font for the priest to wash his hands after Baptism, so he does not wash his hands in the font, and for the sink to flow into the same reservoir as the Baptismal font.**

THE ADULT BAPTISM IS AS FOLLOWS ...

If the person to be baptized is a man, then after completion of the Rite of Renouncing Satan and recitation of the Orthodox Creed, and the Liturgy of Baptism, the attendants should leave the Baptismal room, so the baptized may undress, and go down into the Baptismal font immersed up to his neck, then the priest comes and dips his head in the Baptismal water three times saying: “*I baptize you ... in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”.

Then the priest leaves the room, and the baptized person arises out of the Baptismal water and dries his body by the prepared towel, then wears his underwear. Then the priest comes and anoints him with the Myron oil 36 times. Then he dresses in garments appropriate for this happy occasion.

If the person to be baptized is a woman, after the priest prays the Liturgy of Baptism and performs the Rite of Renouncing Satan, the profession and Orthodox Creed, he leaves the room and asks the deaconess to assist the woman to undress, and go down into the Baptismal font immersed up to her neck. Then the priest enters and places his hand on the woman's head (preferably he should be standing behind a curtain) and immerses her in water three times while saying: "*I baptize you ... in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*". She may wear a white garment specified for this occasion with which she enters into the Baptismal font. Then the priest leaves the room, and the woman arises from the Baptismal font and dries her body with the prepared towel, and clothes herself appropriately for this occasion. The priest comes and anoints her with the holy Myron oil on her external members only, such as on her head, her senses; ears, eyes, nostrils, mouth and both wrists. Thus the Sacrament of Holy Chrism is performed.

THE BAPTISM OF BLOOD

During the days of persecution, many pagans believed in Christ from simply being touched by witnessing the strong faith of the Christians who were martyred for Christ. As a result, these pagans welcomed martyrdom for Christ, even though they had previously not been baptized.

In this situation, the blood which they shed is recognized, and considered a "Baptism of Blood". Hence, they receive the crown of martyrdom and eternal life. In essence, Baptism is dying with Christ, and these martyrs shed their blood honorably for and with Christ.

Many saints spoke about the "Baptism of Blood". St Cyril of Jerusalem said, "Whoever does not accept Baptism has no salvation, except the martyrs, who without the Baptism of water are granted salvation by the Baptism of Blood". When our Savior was crucified on the Cross, He was wounded by a spear in His side, and water and blood came forth. Likewise, during times of peace, baptism is carried out through water, and during times of persecution, by blood. The Savior Himself called martyrdom by blood and Baptism by saying: "*Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*" (Matthew 20:22).

St. Cyril the Great said: "Some received salvation and eternal life without any need for signs from the water, as they were baptized by blood".

THE BAPTISM OF A DYING PERSON

If a child got sick before their baptism and their parents were frightened the child may die, the child must be baptized even if they are a day old. In this case another person, other than the mother, must take the child to the Church for baptism, and then the priest must anoint the child with the Myron. The Rites mention (in the third chapter) : “If the newly born was in fear of death before the mother is purified from blood, someone else may take the child to be baptized, as the delivering woman must stay away from Church forty days if she delivered a male child and eighty days if she delivered a female child.”

In the occasion of baptizing a dying child, it is not possible to be restricted with all the conditions of Baptism, so the child may be baptized by wiping the whole body by water instead of immersion, and if time is limited, the rite of fasting for a priest before baptism may not occur.

If the child dies, their soul will go to paradise as a pure angel, but if the child lives, the baptism must not be repeated, as it is binding. Baptism only takes place once.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Myron, also known as the Holy Anointment, or the Sacrament of Confirmation, is a holy Sacrament, with which we receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. The word 'Myron' is a Greek word which means 'ointment' or 'fragrant perfume'.

The baptized person receives it immediately after Baptism, so as to become a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit aids him to grow in his spiritual life. Although it is received directly after Baptism, it is an independent Sacrament and the priests have to be very careful to grant it accurately to the baptized, anointing them with 36 crosses.

The Lord Jesus instituted it when He said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom these believing in Him would receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (**John 7:37-39**).

The Baptized is anointed with 36 signs on his joints and senses so that the Holy Spirit can dwell within them. His body and soul becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this anointment, God grants the grace of confirmation to the baptized as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Anointing the external organs by the Myron oil denotes anointing the power of the internal soul and its spiritual senses by the power of God to fight the hosts of evil and its power. This is because the Myron is the most powerful weapon against the devil and the best protection against sin and its seduction.

Our fathers the apostles granted this Sacrament by the laying of their hands after Baptism, as we read in the Book of Acts when St. Peter and St. John laid hands on the people of Samaria who were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so received the Holy Spirit, (Acts 9:2-6).

As the laying of hands for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is a specific rite of the fathers the Apostles and their successors the Bishops, and as the regions of mission increased, consequently the number of believers and those who entered faith increased. It was not possible for the Apostles to wander through all the countries and cities to lay hands on the baptized, so they established anointment by Myron as an alternative for the laying on of the hands for the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

The first who made the Myron were the fathers the Apostles as they kept certain fragrant oils which were on the body of the Lord Jesus during His burial, and they added the spices which were brought by the women who prepared them to anoint Jesus, but Christ had risen.

They melted all these spices in pure olive oil, prayed on it in the Upper Room in Zion and made it a holy ointment to grant the gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized. It is also used in the Sanctification of Baptismal water, ordination of Churches, and church altars and vessels. They decided that their successors the Bishops, must renew the making of the Myron whenever it is

close to finishing, by incorporating the original oil with the new.

When St. Mark went to Alexandria, he took with him some of the Myron oil made by the fathers the Apostles. He used it in the Sacrament of Chrism, as well as the Patriarchs who succeeded him. This continued until the era of Pope Athanasius the Apostolic - the 20th Patriarch, who then decided to remake the Myron in Alexandria.

Hence, he prepared all of the needed perfumes and spices from which God ordered Moses to make the Holy ointment as mentioned in the Book of Exodus (Chapter 30), with pure olive oil. Then the sanctification of the Myron was fulfilled in Alexandria, and Pope Athanasius was entrusted with the holy oil (leaven), which contained spices which touched the Lord's body whilst in the tomb, as well as the original oil which had been prepared by the Apostles and brought to Egypt by St. Mark. He distributed the oil to the churches abroad : to the See of Rome, Antioch and Constantinople, together with a document of its authenticity, and the patriarchs rejoiced in receiving it.

The Myron was made 29 times in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

What is joyous and comforting, is that whoever is baptized, is anointed by the Myron which contains the spices which were laid on the body of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Myron oil consists of about 30 kinds of spices and perfumes which have been added to pure olive oil and simmered four times. The filtered oil is then poured into a large container and after the Liturgy of the Sanctification of the Myron, the Patriarch places the old leaven in the Myron recently made, whilst saying certain prayers.

The Ghaliloun oil comprises the remaining fibers of the filtered oil after it having been simmered four times. It is then sanctified by a special Mass, which follows the Myron Mass.

The mixture of the Myron and the Ghaliloun oil, is composed of about 30 kinds of spices, some of which are: myrrh, aloes, frankincense, cinnamon, cassia, sweet-swalling cane, thistle, balsam and ambergris. The last substance added into the mixture is the fragrant musk.

According to the Apostolic Canons, the priest baptizes the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and anoints them with the Holy Myron. This is to take place only after renouncing Satan and professing Christ has been done.

Regarding the Sacrament of Myron, some of our Church fathers said :

“Whoever is baptized should be anointed by Myron, to become the anointed for God, and so is granted the grace of the Holy Spirit” (St. Cyprianus)

“We also, after getting out of the Baptismal Font are granted the anointment officially as was Christ, I mean the Holy Spirit” (St. Kyrillos of Jerusalem)

“After going out of the Baptismal water, we are anointed by Holy Oil according to old tradition. The anointment is accomplished externally on our bodies so that we may bear spiritual fruits” (St. Tertullian)

“In the Sacrament of Baptism the body is cleansed, so that the soul may be purified, and in the Sacrament of Anointment the body is anointed so that the soul may be sanctified” (St. Tertullian)

THE RITE OF ANOINTMENT BY HOLY MYRON

After baptizing the child, the mother receives him on the right side of the priest in a large clean towel, and wipes his body from water.

After Baptism, the priest anoints the baptized according to age, males first then females.

If available, another priest may carry out the Sacrament of Anointment on the baptized, as soon as they come out of the Baptismal Font and their bodies are wiped and dried. After the mother dries her child, she places him on the prepared table near the Baptismal Font, so that the priest can anoint the child by the Myron with 36 crosses, on all the joints and senses.

The Myron Rite takes place as follows:

The priest holds the bottle of Holy Myron and prays saying:

“O Almighty Maker of all miracles, who is Omnipotent, whose will and power can do anything. Grant the grace of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Myron is sprinkled, to become a living seal and steadfastness to Your servants through Your Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to you, together with Him, and the consubstantial Holy Spirit, now and forever Amen.”

NOTES:

This prayer is not for the blessing of the Myron oil, but for asking the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Myron, to also dwell in the baptized person, through the anointment.

THE ANOINTMENTS

The priest places his right thumb on top of the opening of the Myron bottle, and turns it downwards to wet his finger with the Myron. He then anoints the baptized as follows :

The first four anointments (eight crosses) are on the senses

Firstly, the top of the head, the nostrils, the mouth, and the right ear

Then, the right eye, the left eye, and finally the left ear

Whilst anointing, the priest says, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The anointment of grace of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

NOTES:

He anoints The Head to sanctify it. The head contains the brain, where thinking takes place. It is the brain which distinguishes humankind from other creatures. A good mind is of great use and benefit to oneself and to others also. King Solomon praises the mind saying, *“When wisdom enters your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you, understanding will keep you, to deliver from the way evil”* (Proverbs 2: 10-12).

Also, the Lord Jesus praised the young man who answered wisely and said to him: *“You are not far from the Kingdom of God”* (Mark 12:34). And St. Paul our teacher prays for us saying, *“And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7).

The Nostrils contain the sense of smell, and it is an important sense, for if a person is not careful and alert, it is possible for impure thoughts to enter one's heart through this sense. Hence, the priest anoints it to protect it against all sin and lust.

The Mouth with the tongue is the most dangerous organ in a person...

“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless” **(James 1:26)**.

“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” **(James 3:2)**.

“The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison, it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire by hell” **(James 3:8,6), if it is not controlled.**

The Psalmist prays, “Set a guard O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing” **(Psalm 141:3,4)**

And the wise King Solomon said: “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” **(Proverbs 21:23)**, and, “Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you” **(Proverbs 4:24)**. **We ought to keep our tongue from sins such as swearing, insulting, lying, judging, and gossiping. Our words should always be graceful.**

The Ears provide us with the important sense of hearing, which should also be controlled, and the anointing of the Myron is a strong weapon in control what we hear. We protect our ears from hearing such things as gossip, and other conversations which may poison our hearts with revenge and hatred. We also protect our ears from hearing certain songs which may poison our hearts with lustful thoughts.

The Eyes are the most important sense, through which enters more than 80% of information which may affect our hearts. If the information is holy, it sanctifies the heart, and vice versa. For this reason, we should control what we see so that we may keep ourselves pure. The tenth commandment says, *“Do not covet”*. The Psalmist prays, *“Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things”* (Psalm 119:37), and, *“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”* (Psalm 119:17).

The second group of four anointments are as follows :

The priest wets his right thumb with the Myron another time and anoints,

The heart (chest)

The navel

The back

The lower back

Whilst anointing the priest prays : *“An anointment as a token for the kingdom of heaven,”* as this holy anointment makes the Holy Spirit works in us and prepares us for the inheritance of the Kingdom of heaven.

NOTES:

Anointing the heart is very important as it is the organ which pumps blood to all the body. A healthy heart is important for a healthy body, and its spiritual welfare is required, as the wise King Solomon advises us saying, *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23).

The Navel is the place to which was joined the umbilical cord when a person was a fetus in his mother’s womb. Through it the fetus is nourished and nurtured, and so by anointing it, the holy Myron is protecting it against Satan.

The Back supports the body and is the place of the spine. If the spine is infected or damaged, severe pain may occur and even lead to paralysis. So it is important to protect it through the anointing of the Myron.

The Lower Back is the area of sexual lusts, and so the anointing of the Myron sanctifies it and protects it by the power of the living Cross. This area also includes the kidneys.

This group of anointments include the anointing of the heart, which must be cared for and renewed, as the Psalmist prayed, *“Create in me a pure heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”* (Psalm 51:10), and, *“Examine me O Lord and prove me. Try my mind and my heart”* (Psalm 26:2).

The third group of anointments are on the six joints of the arm:

The priest wets his thumb with the holy Myron, and anoints,

The right shoulder joint

The right underarm

The right elbow joint

The inner elbow joint

The right wrist joint

The back of the right wrist

Whilst anointing, the priest prays, “An anointment for the community of eternal life, Amen”.

The fourth group of anointments are on the other six joints:

The left shoulder joint

The left underarm

The left elbow joint

The left elbow joint

The left wrist joint

The back of the left wrist

Whilst anointing, the priest prays, “A holy anointment of our Lord Jesus Christ, an imperishable seal, Amen.”

Anointing the hands is important, as they are instruments of work and contain the sense of touch. We should keep our hands pure from all things that may defile; from touching things that are impure, from partaking in ungodly deeds, from taking part in murder, stealing, and so on.

The fifth group of anointments are on the six joints of the leg:

The priest wets his thumb with the Myron and anoints,

The right hip joint

The right ureter (inside of the hip joint)

The right knee joint

The inner knee joint

The right ankle joint

Above the right ankle joint

The priest anoints them saying, “Perfection of the grace of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

These are sensitive parts of the body, for near the inner hips lies the reproductive organs, and the church anoints this area so that the child may lead a life of purity. The sexual organs are called the holy of Holies of the body, and so keeping them pure is required. Through the anointing of the Myron, these organs are being protected from sexual immorality, which greatly angers God.

God destroyed the old world because of their profanity, through wiping them out by the flood. Likewise, He burnt the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and judged them to become an example of the fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries, “*Those who died in the plague were twenty four thousand*” (Numbers 25:9). For this reason, St. Paul our teacher advises every youth saying, “*Keep yourself pure*” (1 Timothy 5:22), for without holiness no one can see the Lord.

The sixth group of anointments are on the other six joints:

The priest wets his thumb with the Myron and anoints,

The left hip joint

The left ureter (inside of the hip joint)

The left knee joint

The inner knee joint

The left ankle joint

Above the left ankle joint

The priest anoints them saying, "I anoint you (...name) by a holy anointment. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit Amen."

Anointing the feet is to protect them from walking in the way of sin, and from going to corrupt places. Avoiding the way of sin will enable us to live a virtuous life, and finally gain eternal life.

After finishing the anointments, the priest places his hand on the child's head, saying, "May you be blessed by the blessings of the heavenly, and the blessings of the angels. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you in His name."

NOTES:

We notice that the priest anoints the child's right arm, then the left, and the right leg before the left. He gives priority to the right side because it is the center of power in the human body, for example, most work is done by the right hand. Also, when he enters the altar, he must enter with his right foot first.

Blessing of the Heavenly: signifies the blessings of all the heavenly hosts, whether they be saints or angels.

Blessing of the Angels: signifies their care, watchfulness, assistance and intercession for the baptized person, and how they accompany us and keep us from all evil. Here we are assured of the idea of a guardian angel. As the ruler of devils appoints a demon for every born child in order to delude and seduce them, so too does the Lord appoint every person after Baptism and anointment by the Myron, an angel to watch, accompany, care and keep them. The existence of guardian angels are clearly mentioned in the Lord's words (Matthew 18:10 and Acts 12:15).

Blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ: signifies His gifts and providence for each believer to live with God.

In His Name: implies that the believer is blessed by the name of the Lord Jesus through which, "*There is no name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

The Baptized person is now a Christian, having been called by the glorified name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTES:

The 36 anointments are on all the joints and senses of the human body, and the anointment protects them against Satanic warfare, so that the devil does not abide in this person by any means. A Christian who is possessed by a demon, is said to be 'Myron deficient, which means that he was not anointed by the Myron as required, and so the devil was able to penetrate into his body and dwell there.

The child is anointed by the Myron only once in life, so we always ask the priests to take care in administering the Myron after Baptism, lest neglect may bring harm to the child. The priest anoints the new white garments of the child with three signs of the cross, then dresses the baby with the undergarment first saying, "*The garment of eternal life to enable them to enter to the Kingdom of heaven.*"

NOTES:

Wearing the new white garments after baptism has much significance:

"Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new" (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (**Colossians 3:9-11**).

"We were buried with Him through Baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (**Romans 6:4**).

Hence, the new garments signify the new life granted to the baptized person, so that they may walk in holiness.

Why should be garments be white?

The color white reminds us of three incidences - in the past, present and future:

It reminds us of the purity of life in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned. And so wearing white after baptism represents the purity and holiness which Adam had before he fell. Protected by the grace of God, the baptized person does not feel nakedness or shame.

The baptized must live a pure and blameless life, so as not to defile this new garment, new heart and new person, that was granted in Baptism. If he does sin, he must quickly repent and receive the Holy Communion, for the precious Blood of Jesus Christ purifies us from sin.

It also reminds us of the eternal life, which has been prepared for the pure. In heaven the righteous souls wear white garments and serve God day and night in His temple: "*They washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb*" (Revelation 7).

The priest then takes the crown and prays on it saying, “Bless these crowns which we prepared for Your servant who is united with You through the holy Baptism, may they be crowns of glory and exaltation.” He then places the crown on the baptized person’s head, praying, “O Lord, place on Your servant this crown from heaven, Amen. Crowns of glory, Amen.”

NOTES:

Placing crowns on the heads of the baptized, is an old rite mentioned in some of the sayings of the church fathers. St. Ephraim the Syrian (373 AD) addressed the baptized person saying: “*Your garments and crowns shine and the glory of Jesus Christ protected you.*” The Church continued this practice until the seventeenth century, but we do not know the reason why it was then neglected.

This rite should be practiced again, for using crowns on the baptized has many great spiritual meanings; such as denoting victory granted to the baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the new freedom from the bondage of the devil, his evil deeds, and from the imprisonment of Hades and its bonds. Crowns are regal, hence denoting royalty and glory for the baptized who has become a child of God, a king enthroned, a priest, and a prophet. The baptized become like kings over themselves; controlling their tendencies and lusts, and not being enslaved by the devil, sin or lusts. They become like priests; presenting their bodies and souls as a living, holy sacrifice, worshipping, praying, fasting and serving. And they become like prophets; as the Holy Spirit whom they received in the Sacrament of Confirmation grants them the spirit of prophecy, wisdom, understanding, counseling and knowledge (Isaiah 11:2).

The baptismal crowns could be made of metal, similar to the wedding crowns used in the Rite of Matrimony. The crown may also be made of roses, or material adorned by crosses.

The Church has not stopped this rite officially, but out of neglect, it is not practiced. It is important, however, that we return to this original Rite, which is rich in its spiritual meanings.

The priest then ties a red ribbon (girdle) around the waist of the baptized. ‘Girdle’ is a Syrian word meaning ‘belt’. Just as when a soldier ties a girdle about his waist before going into battle, so too, by tying this ribbon around the baptized, it signifies that he has now become a soldier of Christ, ready to attack any evil encounter.

The Christian must strive to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ by enduring hardships, in order to attain crowns of glory (2 Timothy 2:3-5).

The girdle is red, symbolizing the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His Blood for us, and upon which the Baptism, Myron and all other Sacraments were founded (Hebrews 12:4).

After donning the crown and tying the girdle, the priest chants the Verses of the Cymbals, and the congregation responds with, “*Worthy are you!*” three times.

Then the congregation sings the hymn, “Non perishable crowns placed by the Lord, on the baptized who are of Christ.”

The priest then prays for the laying on of hands: “Make them worthy of the Communion of the

Holy Body and Precious Blood.” The prayer of blessing then follows: “Accomplish them in Your wisdom, show them Your fear, bring them up in spiritual stature, grant them the knowledge of truth and keep them in the faith, Amen.”

A Commandment Read for the Parents and Godparents of the Baptized Person

It is read for parents or Godparents of the baptized person, and is said either after wearing the crowns, or after they receive Holy Communion. It can also be said after the procession, or before untying the girdle, and this is when it seems to happen these days. Although it must be mentioned that the procession for the baptized is not referenced in the Rite. The only thing mentioned is the chanting of the Verses of the Cymbals followed by the “Worthy” hymn.

However, the procession after Baptism has a nice spiritual meaning. Baptism denotes the death of the Lord Christ and His burial in the tomb for three days (signified by the three immersions during baptism), followed by Christ's Resurrection and preaching taking place in all the world. And this is the significance of the procession. We celebrate the resurrection of Christ during the fifty joyous days by the procession which takes places around the church, which symbolizes the Apostles preaching Christ and His resurrection throughout the whole world.

Likewise, for the baptized, who has been buried with Christ and arisen with Him, we celebrate by a procession because he has now become a witness of Christ and shares in the joy of His resurrection. Our teacher St. Paul says: “*Buried with Him in Baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God*” (Colossians 2:12).

Baptism is death, and burial, followed by resurrection and joy. The reading of the Commandment is long and spiritual in order to urge the baptized child’s parents or guardians to care for them, and bring them up as Christians. We shall mention parts of the Commandment...

“...Strive to teach them the reading of the holy Bible, and to be committed to Church life, to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as during the Holy Lent and other church fasts. Teach them to abide by the Apostolic instructions and teachings. Implant in them the virtues of righteousness and praise, purity and obedience, holiness, love, mercy, truthfulness and justice. Teach them the acceptable way of God; build them up on the foundation of goodness. Rebuke them from dealing with evil people. Feed them on spiritualities, and teach them the fear of God, and do not disregard their education”.

NOTES:

‘Godfather/mother’ is a Syrian word meaning ‘guardian’, ‘caretaker’ or custodian. They are spiritually responsible before the church for bringing up the baptized child in a spiritual way, full of virtues of holiness, Christian discipline, and strong in the Orthodox faith. The Church puts also certain conditions for Godparents :

They must be Coptic Orthodox only

They must accompany the child throughout their up-bringing and care for their spiritual, physical, and educational well being.

The matter of a Godparent is not only a Rite, but is of great significance, for they are responsible for the spiritual up-bringing of the child, and this is the secret of the continuous success and happiness of a person.

The above mentioned Commandment contains many beautiful meanings :

The greatness and sanctity of the sacrament. It is important for parents to know the greatness and significance granted to their child through this Sacrament.

The responsibility of the Godparent in :

Not allowing the devil to have any share in the child's life after having renounced him.

Teaching the child about the Holy Bible from their childhood, by means of simple stories; strive to teach them the Holy Books, which are the breath of God. In this way, resemble the mother of St. Timothy: "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5), "*And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15), for his grandmother and mother gave him the faith and taught him the Holy Bible from his childhood.

Teaching the child about the Church and its traditions:

The parent must go to Church every week with their child to receive the Holy Communion, and be regular in partaking of it.

The parent must teach the child how to respect God's house and the Holy Sacraments, for example, by taking off shoes before Communion, by lighting a candle in front of the saints' icons, by kneeling before the altar when entering the Church, then kissing the curtain, the cross and the priest's hand, then sitting quietly and respectfully. The parent should also teach the child how to pray the 'Our Father', the Orthodox Creed, and how to make the sign of the cross. It is also important for the parent to teach their child the significance of alms giving by giving the child some money to place in the Church's money box.

The parent must implant virtues and spiritual principles in the child, such as purity, obedience, love, holiness, mercy, almsgiving, justice, righteousness, reverence, patience, goodness, truthfulness and every good deed accepted by God. It is important also that those who teach virtues, should themselves be virtuous people.

Prayer of Untying the Girdle of the Baptized

The church is now accustomed to give the baptized person the Holy Communion at the end of the Divine Mass, followed by the procession. After the procession, the girdle is untied.

In the original Rite, the untying of the girdle occurred in the eighth day after Baptism, at home and not in Church. Hence, the baptized remained with the Baptismal garments bound to the girdle for eight days. On the eighth day, the priest comes to the house and prays the prayer of 'Untying the Girdle' as follows...

A container or bowl of water is placed, and is surrounded by lit candles. The priest then commences with the Thanksgiving Prayer, and the raising of incense three times while reciting the Pauline mystery, "*O God the great and eternal, without beginning and without end...*", followed by the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 50.

The Pauline Epistle is read from 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, which is about the people of Israel who were baptized during the crossing over of the Red Sea, being led by Moses the prophet. Then the Trisagon and the Litany of the Gospel is said, followed by the Baptismal psalm: "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven*" (Psalm 32:1-2).

The Gospel is concerning Christ's baptism by St John: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ... who has fulfilled My will" (Matthew 3:1-7). Everyone wishes for their child to become like Christ in fulfilling the Lord's commandments and living according to His will. The priest says the Three Major litanies for Peace, the Fathers, and The Congregations.

Prayer for the Laying on of Hands

The priest places his hand with the Cross on the head of the baptized, while praying, "Enlighten them by the light of blessing. Purify them, bless them, renew them by Your Grace by the Baptism that was granted by the power of Your living Holy Spirit. Keep them steadfast in the Orthodox Faith till the end. Bring them up in spiritual stature, may they be watched by Your good angels. Fill them with all knowledge and understanding. Remove from their hearts the feeling of anxiety ... make them worthy of eternal life and the Kingdom of heaven."

After the "*Worthy...*" hymn, the congregation prays the Lord's Prayer. The priest says the three absolutions, then makes the sign of the cross three times on the water saying, "*One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, one is the Holy Spirit Amen.*"

The congregation chant Psalm 150, "*Praise the Lord*". During the dismissal, the baby is bathed with the water that has been prayed on. Then it is important that the water be poured into a river, lake or any other thing which no one would walk onto or into.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

APPENDIX

The Prayer of the Basin

This prayer is done for children newly born, and before baptism.

The purpose of this prayer is for the Church to grant its blessing and well wishes to the family, officially, for the new born child. The priest may choose a name for the child from the church saints, and he reminds the parents of their child's baptism day, and how they must prepare for it and be committed to the spiritual upbringing of their child.

The priest comes (according to choice) on the seventh day after the child's birth. He pours water into a basin, together with some oil and salt, and lights seven candles.

The priest prays the Thanksgiving Prayer and raises the Pauline incense.

The deacon reads the Pauline Epistle (Hebrews 1:5-12) which speaks about Christ being the only begotten Son.

This is followed by the Trisagon and the Litany of the Gospel: "*Praise, O servants of the Lord, Praise the name of the Lord ... and the Word became flesh*" (Psalm 112:1-2 and John 1:14-19). The Gospel explains the glory of the only begotten Son of God."

The priest then says the Three Major Litanies, followed by the Orthodox Creed.

The priest says the following prayer: "Bless Your child with all heavenly blessings. Bless their birth day and may they have long life, by Your Grace. May their parents rejoice, and at the right time, may they deserve the new Birth for the remission of sins. Prepare them to be a temple of Your Holy Spirit."

The priest then prays Psalms 148 and 149, which are from the fourth part of the Midnight Praises.

The congregation says the 'Our Father', and the priest prays the three absolutions, making the sign of the cross three times on the water saying, "*One is the Holy Father, one is the Holy Son, one is the Holy Spirit. Amen.*"

The congregation sings Psalm 150 "*Praise the Lord*", while the priest bathes the child (or otherwise, the priest may start to bathe, and another one continue).

The priest says the blessing and dismissal.

Glory be to God forever, Amen.

SACRAMENT OF REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION

“IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS ,
HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE
US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANS US
FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS”

1 John 1:9

The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession is a holy sacrament, by which the sinner returns to God, confessing his sins before the priest to be absolved by the priest through the authority granted to him by God. By this absolution the confessing person is granted the forgiveness of those sins which he confessed.

Confession means admitting and declaring a certain matter. The Sacrament of Confession means verbal confession before the priest of sins and mistakes committed by a person, and confessing and humbly repenting, in order to be granted the absolution and forgiveness.

Instituting the Sacrament of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession when He said to His disciples, the pure apostles: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven” **(Matthew 18:18).**

Also, after the Resurrection the Lord said : “‘As the Father sent me, I also send you.’ And when He said this He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any they are retained’” **(John 20:21-23).**

By this He gave them the authority of binding sins or loosing them, through the authority given to them by the Holy Spirit, and according to the contriteness of the confessing person.

Conditions of Repentance

True repentance has four conditions:

- Contrite heart and remorse for previous sins.
- Steadfast intention to improve.
- Strong faith in Christ and hope in His love to forgive.
- Verbal confession of sins before the priest.

Right Age for Confession

Parents must teach their children about the Sacrament of Confession from an early age, say, about twelve years old, so they may be acquainted from childhood with the Sacrament, for as the proverb says: “Teaching in childhood is like engraving on rocks”.

In the book of Ecclesiology entitled ‘The Precious Diamond’ by John Bin Elsabaa, is written the below mentioned text. In its time, it was adhered to and considered most beneficial :

Releasing the Guardian of Responsibility

When the child grows up in Christian virtues, the Church or guardian takes him before the temple

of God, where he received him from the priest at Baptism and says (in the presence of the priest) :

“My son/daughter, when you were a child and a slave to Satan, your parents wanted to set you free through the Holy Baptism, and they asked my weakness to guarantee you before this priest of God. I received you from him, I renounced Satan on your behalf denied him and his deeds, confessed the Lord Jesus Christ for you, took you to receive His Holy Body and Precious Blood and you became a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now you stand before the Temple of God from where I received you, you must know that the one who renounced Satan and believed in Christ, must abandon the deeds of Satan which are pride, hatred, anger, murder, adultery, lies, swearing, curses, idleness in going to church and hearing God’s word. As you believe in Christ, you must seek the virtues of love, humility and holiness, for without which no one sees the Lord. From this place I received you, and here I surrender you to yourself and God. Do not request from me anything further; from now on, you are mature and conscious of what is good and what is evil.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and abide your heart in the Orthodox faith until the end, Amen.”

From that hour the priest will receive the child, teach them confession, and so the priest becomes a father and spiritual guide for the person who starts to practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession directly guided by the priest.

The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

Verbal confession to a priest is necessary for the forgiveness of sins, for the Lord said to His Pure Apostles: *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (John 20:23.)

How can the fatherly priests forgive or retain sins if they are not aware of them? How can a judge decide a sentence if he is not aware of the case details? For this reason, the authority given to the Apostles and their successors to retain or forgive sins, oblige the congregation to confess their sins before those who have the authority of absolving or retaining absolution.

Confessing to the priest is necessary for gaining the forgiveness of sins. It also has many other benefits :

From a humane perspective ...

Human beings by nature require comfort and wise counseling, and the need to speak to someone regarding problems or worries. They feel the need to have someone share their joys as well as their sorrows, and this is especially so when disclosing sensitive issues to a person who is a priest, a confession father, a teacher, or a guardian; one who keeps secrets, and has a nurturing nature.

From the Old Testament perspective ...

Confession was a necessary act for the repentance of a sinner who brought the sacrifice, laid his hand on its head and confessed his sins to God before the priest. The priest then took the sacrifice and slaughtered it, offering it onto the altar of burnt sacrifice as an atonement for sin. The Lord said: *“If a person sins or touches any unclean thing ... or if a person swears ... he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned ..., so the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin”* (Leviticus 5:1-6).

Hence, the sinner is obliged to confess all his trespasses.

When Achan the son of Carmi sinned and stole, the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel, and they were conquered before the men of Ai. Then Joshua brought Achan the son of Carmi and said to him: *“My son I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done, do not hide it from me.”* And Achan answered Joshua and said, *‘Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel’*” (Joshua 7: 19,20).

When David the King sinned and committed adultery and murder, his conscience did not rebuke

him and the Lord sent Nathan to him who persuaded David to confess saying, “*I have sinned against the Lord*’, so Nathan the prophet said to David, ‘*The Lord also has put away your sin, you shall not die*’” (2 Samuel 12). “*Then Nathan declared to David the divine punishment for his sins. The Lord will strike his child and the child would die, the sword shall never depart from your house. I will raise up adversity against you from your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun*” (2 Samuel 12), “*and the child died and when Absalom rebelled against his father, he did what the Lord said exactly*” (2 Samuel 16:2-22).

It is worth mentioning that the sins David committed against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah the Hittite was considered by God as personally committed towards Him, as Nathan said: “*Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord and do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife*” (2 Samuel 12).

When David confessed to Nathan the prophet, he heard the declaration of putting away his sin and that he would not die the eternal death or perish because of it, but certain punishments were imposed on him, necessary for repentance. Solomon said: “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13).

From the New Testament perspective ...

John the Baptist preached repentance saying, “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand ... then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” (**Matthew 3:1-6**).

The Lord Jesus Christ gave the authority to the Apostles and their successors by saying, “Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (**Matthew 18:18**), **and after His resurrection**, “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘As the Father sent me, I also send you. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’” (**John 20:21,22**).

When the prodigal son was aware of his sins, he returned to his father saying, “*Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight*” (**Luke 15:21**).

The book of Acts tells us that the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession was practiced during the days of the Apostles : “*And many who had believed came, confessing and telling their deeds*” (**Acts 19:18**).

Our teacher St. Jacob advises us saying : “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*” (**John 5:16**).

Once the believer confesses all his sins before the priest, the priest prays for him the absolution prayer and asks God to forgive his sins and help him not to sin again. (Priests also have confession fathers, who are perhaps older and more experienced).

NOTES:

When the Apostle says: “*Confess your trespasses to one another*”, he does not mean for priests to confess to laymen, as laymen confess to priests, but what he meant is :

“Teach each other” as the educated teach the ignorant.

“Heal one another” as the physician heals the patient.

Hence, in the words, “Confess to one another,” he means the congregation should confess to those who have the authority of forgiving sins.

St. John tells us : “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

God forgives our sins and cleanses us from our trespasses, when we confess to God in the presence of the priest, with humility and contrite hearts. St. Athanasius the Apostolic said, “*As the Baptized is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, by means of the priest, the repentant is granted forgiveness of his sins by the grace of Christ, also through the priest.*”

And St. Augustine said, “The Lord Jesus Christ rose Lazarus from the death and those around him (the apostles) loosed him from the grave clothes that bound him.” Was the Giver of life unable to loosen the grave clothes? By loosening them, the apostles denoted their authority of absolving and forgiving sins, which the Lord granted to them and their successors.

St. Gregory of Nyssa said : “Regard the church priest as a spiritual father for you, reveal to him your secrets openly, just as a patient reveals his hidden wounds to the physician, and so is healed.”

It is mentioned in the Apostolic Orders, “You must honor your spiritual fathers as they are given the authority of life and death from God, to judge the sinners and punish them, or to absolve the repentants from their sins.”

The Apostolic Church approves Confession as a Sacrament of the Church, and this is strong proof of the correctness and necessity of confession to a priest, for Church Sacraments are performed by priests only.

The priest is entrusted with the Sacrament of Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, and is required not to give it except to the true repentant, otherwise he will be condemned and held responsible before God for his neglect. In the commandment of ordination of the new priest, the Bishop commands him saying : “*Watch this treasure as the Cherub watches the tree of life. Be careful concerning these mysteries to rid yourself from crisis and traumas, do not give except to the good mannered, pure hearted persons. Rescue the sinner so he does not perish and you be held responsible.*”

Here we wonder how would the priest know whether someone is pure hearted, and another is an unworthy sinner who is prohibited from the Holy Communion?

Is it not through confession before the priest? The priest has the right to prevent a person who does not practice the Sacrament of Confession, from receiving Communion and from the Holy Sacraments, just as Christ the Lord gave His Holy Body and precious Blood only to His trusted disciples whom, He well knew were worthy of Holy Communion. Judas Iscariot, on the other hand, did not receive the holy Body and precious Blood of Christ because of his iniquity and evil.

Confession to a priest and hearing the absolution comforts the soul, as sins confessed are forgiven according to the authority given to the priests.

Confession to a priest benefits the confessing person as he receives instruction and advice from the priest, who is wise and experienced, and so he will benefit in his struggle against sin if he obediently applies the advice.

Embarrassment during confession, is the penalty the soul must bear for falling into sin, but the penance imposed by the priest is the Church's chastening for the body, which together with the soul, shared in sin.

Due to embarrassment, many people try to escape from confessing before a priest, claiming that they confess directly to God. However, the embarrassment experienced is very profitable to the repenting sinner, for through it we feel the shame of the sin committed in the presence of God. Reasons for escaping confession before a priest is due to pride and false dignity, for the proud find it hard to humble themselves before he priest.

CHURCH PENANCE FOR THE REPENTANT TO EXAMINE THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THEIR REPENTANCE, IF OBEDIENTLY ADHERED TO

Abstinence

Prostrations for repentance and humility

Almsgiving to the needy

Prevention from Communion for a certain time

Returning stolen money

Apology to whom we insulted

Extra prayers other than the usual, to ask God's mercy.

These Church penances are spiritual remedies to help heal the sinner's wounds, as it implants

reverence and remorse in a repentant, and initiates the hatred of sin so that we may remain watchful and not fall into sin again.

STEPS NECESSARY FOR AN ACCEPTABLE CONFESSION

True repentance because of our love for God, and not for fear of punishment, we should aim for spiritual healing in order to receive God's grace of forgiveness, and gain eternal life.

To be honest with ourselves, without being biased, so as to avoid the Lord's warning: "He who loves his life will lose it" (John 12:25).

To have honest intention and steadfast will, and so abandon sin and its causes.

To examine our conscience and self carefully, to be aware of the sins committed by deed or word or thought or senses, to repent and humble ourselves so that we may not fall into sin again.

To be truthful in confession, knowing that lying to the confession-father is lying to the Holy Spirit. As in the example of Ananias lying to St Peter : "*Why has Satan filled your heart to be lying to the Holy Spirit?*" (Act 5:3).

Not to hide any secrets and hidden thoughts, but to reveal all frankly before the priest to enable him to offer the best remedy in order to build and revive the spiritual life of the confessing person. Jeremiah the prophet speaks to the human soul saying: "*Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord*" (Lamentations 2:19). When water is poured forth, it leaves no trace or smell, but if oil is poured it leaves behind a trace, and if vinegar is poured, it leaves behind a smell. So just like water which leaves behind no residue, we also should pour forth all our confessions before the priest in order to be cleansed.

Not to find excuses for yourself, and blame others, for confession is about blaming yourself for the sins committed, and not condemning others. King Solomon advises us: "*Do not say before the messenger (Priest) of God that it was an error*" (Ecclesiastes 5:6).

A person must be fair with oneself, not too sympathetic nor too harsh, doubtful or anxious, but rather, should confess with a straightforward, mature conscience.

The confessor must adhere to the advice given them by their confession father, and be diligent in following his advice as a remedy necessary for spiritual life.

To practice all the spiritual exercises given by one's confession-father, and with love and patience, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12). As St Basil the Great says, "*As we bear the scalpel of the physician to remedy the body and the medicine's bitterness, we also should bear the suffering of rebuke, chastisement and various practices so that the soul may be remedied from its sins and weaknesses.*"

To confess bravely without embarrassment, all the sins and its details, and if the priest asks concerning certain points, one must not complain or hide, but answer honestly, knowing that it is for our own benefit that the priest will provide us with useful advice.

A confessing person must struggle with God in prayer as the Lord says: "Come now, and let

us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

After repentance, absolution and forgiveness, we must thank God who opened the door of repentance and saved us from the dangerous road of death, as Isaiah said: *“For wickedness burns as the fire, it shall devour the briars and thorns and kindle in the thickets of the forest; they shall mount up like rising smoke”* (Isaiah 9:18), and our teacher St. Peter said: *“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and the reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness”* (2 Peter 2:9,10). When the repentant knows that through repentance they are rescued from all this, they will deepen in their love toward God and seek to always abide in God, in order to receive power in their struggle against sin. God will make us victorious over Satan and all his enticements, and bring our bodies and all its weaknesses and lusts into subjection.

Our teacher St. Paul advises us saying: *“And having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:13). **The repentant must walk on the pure path of repentance**, and not be willingly returning to sin again.

The confessing person must not venture from one confession father to another, as this may be cause delay in one’s spiritual growth. Unless for very strong reasons, one should not change their confession father.

The person who confesses must have strong love and confidence in the confession-father to trust his guidance, obey and benefit from him, like a patient trusting their doctor.

We advise every husband and wife to have the same confession-father so that the spiritual providence for their marital life become one, and the priest will know their natures and guide them adequately for the welfare of the family. And if a problem exists between them, the priest gives the correct solution without interference from a third party who might have a different opinion, and hence cause harm to the family. Hence, a mutual confession-father is a necessity for the family welfare.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR A CONFESSION FATHER

To be a legally ordained priest

To have permission from his Bishop to accept congregational confessions, for he will be accountable for such a responsibility.

To be wise and experienced in psychology, and knowledgeable about souls and their depths.

To be spiritual and close to God, so that he can pray for his children and plead with God to solve their problems.

To have a strong personality, not double-faced, and not afraid to speak the truth and rebuke the sinner, regardless of who they may be.

He must be righteous with an ability to listen to problems without being affected. He must also be patient with the confessing person and treat them as his son/daughter. He must be able to give them comfort so that they may be able to confess their sins.

He must be strong in spirit, able to bear the weakness of the weak, accept their confession, listening to their sins without despising or judging them, they must be attentive and able give the person enough chance to say everything they need to say. Then he must give the appropriate advice and instructions necessary for helping the person overcome the sins in future.

He must be wise and spiritually experienced in order to guide his children, so as not to give them wrong instructions that may harm their spiritual life.

He must be biblically knowledgeable as well as being informed concerning areas such as psychology and education, so that he may be able to understand different phases of growth and special psychological reactions. Hence, he must give the correct medicine for every illness, without hurting feelings, but rather, to encourage a person to confess.

He must be old enough to accept confessions, reverent and sober so that every one respects and listens to him.

He must be pure in intention, thoughts, heart and body so he can accept the confessions of women and guide them without causing disruption to himself.

He must be honest with people's secrets, not to reveal them to anybody whatever the causes are, knowing that Church rules forbid this and punishes the priest who reveals secrets and the confessions of people and so cause them embarrassment (Basilian Laws, 34).

He must be well learned about church laws in order to apply them wisely to those confessing to him.

He must imitate St. Paul in his love for his children: "*My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you*" (Galatians 4:19), readily laboring for them until they become true Christians in their virtues and manners.

He must be convinced that Confession is a source of comfort for a person who confesses, and growth for spiritual life. If a person does not feel comfortable confessing to him and seeks his permission to change confession fathers, he must not forbid them, for by so doing, he may cause the person to rebel and cease from confessing again. It is important, however, that the priest be aware of the reason for the person wanting to change confession fathers, so that he may help them in choosing another who will be a source of help and comfort. If the priest insists on not allowing them to change confession fathers, the person may go directly and seek permission from the bishop, without involving the priest. It is also important to note that the priest is an adviser in personal matters, such as marriage or career decisions, and so should never enforce his opinion on others.

He must never attempt to intimidate any person confessing to him, such as those without a

confession father. A priest should be considerate of the feelings of other priests he serves with, such as in accepting the confessions of a person who has recently been absolved from confessing to his fellow brother the priest.

In the Sacrament of Confession, the priest is a father, judge and teacher.

FIRST : A FATHER

Who yearns for the repentance of every one of his children, as their repentance and salvation will be a cause for his salvation, and so at the last day, he will say to the Lord: *“Here am I and the children whom God has given me”* (Isaiah 8:18), and together with St. Paul he will proclaim: *“For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord”* (Thessalonians 3:8). He resembles the father of the prodigal son, who awaited his son’s return every single day, and, *“When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20), and accepted his repentance and forgave him all his sins, rejoicing for his return, and saying to the elder son: *“It was right that we should make mercy and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found”* (Luke 15:32).

SECOND : A JUDGE

Who judges the case of his children according to the authority given to him: *“Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 18:18). The priest must be accountable to this divine responsibility, neither favoring nor neglecting or oppressing or using this authority unduly, for personal purposes. He must be strict with sin regardless of who the sinner may be, just like a physician who loves the patient but hates the disease, and so tries to abolish it by the best possible medicine.

THIRD : A TEACHER

Who teaches according to the Holy Bible, and makes disciples of Christ of all those coming to him. He teaches them the way to God and Christian perfection, through his knowledge, experience and trials. The priest who wants to teach and make disciples of Christ, must himself be a disciple and be obedient towards his confession-father (who may be older, wiser and more experienced). Hence, he resembles our teacher St. Paul who says: *“I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me”* (Roman 15:18). He experiences, learns then teaches.

The priest must teach his children that absolution is granted after practicing the Sacrament of Confession directly. Group absolutions which are granted during the Holy Mass, (when each person remembers their sins, confesses before God and bows to receive the priest’s absolution), is sufficient to receive Communion. It is not necessary, therefore, for the priest to read the absolution in the Church for each individual who has not confessed. Following the

transubstantiation of the holy Body and Blood, the reading of the absolution is a grave mistake, for the absolution itself (the Holy Sacrament) is present on the altar. It is not right that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest is present on the altar, and the priest, ignoring Him, gives the absolution.

The priest must care to give his children adequate spiritual practices for their lives, so that they may be able to abandon certain sins and habits and replace them with virtues.

He must follow these practices with them by praying for them and asking about them in every confession. It is also useful if a spiritual note-book is available, so that the priest can see it and provide them with advice and practical applications to help them in their spiritual life.

THE RITE OF PRACTICING THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Before Confession :

The period of Confession must not exceed one month or a month and a half maximum. Delaying confession encourages a person to be negligent, and forget many sins committed. Delaying confession is a great loss to a person and delays their spiritual growth noticeably.

Some fathers use a notebook in which they write the names of their children in confession - when they confessed and the date of their next confession. This keeps the person confessing prepared at all times for confession.

A person must sit firstly with themselves, to examine themselves very carefully before going to confession. You may start with a short prayer to ask God's help in revealing your sins, as Jeremiah said: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways"* (Jeremiah 17:9,10.)

In preparing for confession, it is advisable to write down on a piece of paper, all the sins committed, however, it should be written in such a way that only the writer understand. This is to prevent it from falling into wrong hands. The wisdom behind writing sins is so not to forget them during confession.

The confessing person must care for three important things while preparing for confession, and jotting down notes :

Sins and mistakes committed

Thoughts and feelings encountered which need counseling from the confession-father in order to distinguish the good from the bad

Any questions regarding the spiritual life which need guidance or discussion with the confession father.

Self-examination must be honest, and without condemning others, for in confession we should blame ourselves, not other people or circumstances.

After having prepared for confession, the repentant prays before God in their private room, mentioning before Him every sin and pleading for forgiveness, and power from God so that they may abandon them.

Sins to be forgiven must be confessed three times :

Before the person whom we sinned against, as the wise King Solomon said: “For you have come into the hand of your friend: go and humble yourself, plead with your friend, give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, deliver yourself” (**Proverbs 6:3-5**), **rescue yourself from the results of sins and its harm by apologizing to whom you sinned against.**

Before God as the responsible Father for all people whom we sin against. When David sinned against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, God considered it a sin directed toward Him personally and blamed David saying: “*Why did you despise Me?*” and David confessed his sin saying, “*I have sinned against the Lord*” (2 Samuel 12). In the Psalm of Repentance, David spoke humbly before God saying: “*Against You and You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight*” (Psalm 51:4)

Before the Church represented by the priest. The church is our mother and cares for her children’s peace, their love and reconciliation with one another. The priest is the dove of peace and reconciles the rights of the just from the unjust. The confessing person receives the absolution and forgiveness of their sins from the mouth of the priest, the officiate of the Mysteries of God, who sees the truthfulness, or otherwise, of one’s repentance. If otherwise, the priest provides penance and certain spiritual exercises in order to help the confessor fulfill the conditions of an acceptable repentance. Once accomplished, the person is granted absolution and forgiveness from the priest who receives the authority from the Holy Spirit : “*Make them absolved by the Holy Spirit, through me.*” Once absolution is granted from the priest, the person can receive the Holy Communion of our Lord Emmanuel, so that they may be cleansed of their sins by the Blood of Christ, just like the saints who, “*Washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb*” (Revelation 7:14), and, “*The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (John 1:7).

During Confession :

Confession must take place in a quiet corner in the Church, facing the altar, so that we feel empowered and sanctified. Confession, being a sacrament, should always take place in Church, however, if the priest comes across a person who has not been regular in church or in church life, but wishes to repent, the priest may visit them at home and accept their confession there, and at the same time encouraging them to come to church. In addition, the Sacrament of Confession may take place at home if someone is sick, before they receive the Holy Communion.

The priest must wear a cloak or cape whilst accepting Confession, as he is taking part in a holy

sacrament which needs physical and spiritual preparation.

In church there must be a waiting place for those awaiting confession, with various spiritual books which they can occupy themselves with.

The priest must always be alert. He must not eat or drink during confession, for confession is a sacrament, and as such should be practiced while fasting (similar to the rest of the sacraments). After the person comes to kiss the hand of the priest, they should sit before him respectfully, as he is the minister of the Mysteries of God, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The priest and the confessor make the sign of the cross, and together pray 'The Lord's Prayer'.

The priest then encourages the person to confess, asking them about their spiritual life.

The confessing person takes out the paper in which the sins are written, and begins confessing them one by one, without embarrassment, and waiting to hear the appropriate advice and instruction of the confession father. We can resemble this to one waiting for the verdict of a judge after having done wrong, or waiting for the doctor to prescribe the best medicine possible to cure ailments. The confessor should acknowledge their sins completely and repent in contriteness, aiming to struggle against sin till death. Discussion with the priest should take place with respectfulness and decency.

The confessing person should commence by confessing the most grievous sins, followed by the less grievous. In this way, the confessor will be humbled.

It is important for the confessor to be mindful of the priest's time and others waiting, and so not divert from the confession by telling stories which may be unrelated. They must be mindful of the reverence of the sacrament and being in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The priest must be careful not to condemn or degrade the person confession, so they do not despair. On the other hand, it is important the priest is not too lenient, otherwise the confessor may become negligent. The priest must be wise and moderate, able to love those who confess, despite their failures and sins.

After confession, the confessing person kneels before the priest, bowing their head and repeating the words, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13). The priest, standing, places the cross in his right hand on the confessing person's head, and prays the absolution.

NOTES:

The priest places the cross over the head of the confessing person, as the gift of absolution and forgiveness is obtained from the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is shed on the cross. The head is humbly bowed from the load of sin, and the cross over it works mysteriously to sanctify the confessing person in thought, body and soul by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is called by the priest to grant absolution and forgiveness to the repentant. Hence, reconciliation between God and the repentant is fulfilled, as our teacher St. Paul says: "*Having made peace through the Blood of His*

Cross” (Colossians 1:20), “And now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

When the priest places his hand on the confessing person’s head, holding their temples between his fingers, he denotes the compassionate fatherhood of God accepting the repentants, and it is also a symbol of the hand of God, the Pantocrator, who holds everyone in His hands, for He controls man’s movements and thoughts and is able to sanctify them and guide them towards the right direction, for their welfare and salvation : *“Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5), and applying the words of St. Paul : *“But we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16), and so become the servants of God who, *“shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads”* (Revelation 22:4). Hence, they have the name of God filling their thoughts and lives.

PRAYERS TO BE SAID BY THE CONFESSOR, IN ORDER TO RECEIVE ABSOLUTION

Psalm 50 : “Have mercy upon me, O God ...”

The prayer of : “O God absolve, remit and forgive us our sins which we have done willingly and unwillingly and those which we committed knowingly and unknowingly, the hidden and the visible. O Lord forgive us for the sake of Your Holy Name that is called upon us, and according to Your Mercy and not to our sins.” Followed by, “O Lord I have sinned, absolve me”, or the tax-collector’s prayer: “God be merciful to me, a sinner”.

Then following the absolution, the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ is said.

PRAYERS OF THE PRIEST ON THE HEAD OF THE CONFESSOR

Thanksgiving Prayer: To thank God for the return and the repentance of the sinner.

Psalm 50: for repentance and humiliation

Litany of the Sick: for the sinner is in need of remedy

The Three Absolutions: What is noticeable is that the priest prays them in the plural form placing himself with the confessing sinner, asking absolution and forgiveness for both of them, with all the other blessings. In these absolutions are many meaningful and touching supplications, which deserve contemplation. The priest should pray them quietly but audibly, so that he and the confessing person may meditate on every word. It is worth mentioning also that these absolutions which are read on the head of the confessing person, are prayed in Church during the Matins and Vespers Prayers, and in other Church Rites, such as the Sacraments of Unction of Sick, Matrimony and others.

THE FIRST ABSOLUTION : PRAYER OF SUBMISSION TO THE SON

“Oh Lord who has given authority unto us to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy, crush his heads beneath our feet speedily, and scatter before us his every design of weakness that is against us. For You are the King of us all, O Christ our God”.

Notes on the First Absolution:

God gave the authority to His pure Apostles saying: “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” **(Luke 10:19)**.

“Crush his heads beneath our feet speedily,” as the devil does not have only one head but many heads, denoting his plans and deceit, thoughts, and seduction which are various and destructive to those attracted to them.

“Scatter before us every design of weakness that is against us.” The Satanic designs are the evil thoughts which he tries to implant in us, we ask God to scatter them before us so we do not perish.

THE SECOND ABSOLUTION :

ALSO CALLED THE PRAYER OF SUBMISSION TO THE SON

“You, O Lord, who created the heavens, You descended and became man for our salvation. You are He who sits upon the Cherubim and the Seraphim, and beholds them who are lowly. You also now, our Master, are He unto whom we lift up the eyes of our hearts, the Lord who forgives our iniquities and saves our souls from corruption. We worship Your unutterable compassion, and we ask You to give us Your peace, for You have given all things unto us.

Acquire us unto Yourself, God our Savior, for we know none other but You; Your Holy Name we do utter. Turn us, God, into fearing You and desiring You. Be pleased that we abide in the enjoyment of Your good things, and those who have bowed their heads beneath Your hand, exalt them in their ways of life, and adorn them with virtues. And may we all be worthy of Your Kingdom in the heavens, through the goodwill of God, Your good Father...”.

Notes on the Second Absolution:

In this absolution the priest asks God,

To give us the peace we lost through committing sins, for sin destroys peace, as fire destroys hay. For thus says the Lord, *“There is no peace for the wicked”* (Isaiah 48:22).

To instill within us the fear of God, as, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,”* (Proverbs 1), and when one’s heart is filled with the fear of God, one becomes enlightened, as Abba Anthony said: *“As light entering a dark house casts out its darkness, so if the fear of God entered into a human heart, it casts out ignorance (by which he falls into sin).”*

To cause us to desire the Lord, and taste those things which are spiritual and divine, rather than partake of those things which cause us to sin and thus result in death. For this reason, the priest asks God to return this desire to the hearts of those confessing, so that together with King Solomon, they may declare : *“Lead me away! We will run after You”* (Songs 1:4).

The priests asks God to exalt the repentant who is bowing in contriteness beneath the hand of God (which is symbolized by the hand of the priest placed on the head of the confessing person), and adorn them with virtues, after having saved them from sin, so they may glorify God and become worthy of Eternal Life and the Kingdom of God, which is prepared for those who struggle diligently in order to perfect their holiness.

THE THIRD ABSOLUTION

“Master, Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son and Logos of God the Father, Who has broken every bond of our sins through His saving, life-giving sufferings, who breathed into the face of His holy disciples and saintly Apostles, and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you will remit, they are remitted to them, and those which you will retain, they shall be retained”. You also now, our Master, through Your holy apostles, have given grace to those who for a time labored in priesthood in Your Holy Church, to forgive sin upon the earth and to bind and to loose every bond of inquiry. Now, also, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind, for Your servants my fathers, and my brethren and my weakness, those who bow their heads before Your Holy Glory. Dispense unto us Your mercy, and loose every bond of our sins, and if we have committed any sin against You, knowingly or unknowingly or through anguish of heart, or in deed, or in word, or from faint-heartedness, You O Master, who knows the weakness of men, as a good and loving God, grant us the forgiveness of our sins (the priest signs the confessing person, then says...) Bless us, purify us, absolve us (and absolve your servant ...). Fill us

with Your fear, and straighten us unto Your holy, good will, for You are our God, and all glory, honor and dominion and adoration are due unto You.”

Notes on the Third Absolution:

By reciting this absolution and making the signs of the cross mentioned, the Holy Spirit comes upon the confessing person, and grants them the forgiveness of sins which were confessed to the Holy Spirit in the presence of the priest.

This absolution asks forgiveness for many types of sin : “If we have committed any sins against You, knowingly or unknowingly, or through anguish of heart (fear), or in deed, or in word, or from faint-heartedness (feeling of inferiority, despair or desperation).”

Now He asks God to grant him the necessary remedies : “*Bless us, purify us, make us absolved, straighten us unto Your Holy, good will*”. When the sinner is granted these divine remedies, he is healed from sins and walks in holiness which leads to eternal life.

After the absolutions, the priest says the blessing, and concludes with the Lord’s Prayer, which is also said by the confessing person.

The priest breathes into the face of the confessing person three times asking the Holy Trinity to absolve and forgive them.

The confessing person prostrates, touching the ground with his forehead, then stands and kisses the priest’s Cross and hand saying: “*Father absolve me*”, and the priest answers: “*May God absolve you*”. Then they leave confession, rejoicing for repentance, exalted by the praises of angels and saints, for, “*There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance*” (Luke 15:7). One feels a great burden released from one’s heart after confession, the burden of sin and now a person is justified and feels victorious, and renews their hope for gaining entry into the eternal life together with the multitudes of repentants, who have been redeemed and saved.

NOTES:

The prostration (metania) done at the end of the absolution, is a sign of humility and remorse, repentance for sins, and an intention to struggle to change one’s thinking and behavior for the better. Metania is Greek in origin, meaning ‘repentance’ and ‘to change one’s mind’.

After kneeling, the repentant kisses the Cross and the priest’s hand, for through the priest we are granted forgiveness and reconciliation with God, by the power of the Divine Blood shed on the Cross for our salvation. And from the priest’s hand we receive the sacraments :

The priest baptizes us by his hands, and we are granted the Divine citizenship and rebirth.

The priest anoints the baptized by the Myron oil, through which the Holy Spirit comes and abides in us, and we become temples of the Holy Spirit.

The priest holds the Cross in his right hand and prays the absolution so the Holy Spirit comes upon us and grants us the Absolution and forgiveness of sins that were confessed.

The priest holds the Holy Communion in his hands, carries it and distributes it to the believers, in order for them to have Christ abiding in them, and so gain eternal life. For this reason, we kiss the priest's hand.

When the confessing person asks for the absolution saying, "*Absolve me father*", the priest answers, "*May God absolve you*", for it is God who grants the absolution, and is the source of absolution and forgiveness.

After confession and having received the absolution, the confessing person receives the Holy Communion as soon as possible, so that they may be empowered by grace to grow in virtues and gain strength in their spiritual struggle.

3. After Confession :

A person prays the 'Thanksgiving Prayer After Confession' (found at the end of the Agbia). This prayer thanks the Lord for accepting ones confession, and seeks God's help to strengthen them in their life of repentance and honesty with God.

The repentant must be watchful over their spiritual life, so as not to fall again into sin, for every sin is caused by negligence or laziness.

To repentant must obey the advice and guidance of the confession father, regarding church rules, penance, or spiritual exercises, which are spiritual remedies to anoint our wounds and heal our illnesses and weaknesses.

We must adhere to the advice of the confession father in order for us to grow in grace and spiritual stature. St Basil said, "As we bear the bitterness of medicine to heal bodily pain, so must we bear the remedy of the spirit through chastisement and rebuke, for the spiritual healing from sins". As God teaches us, "Surely I will pour out My Spirit on you, I will make My words known to you" (Proverbs 1:23).

RITE OF A PRIEST'S CONFESSION TO ANOTHER PRIEST

For every priest there must be a confession-father who is older in age and priesthood, and more experienced so he confesses to him and becomes his disciple. He must be very regular in confession so that he does not neglect and lose his eternal life, as St. Paul says, "*Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*" (1 Corinthians 9:27), and every priest should take care to heed the advice of our teacher St. Paul : "*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in then, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you*" (1 Timothy 4:16).

During confession the priest must sit down honestly before his confession-father, like a patient before the physician, and confess seriously and frankly, asking for absolution, forgiveness and salvation.

After confession the confessing priest removes his priestly had and kneels before his confession-

father bowing his head to accept the absolution.

During the absolution the priest does not place the Cross on the priest's head but on his shoulder, or otherwise, he lifts the Cross near the priest's head without touching it, and so prays the prayers and absolutions specified for confession.

By the end of Absolutions, the confessing priest bows to his spiritual-father, kissing the Cross and his hand, thanking God for the grace of absolution and the forgiveness granted by confession and absolution.

NOTES:

The priest does not place the Cross on the confessing priest's head as he is equal to him in the rank of Priesthood, while the blessing is granted by the older to the younger, as St. Paul said, "*Beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better*" (Hebrews 7:17).

If a priest confesses to a Bishop, the bishop has the right to place his hand with the Cross on the confessing priest's head and pray the absolution, as he is higher in rank than the priest.

PRAYER FOR THE APOSTATE

For those who deny Christ (Apostasy) or profane their bodies by adultery, the Church does not grant, in the first place, the Sacrament of Confession on their return, but rather prays for them the 'Prayer for the Apostate', or 'Prayer of capability' as they call it, which requests forgiveness for grievous sins which need God's mercy.

This prayer, which is full of benefit and spirituality, is recorded from the book entitled 'Make Me Repent Lord' by Reverend Father Yousef Asaad, (pp 160-166), and is most beneficial for asking God for blessing and power.

RITE OF THE APOSTATE'S PRAYER

A new ceramic container of fresh water is filled with simple oil, which the priest pours three times, whilst making the sign of the cross. Then,

The priest prays the Thanksgiving Prayer.

Then the Verses of the Cymbals is chanted.

During prayer the priest raises incense whilst audibly praying the Pauline prayer: "O God the Great and the Eternal, without beginning and without end, great in His counsel and mighty in His works, who is in all places, and dwells with everyone. Be with us also, our Master, in this hour and stand in our midst. Purify our hearts and sanctify our souls. Cleanse us from all sins which we have done willingly and unwillingly and grant us to offer before You worthy sacrifices and sacrifices of blessing, and a spiritual incense entering within the veil of the holy place of Your Holies" (and then he offers incense in the four directions).

Following the Verses of the Cymbals, the congregation pray : “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Now and forevermore, Amen, Alleluia!”

The congregation then prays ‘The Lord’s Prayer’

Followed by Psalm 50: “Have mercy on me O God”.

They conclude by kneeling, saying, “We worship You O Christ, with Your gracious Father, and the Holy Spirit, for You have come and saved us.”

The deacon then reads the Pauline Epistle : “As I urged You when I went into Macedonian - remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which comes by faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they saw nor the things which they affirm. But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and in subordinate for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for killers of fathers and killers of mothers, for murderers, for liars, for perjurers and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust and I thank Jesus Christ our Lord who has enabled me because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Jesus Christ. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise be honor and glory for ever and ever Amen” (1 Timothy 1:3-17). **May the grace of God the Father be with us all Amen.’**

The congregation sings the Trisagon (Agius).

Followed by the priest praying the Litany of the Gospel.

The gospel is then read by the priest: ‘A Psalm of our teacher David the prophet and King, may his blessings be with us all, Amen. “Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. According to Your mercy remember me, for Your Goodness’ sake O Lord... For Your name’s sake O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great, alleluia” (Psalm 24: 6,7,11). Gospel according to St Luke, the evangelist and pure apostle, may his blessings be with us all, Amen. “So He spoke this parable to them saying: What man of You, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven

over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15: 3-10) Glory be to You, O God forevermore.’

The congregation then says the appropriate response of the Gospel: “I have sinned, I have sinned my Lord Jesus Christ forgive me, as there is no servant without sin nor master without forgiveness. Grant me Lord repentance so that I may repent before death, and close before me the doors of Hades. Intercede on our behalf, O Archangel Michael, leader of the heavenly hosts, that He may forgive us our sins. Supplicate on our behalf, O my masters the fatherly Apostles and the Disciples that He may forgive us our sins. Blessed is Your name, O Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. We worship You now and forever Amen.”

Then the priest prays the three Major Litanies for Peace, The Fathers, and The Congregations.

At the conclusion of the Prayer for the Congregations, the repenting person says together with the congregation, the Orthodox Creed.

The priest then prays the following for the repenting apostate: “O Lord, Master and Almighty God, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ who wants every one to live and come to the knowledge of truth, we ask You Master for your servant (...name of Apostate), who bows his head and seeks You to absolve him from the hands of Satan and from every evil deed by which he rejected You. We ask and appeal to Your goodness, O Lover-of-mankind, send Your Holy Spirit and Your power to your servant (...name) at this hour. Cast away from his heart every vain and wicked intrigue. Purify his heart from all evil thoughts. If he profaned his body with an unbeliever, forgive him and justify him for righteousness, that which was preached by the prophets, apostles and church teachers. Your servant (...name) count him with Your people and the flock of Your inheritance. Grant him the forgiveness of all the sins done since his birth till this hour, by the coming and dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him so he lacks nothing from the Baptismal graces which he first accepted. Bless him, purify him, sanctify him, fill him with Your fear, straighten him towards Your Holy good will. Through the intercession of our lady the mother of God St. Mary, and all Your Saints, by the grace, mercy and love-of-mankind of Your only Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to You together with Him, and the life-giving and consubstantial Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen.”

The congregation prays ‘The Lord’s Prayer’.

Then the priest says the following supplication : “Yes Lord our God, who does not allow any one to be tempted beyond what we are able, due to our weakness. We ask You to save us from these temptations to be able to quench the fiery arrows of the adversary. Save us from the devil and his intrigues, through Jesus Christ our Lord, glory honor...”.

The deacon says : “Bow your heads before the Lord.”

The priest then prays : “O Lord who said, “I will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,” for with temptation You will also send us a redeemer, send from on high Your grace so that we may be able to stand. Save us O Lord our God from every troublesome temptation. Cast

it away together with all the wicked deeds, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Glory, honor, dominion...”

The deacon says : “Let us attend in the fear of God.”

Now the priest prays the following absolution: “O Lord God, healer of our souls, our bodies and spirits, You are He who said unto our father Peter through the mouth of Your Only Begotten Son, “You are Peter, upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it, and I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of the Heavens. That which you will bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens, and that which you will loose upon the earth shall be loosed in the heavens.” Therefore, O Lord let your servant (...name of Apostate) be absolved from every sin, from every curse, from every denial, from every false oath and from every encounter with the heretics and the heathens, through Your Holy Spirit, O You, the Lover of Mankind. O God who takes away the sins of the world, hasten, to accept the repentance of your servant for a light of understanding and forgiveness of sins. For You are a compassionate and merciful God. You are patient. Your mercy is great and true. Forgive him O God, and Lover of Mankind.”

The deacon then says : “Saved, Amen. And with Your Spirit.”

The priest makes the sign of the cross on the water three times whilst saying, “The Holies are for the holy people, blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

The congregation responds : “One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

Finally, the congregation chants the hymn “*Praise God*” (Psalm 150), whilst :

Behind the curtain, the repentant undresses and the priest sprinkles water on him three times, saying: “I protect you (...name), in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God Amen”.

After the priest finishes pouring the water on his head and sprinkling him, He takes the oil and anoints his forehead, heart and palms, whilst saying: “*Blessed be God the Father the Pantocrator Amen. Blessed be His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete Amen*”.

After the anointment is completed, he dresses, and bows his head, whilst the priest prays: “Master, Lord, the only God, and Logos of the unblemished Father, who came into the world to call sinners to repentance, who does not wish death for the sinner, but to repentance and life, who said if your brother sins against you, seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you saying “I repent”, you shall forgive him. You now, our Master and King, look unto us bowing before You, we Your servants, and sinners, cast away all evil thought from the heart of your servant (...name), forgive all his sins, liberate him from all evil darkness to see the greatness of the glory of Your beauty. Lord grant us pursuit, repentance and freedom from our sins, iniquities and transgressions . Do not let us return to them once more, but raise us from falling, walk with

us by Your power and save us from the intrigues of Satan. Restore us truly to You, manage our life as deemed fit and purify us from all impurity, liberate us from every unclean inclination. Blot out our transgressions and save us now, so we are able to be empowered by Your help against the evil hosts and its images so they retreat with failure in our second warfare and we come to the path of divine worshipping. Count us with the true strugglers who were saved by the goodwill of God the Father, with whom You are blessed, with the Holy Spirit, who is of one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.”

Following this prayer, the priest prays the Absolution to the Son (which is the third absolution of the litanies), “*Master, Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son and Logos of God the Father...*”

The priest concludes by ordering him not to commit the sin again. He says the blessing, and together they pray ‘The Lord’s Prayer’.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Many priests neglect giving their children some spiritual exercises during confession. This negligence may be due to the laziness of some priests who are not ready to make an effort to follow up with their children during these practices, by encouraging them and praying for them. Some priests may find the excuse that those confessing have low levels of spirituality which cannot handle the spiritual exercises, or that the priests do not have time for follow up.

Hence, this causes a stop in one’s spiritual growth, and confession becomes a routine, words said, and absolution read.

Some who are spiritually fervent or interested in their spiritual growth complain from lack of spiritual practices which help them in their spiritual life. At times they may ask their confession fathers for exercises, but this is very rare. Some make their own practices according to their needs. But this is not correct, for no spiritual exercises should be done without the permission of the confession-father. The reason for this is so that the devil does not intervene, for he may use one’s innocence or inexperience to encourage them to struggle more and hence cause them to fall into the sin of pride, or any other wicked plan of Satan. The wise King Solomon warns us saying: “*But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up*” (Ecclesiastes: 4:10), and Abba Anthony says, “*Ask your father to tell you and your elders to speak to you*”, the person who proceeds in their spiritual life on their own, and without guidance, falls in Satanic traps, as Solomon says: “*Where there is no counsel the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety*” (Proverbs 11:14), and if he falls, he regrets saying: “*How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof. I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers*” (Proverbs 5:12,13). Priests must care to give their children in confession, certain practices and follow their progress, and those confessing must like spiritual growth. So ask for these practices in earnest, so that you may grow in grace and stature before God and others.

EXAMPLES OF SOME SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

For those who are sinning from **personal weakness**, such as lying, swearing, gossiping, for example, a penance such as five prostrations can be applied for each time the person commits these sins.

Spiritual exercises may also be taken from the **Holy Bible**, where there are many examples, such as in the **Ten Commandments** (Exodus 20) :

Remember the day of the Lord, keep it holy

Honor your father and mother (especially in old age)

Do not murder

Do not commit adultery (either in action or thoughts)

Do not steal (or bribe)

Do not bear false witness (such as lying or forgery)

Do not covet that which is not yours

Another great Biblical example from which to apply spiritual exercises, is from Christ's **Sermon on the Mount** :

Spiritual poverty or humbleness

Meekness towards all people

Mercy for the needy

Struggling for purity of heart and simplicity.

Struggling to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker.

Bearing tribulation and persecution and false witnessing with joy, as long as it is for God's sake.

Not provoking hostility with others, and hence hindering prayer.

Being lawful in all things.

Whoever asks anything of you, give unto them, regardless of your situation. Learn to give, even if it only a little.

Love your enemies, pray for them, ask for their blessing, help them in times of need.

Give in secret, and pray and fast in moderation.

Trust in God, just like the lilies of the field and the birds, who trust in God's providence. Trusting means to depend on God and not on oneself.

Struggle with all your might to hold your tongue so that you do not fall into condemnation. For the sin of the tongue is dangerous and may bring about the wrath and judgment of God.

Practice praying at all times. Ask, you will be given, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open and to you. It is important to persevere in the life of prayer.

Follow the golden rule of treatment: Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.

From the first Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Corinthians, (Chapter 13), **let us practice all kinds of love :**

“Love suffers long and is kind”; **bear all people kindly.**

“*Love does not envy*”; let us practice not to envy others.

“*Love does not parade itself*”; a person must not boast before others concerning the things they may have.

“*Love is not puffed up*”; pride is a terrible vice, for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

“*Love does not behave rudely*”; a loving person does not speak rudely but decently, just like a clear spring bringing forth sweet water.

“*Love does not seek its own*”; the loving person is not selfish but loves others, sacrificing and giving readily. Avoid selfishness for it is the cause of many troubles.

“*Love is not provoked*”; does not get angry, for the anger of man does not result in the righteousness of God.

“*Love thinks no evil*”; for all things are pure to the pure minded. The pure person always puts others before themselves.

“*Love does not rejoice in iniquity*”; nor in catastrophes that may hurt others.

“*Love rejoices in the truth*”; rejoices for the good of others, whether it be success, riches, joy, children, or any other blessings given by God. “*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*” (Romans 12:15).

“*Love bears all things*”; practice being patient. Do not lose your temper quickly lest you fall and commit grave mistakes, and even lose the love and respect of others. To be able to bear is to be able to love. Bear all things, all situations and all people, without complaint.

“*Love believes all things*”; for love is simple, and is not deceiving. It is wise and insightful.

“*Love hopes all things*”; hopes for the good and happiness of others.

“*Love endures all things*”; practice patience, for with it comes the crown of life. Learn to bear others, even those who may be troublesome, knowing that your patience will result in goodness.

“*Love never fails*”; despite the various trials and tribulations which may occur, true love will never fail but will stand fast in the face of any test. “*Love is as strong as death ... many waters*

cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised” (Songs 8:6-8).

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN HUMILITY

Do not provoke people to anger

Be quite and peaceful in all things; your speech and actions should be peaceful

Do not interfere in the affairs of others, regardless of who they maybe, relative or otherwise.

Love all and avoid all

Practice being a good listener, and listen patiently to all, regardless of whether they may be younger or in less of a position than you.

Do not complain to anyone, other than God, with humility.

Practice being cheerful with all people, regardless of whether they may be aggressive or rude.

Every Christian should be obedient, wise and flexible.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN PRAYER

Practice reverence during prayer : reverence of heart and body, and tranquility of the senses.

Learn the Psalms, Gospels, and prayers of the Agbia, gradually.

Practice praying at all times, whether while you are working, walking, or even sitting with others.

Practice reciting always the ‘Jesus Prayer’ : “O my Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner!”

Practice praying for others, and at all times, show love to all.

Practice the Lord’s commandment of praying for enemies and for those who insult you.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN FASTING

Be committed to church fasts, with all care.

A period of abstinence during fasting is necessary, but may differ from one person to another.

Be moderate with the types of fasting food you may eat.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN READING

Daily reading of the Bible is very important.

Read at least one chapter from the Old Testament daily.

Bible reading must be done on a regular basis, but not just as a habit.

Keep beside you a pen and notebook whilst reading the Bible, to jot down points.

Highlight or underline the verses which you find most effective, and write your notes or thoughts in the margins.

Write in the notebook the verses you need to learn during that day, and keep reciting it throughout the day. If possible, write a small contemplation of what you found effective and beneficial about the verse or the chapter read.

Record and make special note of the practical verses from the chapter, which you feel can benefit you and practically be applied, such as: *“Whoever asks you for anything, give to him”, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged”, “Love without hypocrisy”, “Hate evil and do good”, “Share in the needs of the saints”, “Bless and do not curse - rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.”*

Try to practice these spiritual exercises, and learn to live by them.

CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Some conditions are necessary to ensure the success of the spiritual exercises, for those who practice them :

† **Clarity of the exercise: it is important that the instructions of what must be exercised are clear to the repenting person, and not vague or generic.**

Specification of the exercise: specific points must be emphasized, such as, abstinence, no judging of others, no stealing, and so on.

The occasion of the exercise: for example, we cannot practice silence on a day when there is a special family gathering. Likewise, we cannot fast when there is a wedding, and so on.

Gradual progression in exercises: it is important for one to progress gradually in their spiritual life, lest they suddenly fall.

Duration of the exercise: these spiritual exercises must be ongoing so that they may eventually bear good fruits and result in good habits. St. Ephraim said, *“Every practice which does not take long, does not bear fruits.”* One of the saintly fathers applied one spiritual exercise every year, which he would practice with diligence. St. Arsenius took three year to perfect the virtue of silence in his life.

Success of the exercise: requires the person to be convinced of its need and benefits.

Success of the exercise: requires the constant prayer of the confessing person, to God so that He may help and strength him in his spiritual life and progression so that his spiritual exercises leads to bearing good fruit. He also needs the prayers and fellowship of his confession-father, so that he may consistent in his spiritual life. This is especially so for those beginning in their life of confession. It is important for them to accurately write down the instructions given to them by their confession father, and for them to strive diligently in compiling with his instructions.

Success of the exercise: requires the use of a spiritual notebook, which the confessing person to assist them in their progression, so that they may grow in spiritual stature and grace.

AMEN.

**“COME TO ME , ALL YOU WHO LABOR
AND ARE HEAVY LADEN ,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.”**

Matt 11:28

SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

Known as :

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sacrament of Thanksgiving

The Lord's Supper

The Mysterious Supper

Sacrament of Community

The Meaning of the Eucharist

The Sacrament of Communion is a Holy Sacrament by which the believer eats the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, presented by the Bread and Wine. This Sacrament has the greatest importance among the Seven Church Sacraments. It is sometimes called the 'Mystery of Mysteries' or the 'Crown of Sacraments'; for all the Sacraments are crowned by the Eucharist :

The person baptized must receive Communion directly after Baptism.

The repentant person must receive Communion after having confessed.

The person who marries must receive Communion after the wedding, (which must take place between the Matins and Holy Mass), according to the original Rite of Matrimony. Also, whoever is ordained with any priestly rank must receive Communion following the Holy Mass of his ordination.

Its Institution

The Lord Jesus instituted the holy Eucharist on Covenant Thursday, in the Upper Room of Zion, shortly before His arrest and trial. After He celebrated the Rite of Passover of the Jews, He rose and washed the feet of His disciples, as a sign of repentance and preparation, then sat down and instituted the Passover of the New Covenant, which is the Sacrament of Holy Communion. "*He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body', then He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to His disciples saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins' "*" (Matthew 26:26-28), and our teacher St Paul repeats the same words in 1 Corinthians (11:23-25).

The Benefits of Holy Communion

The Sacrament of Holy Communion has many benefits, such as :

Abiding in Christ according to His precious promise: *“He who eats My Flesh, and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him”* (John 6:56). By receiving this Sacrament we become members of His Body, of His Flesh and of His Bones (Ephesians 5:30), and we also become partakers of the Divine Nature, (2 Peter 1:4).

It gives us the promise of eternal life : “Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. He who eats this Bread will live forever” **(John 6:54,58).**

It provides growth in the Spirit and spiritual perfection and life in Jesus Christ, for He said: “For My Flesh is food indeed and My Blood is drink indeed As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” **(John 6:55,57).**

As food develops the body and keeps it healthy, so too the spiritual food, which is the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, strengthens the soul so that it may grow continually in grace.

It provides remedy to the soul, body and spirit, as we say in the Offertory Mystery : “That they (Holy Body and Precious Blood) may become to us all for participation and healing and salvation for our souls, bodies and our spirits”.

Partaking of the Communion without worthiness causes weakness, sickness and death, for as St Paul said : *“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Also Communion received worthily and with preparation results in health, and strength for our bodies and souls. Our holy church fathers called Communion ‘the remedy for the death of sin’.

Communion results in our salvation and remission of sins; as mentioned in the final ‘Confession’ in the liturgy : *“Given for our salvation, remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him”*.

By repentance and Confession before the priest we are granted the remission of the sins we have confessed, but in Communion we are granted remission of sins that we are unaware of, including the sins of lust that we are not conscious of. Communion is the washing and cleaning of the repentant’s heart from all sins, as we read in the Book of Revelation about those redeemed and saved who are, *“The ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 7:14).

Communion gives a person immunity against sin. Material food gives him health and immunity against bacteria and viruses that attack him. Likewise, partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ gives the spirit immunity and inaccessibility against the viruses of sins, Satanic

warfare and bodily lusts, so the person lives in victory in his spiritual struggle. The Psalmist says : “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*” (Psalm 23:5). This verse was a prophecy about the table of Communion and its benefits for victory against our enemies.

The introduction to the Litanies is as follows : “We ask You O our Master, to partake of Your holies for the purification of our souls, our bodies and our spirits. That we may become one body and one spirit, and may have a share and an inheritance with all the saints who have pleased You since the beginning...”

We find many benefits of Communion in this prayer :

It gives purification for our souls, our bodies and our spirits. St Paul advises us, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

It provides the **unity** of the body and spirit, as St. Paul our teacher says : “*For we being many, are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one body*” (1 Corinthians 10:17).

As the bread that is transubstantiated to the Body of Christ was previously grains of wheat having become bread after much grinding, kneading and baking, and the wine that is transubstantiated to become the Blood of Christ was previously many grapes pressed to become liquid, so too all the community of believers, partaking of the Holy Body and Precious Blood, become one in Christ. For this reason, in the Gregorian Mass we pray, “*May the unity of heart that is for love, be rooted in us,*” and this is achieved through partaking of the same Body and Blood of our Lord.

- v **It gives us an eternal inheritance with all the saints who have pleased the Lord by their good deeds, and this is our greatest longing and aim of our struggle; to please the Lord and granted an inheritance amongst His saints. Communion helps us achieve this goal.**

DUTIES OF THE PRIEST TOWARDS THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The priest who serves the Mass and sanctifies the sacrifice is completely responsible for it before God, just like the Cherubim that God appointed at the East of the garden of Eden, holding a sword of fire to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). The sword in the priest’s hand is the authority of priesthood given to him by God, to give the Communion to the worthy repentant and forbid it from those who are unworthy. On his day of ordination, the Bishop advises the new priest saying :

“You must be watchful when you distribute the living Lord’s mysteries, more than all the ecclesiastical commandments and better than all other Apostolic orders. Do this seriously, actively and diligently. Be sure that the Seraphim and Cherubim are standing in awe and reverence. Be well knowledgeable of the sublime value of the sacrifice between your hands. He is Christ Emmanuel who sacrificed Himself for you. Know, without doubt, that you divide the Human Members, and carry in your hands the one whom Simeon the priest carried in reverence and awe” (Luke 2:28).

“This Chalice is His Blood shed for our sins, by which He saved from Hades all the imprisoned souls. What a sublime hidden Mystery! This is the Holy Body and precious Blood given for the salvation of humankind. This is the Lamb of God who lifted the sins of the world and led them to the light of truth. My son, take care of yourself and guard this valuable jewel as the Cherubim guarded the tree of life. Be alert about these Mysteries and treat them with caution to rid yourself from crisis. Do not give them except to the righteous, good and pure. Forbid whoever is an evil doer, so he does not bring upon himself condemnation, and you become the reason of guilt, sharing in the sin he committed by receiving Holy Communion in an unworthy manner. Hence you also will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord and will be punished. The Apostle says : “Do not share in other people’s sins” (1 Timothy 5:22). Be cautious and not neglectful, for the whole world is worth nothing.”

The Measuring Reed

In the book of Revelation, St John says, “Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying: “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there” (Revelation 11:1). The reed given to St John symbolizes the authority given to Christ’s ministers to ‘measure’ (assess) the believers.

They absolve the person who deserves absolution and bind the persons who deserve binding. They give the Sacrament of Communion to those whose measure they consider lawful, and forbid those whose measure they consider deficient. So if a person approaches Communion and the priest forbids them, it is not appropriate to complain and lose temper, but rather listen to the advice and accept the instructions of the priest. The priest is given authority to refuse giving the Communion to the unrepentant and anyone else he feels unworthy of Holy Communion. Also, he is authorized to forbid his son or daughter in confession to receive Communion for a certain time as a means of chastisement for a certain confessed sin. However, the priest has no right to forbid a believer to receive Communion in another church from another priest, this is only the authority of the bishop.

A priest and a bank teller

As the bank teller is responsible for every dollar going out from the bank’s safe, and must be accountable for every document by which he withdraws any amount from the safe, so too is the priest, Christ’s minister, who is responsible before God to ensure that every one who approaches the Holy Communion is worthy and ready, otherwise he will be condemned by God for his negligence in giving Communion to those who are unworthy : “*He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body*” (1

Corinthians 11:29).

Here a question arises: What is the meaning of worthiness of Communion from the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord, and when is a person worthy of this great grace and receive it without falling into condemnation?

Worthiness has various meanings :

True Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: as the person who approaches the Holy Communion must be a Christian Orthodox believer, baptized in the Orthodox Church, and strongly believes in the transubstantiation of the Bread to the Body of Christ, and the mixture into the Precious Blood of Christ, and that the Communion is the actual Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus.

Repentance: the person coming to Communion must practice repentance and confession regularly with their confession-father. The priest who is the Minister of the Sacrifice, can ask the person if he is not acquainted well with them, if they practice confession? If the person does, then the priest will give them the Communion, if they do not, the priest can forbid them until such time that they do confess. This is for the personal benefit of the person and the priest too, who keeps the commandment of Priesthood carefully, for as St. Paul says: *“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup”* (1 Corinthians 11:24). Self-examination is all about being aware of ones sins and mistakes, and confessing them honestly, as St. John Chrysostom says: *“No one approaches idly or negligently, but let us approach with zeal and fervor and stay alert (ready as the judgment is prepare for those who share in an unworthy manner”*.

True faith and pure repentance are the beginnings of life with Christ, as St. Paul says: “The elementary principles of Christ, the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God” (Hebrews 6:1).

Reconciliation with others: anyone who approaches the Communion must be first reconciled with others, for the Lord’s advice is clear: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23,24).

We read in the Canons of St. Basil, that, “If some laymen are hostile and the clergy know about this hostility, they should not receive the Mysteries and offerings until they are reconciled” (Law 97).

He must not deal with Communion as if ordinary food, or partake of it for blessing only, but he must know the greatness of the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord, for Communion is like a

live coal which the Seraphim presented to Isaiah the prophet after he confessed his sins:
“Then I said, ‘Woe to me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips’ ... then one of the Seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold this has touched your lips, your iniquity is taken away and your sin is purged’” (Isaiah 6:5-7).

The Seraphim denotes the priest who is the Minister of the Sacrifice, and the tongs denotes the fingers of the priest by which he takes the jewel, which is the Holy Body (represented by the live coal) from the paten on the altar and places it into the mouth of those receiving Communion.

Worthiness is feeling unworthy and sinful, and knowing that the holies are for the holy person, and that no person has reached this holiness but struggles to attain it. Even if the person is contrite, repentant and confesses, they must believe in what our teacher St. Paul said: *“For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this”* (1 Corinthians 4:4).

The priest says: “Make us all worthy to partake of Your holies”, and he also prays in the Prayer of the Veil: “We pray and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind, that this Mystery which You have appointed unto us for salvation may not be unto condemnation unto us or unto any of Your people, but for the washing away of our sins and the forgiveness of our negligence.” The deacon says: “Pray for the worthy Communion of the immaculate heavenly and holy Mysteries,” so the partakers may take blessing and grace and the Mysteries affect their lives spiritually. There is an old script, which is still used in some countries. Its words are powerful and effective :

“Amen. Amen. Amen. I believe. I believe. I believe, and confess that this is true indeed, Amen. Partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God who came into the world and said, ‘I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him. For My Flesh is food indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He who eats Me lives by Me and I will raise him up at the last day.’”

Whoever approaches this Holy Body and Precious Blood in an unworthy manner, becomes like Judas the cursed, who was cast away from amongst the Disciples. He who is pure, let him approach. He who has any trace of hatred, let him escape, otherwise he will be burnt by the fire of the Divinity. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Sing a hymn. Alleluia. Pray for the worthy Communion of the immaculate heavenly and holy Mysteries for the remission of sins. Lord have mercy!”

Necessary Physical Purity For Communion

We spoke previously about spiritual conditions necessary for receiving Holy Communion like having true faith, pure repentance, reconciliation with others, not approaching the Communion

without preparedness, and the importance of feeling contrite and unworthy at the time of Communion. Holy Communion should be approached with the same eagerness as a patient seeking medicine to be cured of all illnesses. Hence, Holy Communion gives us the healing and immunity against all evil viruses of sin.

There are also some necessary physical preparation before receiving the Holy Communion, such as:

Control over all physical senses so that no obscure sins may enter the heart.

Cleanness of body and clothing; respectable clothes should be worn, as you are going to Church to meet the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The faithful must be fasting and eat light food on the eve of Communion.

Sexual relations between married couples should not take place either on the eve of Communion, as well as on the day of receiving the sacrament.

If a person is in a state of impurity, accompanied by a dream or otherwise, he must not approach Holy Communion as this is considered breaking the fast. St Severus Bin Moqafaa said, *“Sexual impurity is fast breaking, and who breaks the fast cannot be forbidden from praying, or entry of the Church or attendance of the Mass (after a complete physical cleaning of course), but only forbidden from partaking of the Mysteries.”*

Period of abstaining from food must be nine hours for adults, according to the number of hours of suffering of the Lord Christ during His Crucifixion, (from the Third Hour (9 am) until His sentence at the Twelfth Hour (6 pm)). For children, the period of abstinence is six hours, and the duration of the Mass (three hours), for weaning infants (three hours is also the usual time between feeds). If the child's health is not the best, the priest can lessen the period of abstinence. A common mistake amongst some churches which distribute the general Korban (holy bread) early, is that some mothers feed their children from the Korban before going to receive Holy Communion. It is important therefore, for Churches to distribute the Korban after the Mass has finished only. In the past, some Churches would arrange for an 'Agapi' meal after the Mass, where the poor, together with guests and strangers, would sit together and share a meal in love. When churches no more had the 'Agapi' meal, the Korban was distributed in its stead.

Before Communion, it is important not to brush your teeth or gargle water, in case water may accidentally be swallowed. St. Severus Bin Moqafaa says, *“Many gargle their mouth by water then partake in the Communion and this is wrong. The mystery of God's words to His servant Moses about the Passover lamb, who was an example of the Body of Christ, was to be eaten with bitterness, meaning bitterness of the mouth.”*

Women should not partake of the Holy Communion when they are menstruating.

After a woman gives birth, she is not to partake of the Holy Communion until after forty days, if she delivered a boy, and eighty days if she delivered a girl. Hence, the first time she receives Holy Communion, after child birth, is on the day of her child's baptism after the

priest prays for her the woman's absolution.

It is not preferable for a person to walk barefoot, or for a man to shave, directly after Communion. This is to avoid any wound occurring which may bleed. If, however, bleeding does occur unintentionally, the blood must be wiped with a piece of cloth or cotton, then burned in fire.

If anyone comes to church late, that is, after the Bible reading, they have no right in partaking of the Holy Communion. The Bible reading and the Prayer of the Mass are performed before Holy Communion in order to sanctify the soul and body, and provide spiritual and mental preparation for partaking of the Holy Communion.

After receiving the Holy Communion, it is important for each person to read the 'Prayer After Holy Communion', and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the wonderful grace received.

It is advisable that the remainder of the day be spent relaxing, rather than mingling with others. Reading spiritual books and spending the day in peace is a great way to feel the existence of God inside you, after having received the Holy Communion.

I have already written three books concerning the Rites of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and the Divine Mass, and therefore I will not expand on this further. I hope, dear reader, you may be able to read these three books :

Spirituality of the Rite of the Holy Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church

How to benefit from the Holy Liturgy

Study and Contemplation on the three Masses

The books include all the Rites of the Liturgy, specifying what concerns the priest, the deacons, and the congregation.

May God help us to be ready and worthy always to partake in the Divine Mysteries, so that we may abide in Christ, and He may abide in us, so that we may be granted the gift of Eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Due to its importance, I would like to mention here the Rite of Sanctification of the Chalice, as mentioned in the Liturgy books.

[2]RITE OF SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHALICE

If the Chalice is accidentally exposed to substances other than wine, such as vinegar or oil, it must be emptied and the chalice properly cleaned, after covering the bread that has been chosen to be the Body and placing it on the right side of the altar. A priest or deacon stands near the Body to watch over it, with a lit candle in his hand.

The ministering priest wraps his hand with a linen veil in which he receives the decanter of wine after testing it well. The priest holds the decanter in his left hand and makes the sign of

the cross over it three times, before pouring it into the Chalice and mixing it with about a third water (two thirds wine, and one third water). The deacon then follows with the deacon's response.

The priest says the Thanksgiving Prayer, then covers the Chalice with the Prospharine, raises the incense after placing five spoonfuls of incense, and says the first Pauline Mystery: "*O God the great, and the eternal...*". He offers incense in the censor, without proceeding around the altar, or descending from the sanctuary.

The congregation sings the hymn "*Censer of Pure Gold*", as well as any other hymn according to the season or rite. A deacon reads the Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians, which speaks about the Holy Communion being the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-27).

The hymn of "*Holy God*" is sung before the Prayer of the Gospel. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cups runs over" (Psalm 22:5), followed by the Gospel according to St Matthew (26:26-29), which speaks about the institution of the Holy Communion.

The priest says the Litanies of Peace, the Fathers and the congregations, then the Apostolic Creed.

The priest then says the Prayer of Reconciliation: "O God, and lover of mankind, purify us from all blemish, all guilt, all hypocrisy all malice and the remembrance of evil entailing death. Make us all worthy to greet one another with a holy kiss, to become one body and one spirit by the bond of perfect love and peace which is Your only Begotten Son, our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. Through whom is all glory, and honor ..."

The deacon responds, "*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*" During the congregational response, the priest lifts the Prospharine.

During the Consecration of the wine, the priest says, "Likewise also the cup after supper He mixed it of wine and water, and, He gave thanks, Amen. He blessed it, Amen. And He sanctified it, Amen."

The priest continues: "He tasted, and gave it also to His own holy Disciples and saintly Apostles saying: "Take, drink of it all of you. For this is My Blood of the new Covenant which shall be shed for you and for many, to be given for the remission of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me."

The priest then prays on the Chalice, saying the following fractions:

"O Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son, the Logos of God the Father, who was incarnated for us without alteration, by His own will, who suffered in Body, while as a God was not suffering. Who gave us the spring of life from His pure side, we ask and entreat Your goodness O Lover of Mankind, for this mixture which is in this Cup, may You bless it, sanctify it, and manifest it as the Holy Blood of Your Holy living Body."

“That which preceded and was sanctified and perfected to become One with it, for every one to partake and be pure in soul and body and spirit, to be worthy of the remission of sins.”

“Glory be to Your holy name, with Your good Father, and the living Holy Spirit. Make us all worthy to dare, without fear, O God the Pantocrator who is in heaven to say: ‘Our Father who art in heaven.’”

Then the priest takes the paten which holds the holy Body, and places it on the altar after having carefully lifted the veil which covered the holy Body, and says the Submission Prayers: “*Yes we ask You, O good Father ... The grace of the beneficence of Your only begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ are now fulfilled.*”

Followed by the Absolution: “O Master, Lord God the Pantocrator, healer of our souls, our bodies and spirits...”

The priest then says the introductions of the Three Litanies:

“Remember O Lord, the peace of Your one, holy, universal, and Apostolic Church...”

• “***Remember O Lord, our Patriarch, the honored father, Pope ... , and his brother(s) in the apostolic ministry ...***”

“Remember O Lord, our congregations, bless them.”

The deacon says, “Saved, Amen. And with your spirit. In the fear of God, let us attend. Amen.”

The congregation responds, “Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.”

The priest lifts the “Spadikon” (central part of the holy Body) and makes the sign of the cross with it on the blood, then places it in the Chalice, saying, “*The holies are for the holy people. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*”

The congregation responds, “One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

The priest lifts the Chalice in his hands and says the Confession.

He then kneels before the altar and prays silently, “That every glory, honor, and worship all the time is due to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ... now and at all times...”. The congregation then sings Psalm 150, “Praise the Lord”, which is the Communion Psalm.

The priest then distributes the Holy Mysteries, which are the living Body and precious Blood of the Lord.

The Bishop is responsible for ensuring that the priests distribute the Holy Communion according the holy Church canons, and penalize those who are negligent.

NOTES:

Rite of **Sanctification** of the Chalice is done, only if at the end of the Mass it was noticed that the

precious Blood had seeped from the Chalice, due to a fracture of the Chalice (if it was made of glass or similar), or if accidentally, what was placed in the Chalice was not wine but some other substance. If, however, either of these cases were discovered before transubstantiation, then it is possible to change the Chalice (in case of a fracture), or pour the contents of the Chalice which is not wine, into a container, then wash and wipe the Chalice thoroughly, before continuing with the Holy Mass, without the need for performing the Rite of Sanctification of the Chalice.

SACRAMENT OF UNCTION OF THE SICK

*“Is anyone among you sick ? Let him call for the elders
of the church , and let them pray over him ,
anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord .”*

James 5:13

The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick is one of the holy Seven Sacraments of the church, through which the sick who are faithful, are healed from psychological and physical diseases. The priest anoints the person with the holy oil from which they obtain the grace of remedy from God.

It is called the ‘Sacrament of Lamps’, for the early Christians used to place oil in a lamp, from which hung seven other lamps. Each lamp was lit at the beginning of every prayer. This rite still exists, however, the seven lamps were replaced by seven wicks, made from cotton wool, which sit in a plate of oil. The number seven signifies the seven spirits of God, which are mentioned in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 3:1). The Spirit of God dwells and sanctifies the oil in order to heal those anointed by it. It is advisable that the wicks be placed in the sign of the cross, in the plate of oil.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He said to His disciples: “Heal the sick, cleanse the leper” (Matthew 10:8), and, “Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, heal the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:8-9). For the Lord Jesus came that we may have life, and that we have it more abundantly (John 10:10), so He healed the sick, raised the invalid, opened the eyes of the blind, purified the lepers and the lame, after having saved them and forgiven them their main cause of sickness, which is sin. “Jesus went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 1:38), as Malachi prophesied about Him saying, “But to you who fear My Name, the Son of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2). Our fathers the Apostles practiced it according to the orders of their Master, as the Bible says, “So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them” (Mark 6:12,13).

Our teacher St. James advised the believers to practice this Sacrament when they are sick, and to ask healing from God, who says, “***I am the Lord who heals you***” (Exodus 15: 26). Also, David the Psalmist thanks God saying, “***Bless the Lord, O my soul...Who heals all your diseases, Who***

redeems your life from destruction” (Psalm 103: 1-4), and, “O Lord my God, I cried out to You and You have healed me” (Psalm 29:20), and also the prayer of Jeremiah the prophet: “Heal me O Lord, and I shall be healed” (Jeremiah 17:4). For this reason, St. James advises us, “Is anyone among you is sick, let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:13,14).

The priest is the one who prays, and it is God who heals, for the sacrament is not a person’s work but the work of God.

The Necessity of Confessing before partaking of the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

The Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, with all its beautiful associated prayers, provides for the healing of the soul, which in turn provides cure for bodily ailments. This is because of the strong link between the soul and the body, and if the soul is sick, the body will likewise suffer. For this reason, the Church always asks her children to firstly repent from their sins, so that the spirit and the soul will consequently be healed.

When the Lord Jesus Christ, glory be to Him, healed the lame man at Bethsaida, who had been sick for 38 years, He said to him: “***Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you***” (John 5:14). This implies that his illness was due to sin. Likewise, when the people lowered the paralytic man down from the roof top on a stretcher, the first words the Lord said to him was: “***Your sins are forgiven***”, then, “***Arise, take up your bed and walk***” (Matthew 9:2-6). The Lord Jesus manifested that the cause of sickness was sin, and declared that the soul should be healed by repentance in order for the body to also be cured of any physical ailments. There is no objection of course, for calling a doctor when one is sick, but it is of great importance that the priest is called as that he may carry out the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, and through faith, the sick will be healed, for God never abandons those who hope in Him.

A patient who relies only on medicine, denies himself the ability of God to heal him, just like King Asa, of Judah: “***Asa became diseased and his malady was very severe, yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians***” (2 Chronicles 16:12-13), who was contrary to the good King Hezekiah who was close to death, and prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly until the Lord sent Isaiah the prophet to him saying: “***Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add to your days fifteen years***” (2 Kings 20:1-6).

The Church is not against medical healing, but approves ...

The Church completely rejects her patients seeking the psychics for healing, for this would mean that they rather the healing of the devil and deny the power and healing of God. For a person to seek the assistance of psychics means that they are totally and completely abandoning and denying Christianity. Our teacher St. Paul says about those people: “***Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons***” (Timothy 4:1). We read in the Old Testament about King Ahaziah who fell sick and sent messengers to inquire of Bel-Zebub, the god of Ekron. Along the way, they were met by Elijah the prophet who said to them: “***Thus says the Lord, is it because there is no God in Israel, that you are going to inquire of Bel-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus says the Lord, ‘You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die’***” (2 King 1:2-4), and so Ahaziah died.

The Church is not against traditional medicine, but in fact supports it and approves it for the

purpose of healing. It is also important to remember that all medicine is comprised of certain herbs, which God created for the benefit of human kind: **“God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving”** (1 Timothy 4:3,4). The Lord said, through Jeremiah the prophet: **“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?”** (Jeremiah 8:22). Hence, it is important for doctors to be consulted when one is sick, and to take medicine for physical healing.

In the book of Joshua, there is much said about doctors and medicine :

Give the physician his dignity, for the Lord created him.

Medicine comes from on high.

God created medicine from the earth and the wise man does not hate it.

My son do not neglect yourself if you get sick, but pray to the Lord who heals you. Refrain from all iniquities and make straight your deeds. Purify your heart from sin ... then make a place for the physician, as the Lord created him and will not leave you when you need him. (Joshua Bin Sirakh 38:1-15).

Most of the medicines used by doctors are herbs and plants of the earth, produced by God for human benefit, as the Psalmist says: **“Who makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives the beast its food and to the young ravens that cry”** (Psalm 147:7).

When Hezekiah, King of Judah was recovering, the Lord ordered him to use natural remedies saying, **“Let them take a lump of figs and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover”** (Isaiah 38:21), and the boil was the ulcer that King Hezekiah was recovering from.

The physician may advise the patient to rest, in order for them to have a quick recovery, just as Joshua advised: **“Severe sickness is gone by sleep”** (Joshua 31:2), but most of all, it is necessary to plead to God in order for them to receive healing and the regaining of health (Joshua 38:14)

When the priest visits the house of the sick to perform the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, it reveals the church’s love and care for her children in that the Church is emotionally sharing in the trials with the family. The church forms a bond with the family so that they become one body. Hence, if the family is suffering, the church suffers with them. This is a generous gesture by the church, and one that the faithful would not forget. For this reason, the family will become more and more attached to the church.

For the sick to benefit from the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, it is necessary that they firstly confess, and then receive the Holy Communion as soon as possible afterwards. Hence, they will actually be partaking of three Sacraments, for their spiritual and physical healing.

The most appropriate time for carrying out the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick is early in the morning, when everyone is still fasting (that is, the priest, the sick person, and other members attending). The priest must fast for nine hours beforehand, and the sick person for six. In extreme

cases, however, when medicine is to be taken at regular intervals, the priest may give the sick person absolution to abstain for a lesser period of time.

The priest must pray all of the seven prayers of the sacrament, for it is not proper for him to shorten any of the prayers, as this is against the Apostolic orders which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and recorded in the Church's books.

The order of the prayers of the Unction of the Sick are very old and traditional. Church history mentions that St. Epifanius, Bishop of Cyprus, wrote and organized these prayers. In addition, St basil confirms that the 'Kandeel Prayers' were well known in the Church from the early days (Canon 91).

The Priest's duties during accomplishment of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick

He accomplishes this sacrament in faith and hope that God will heal the sick. The priest is not only performing a church rite, but he is also praying with the spirit.

He must long for the salvation of the sick person, and for his bodily healing, so he prays out of care and love, and not out of force or pressure.

He cares to accept the confession of the patient in private, before performing the sacrament, to enable the sick person to be granted the forgiveness of sins as well as psychological healing, and hence enable the sick to be cured physically also.

As long as the priest's time and health permits, he should not neglect or postpone any appointment to perform this Sacrament, regardless of whether the sick is rich or poor.

The priest should continue caring for the needs of the sick person, until he is cured.

The priest must be fasting before performing the Sacrament, and he must indicate to the relatives of the sick person how important it is that they also be fasting before performing the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.

As the Kandeel oil is holy oil, upon which the Holy Spirit came, it is important not to leave it sitting in the dish in case it is accidentally spilled. The priest should ensure that the oil, after prayers, is placed in a small bottle, and that the dish is wiped with cotton wool and burnt together with the cotton wicks which were used during the Kandeel prayers, before he leaves the house.

The patient's duties during accomplishment of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick

The sick person and his relatives must have strong faith in the work of God in this sacrament, just like the two blind men who had strong faith that Christ would heal them (Matthew 9:28), and the faith of Jairus (Luke 8:50), and the faith of the father who had an epileptic son (Mark 9:23), and the faith of the friends of the paralytic man (Matthew 9:2), and the faith of the bleeding woman (Luke 8:48).

The sick must have faith and confidence in the priest, just as he has trust in his doctor.

The sick person must practice the Sacrament of Confession before partaking in the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, and he must receive the Holy Communion as soon as possible afterwards. All Sacraments must begin with Confession and conclude with Holy Communion ...

An adult who is baptized should confess before Baptism, and receive Holy Communion after it.

An adult who is sick should confess before the Kandeel Prayers, and receive Holy Communion after it.

A couple getting married should confess before Matrimony, and receive Holy Communion after

it.

In the occasion of any priestly ordination, confession is obligatory before ordination, and Holy Communion received at the end of the ordination mass.

The sick must fast beforehand for as long as he can, as well as those attending

The sick must be clean in body and clothing, ready for the Sacrament.

The sick must promise God to live his whole life in His fear, His love and service, just like Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15), and like Mary Magdalene (Mark 15:40). As St. Paul said: ***“That those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again”*** (2 Corinthians 5:15).

The sick must thank God after recovery, for His grace and providence.

Why is it that sometimes the sick does not recover after the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick?

At times the sick person may not recover quickly after the Sacrament or may take a long time to heal, and at times the sick person may even die. There are many reasons for this, of which some are ...

Lack of faith of the sick person, just like the people of Nazareth: “The Lord Jesus did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58).

He may not be worthy of being healed due to his evil doings and reluctance to repent and return to God, who says, “***Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding***” (Jeremiah 3:22).

Sickness may result in death, and death is the great recovery and salvation from all bodily pains.

Sickness may be for chastisement and God may abolish it when its purpose is accomplished, just like Job who was sick for seven years. Likewise, Moses’ sister Miriam, was struck by leprosy when she spoke badly against Moses. Then Moses prayed for her saying: “***Please, heal her, O God, I pray!***” and the Lord said to him, “***Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again***” (Numbers 12), that is, healed from leprosy.

At times a person may not recover from, his illness, and this is divine wisdom, which we cannot understand or interpret: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33). St Paul had a thorn in his side and prayed for God to heal him, but the Lord refused, saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). God worked amazing miracles by the hands of St. Paul, “So that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.”

RITE OF THE SACRAMENT OF UNCTION OF THE SICK

When the priest comes to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, he must wear an Epitrachelion (priestly vestment), as he will be accomplishing two Sacraments together; the Sacrament of Confession and the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick.

During confession, which must take place before the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, the sick person confesses honestly and with true repentance, promising to walk with God after his recovery, and striving never to return to sin. Then the priest reads the absolution for him, after giving him advice, guidance and spiritual exercises which may be needed for his spiritual growth. The priest then advises him to receive the Holy Communion as soon as possible after the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.. If he is too sick to go to Church, the priest can bring him the Holy Communion at home.

After Confession, all the family gathers to attend the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick and partake in its spiritually interesting prayers, once the censer has been filled with hot coals.

On the table is placed a dish which contains some pure oil (preferably olive oil) with seven pieces of cotton wool shaped like wicks. Each wick is lit at the start of each prayer. Also needed for accomplishing the Sacrament, is incense, a prayer book, and a box of matches.

The priest stands facing the East, and the sick is seated before him in reverence, facing the west; his body and clothing must be clean. The rest of the family members stand around the priest.

The priest then starts the seven prayers of the Kandeel.

THE FIRST PRAYER

The priest lights the first wick of the Kandeel.

The Kandeel commences with the Lord's Prayer.

The priest prays the 'Thanksgiving Prayer', and the deacon and family members respond accordingly. The priest then places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer, with three signings of the cross, and then raises incense in the four directions, as usual.

All in attendance pray Psalm 50, "***Have mercy on me O God.***"

The priest says the 'Prayer for the Sick' : "Remember O Lord the sick of Your people ... heal them, take away from them and from us all sickness ... As for us also, O Lord, the maladies of our souls heal them, and those of our bodies too, do cure us, O You, the true Physician of our souls and our bodies ... visit us with Your Salvation, by the grace ...".

These are deeply spiritual prayers where the priest asks God to heal the soul, body and spirit, as He is the hope of those who are hopeless, the help of those who are helpless.

The priest begins praying, "O You, who gave Your grace to Your pure Apostles, O You the Lover of Mankind, ... rescue us from the sicknesses of the soul and body, when Your priests anoint them, as You said by Your disciple ..." (James 5:14,15).

Each prayer of the Kandeel is divided into four parts. Each part concludes with the following : "*Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Saint Mary*", and the attendants respond, "*Lord have mercy.*"

NOTES:

Every quarter ends requesting the intercession of St. Mary, and this indicates the great appreciation and hope the Church has in St Mary's intercession, through our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

At the end of every quarter, the attendants respond, "*Lord have mercy*", asking God for mercy and forgiveness of their sins. Asking mercy from God is very acceptable before Him, and very important: "***Because Your loving kindness is better than life***" (Psalm 63:3). The priest says a glorification prayer beginning with: "*God is light and lives in light, praised by angels of light...*"

Then the priest prays the following litany while making the sign of the cross on the oil, at every quarter, and those in attendance respond with, "*Lord have mercy*" ...

"We ask God for the heavenly peace" ... "Lord have mercy."

"We ask God for the sanctification of this oil" ... "Lord have mercy."

"We ask God for the sanctification of this house and those who dwell in it" ... "Lord have mercy."

"We ask God for the sanctification of our Christians fathers and brothers" ... "Lord have mercy."

"We ask God for the blessings of this oil and its sanctification" ... "Lord have mercy."

"*We ask God for Your servant (...name*)*" ... "*Lord have mercy.*" *The priest mentions the name of the sick person, and lifts his heart to God to heal him.

Then the priest completes the prayer until the end. On the oil, the priest says a silent prayer: "O merciful Lord, healer of our souls and bodies sanctify this oil to become a healing from the profanity of soul and sufferings of body for whoever is anointed by it. To glorify Your holy name, glory and salvation be to You, we send You glory, honor and dominion, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Through the sick person's recovery by prayers, the name of the Lord will be glorified and people's faith will be encouraged.

One of the attendants reads the Catholic Epistle of St. James (5:10-20), which includes beneficial instructions for the sick ...

The priest's invitation to pray for those who are sick: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15).

The necessity of Confession before the Kandeel. "***And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven***" (James 5:15), for repentance and confession heal the spirit, and provides the way for

physical healing.

The necessity of enduring tribulation, just like our fathers the prophets, such as Job and many others.

The necessity of praying when in trouble and when suffering: “***Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray***” (James 5:13).

The power of earnest, fervent prayers, such as those of Elijah the great prophet (5:16-17).

The attendants sing the hymn of “Agios” (Holy God), which is the angelic heavenly praise of the Cherubim.

The priest prays the Litany of the Gospel, after placing a spoonful of incense into the censer. An attendant then reads the Psalm and Gospel.

“O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger ... O Lord heal me for my bones are troubled” (Psalm 6:1,2)

The Gospel reading is taken from John (5:1-17), and speaks about the paralytic man who was sick for 38 years. He lay on his bed being abandoned by all, however, the Lord did not leave Him, but went to him and healed him: “***Rise, take up your bed and walk***” (John 5:8).

The church wants to enliven the spirit of hope and faith in the heart of the sick person, even if he has been sick for a long period of time. The Lord will not leave Him, even if He delays. We must have patience and endurance, and be thankful at all times to God.

The priest says the Three Major Litanies:

Prayer for Peace of the Church, for the Lord to preserve the church, as it is the body of Christ, and we are members in this body. The Church’s peace is peace for us all.

Prayer for Fathers of the Church, we ask God to grant them power and wisdom for the leadership of the church, and correct interpretation of the word of truth.

Prayer for the Congregations, so that all our gatherings, whether they be spiritual or educational, may be granted without obstacle or hindrance. The priest also prays for blessings upon the house of God where he is praying : “*Houses of prayer; Houses of purity; Houses of blessings, grant them unto us O Lord.*”

All recite the Orthodox Creed declaring their faith in the Holy Trinity, for faith is the foundation of healing.

The priest says a certain prayer which includes various supplications ...

Healing for the sick : “Lord, grant Your servant (...name) healing.”

Forgiveness of his sins : “Lord, forgive him his sins, whatever he may have committed during his life.”

We ask healing from the Almighty God, who purified the lepers, and healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman, and raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow, and

Lazarus.

The Church asks for the healing of the sick person, but surrenders the whole matter to God : **“If You wish to raise him from sickness some time later, grant him help to endure without complaint ... and if You want to receive his spirit, may this be by the hands of luminous angels who rescue him from the devils of darkness.”* (* It is preferable to say this statement inaudibly, so that the sick person is not affected).

The Church teaches us to completely surrender ourselves to the will God, just as our beloved Lord Jesus Christ did with His Father : *“Father, take this cup away from Me, nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will”* (Mark 14:36).

THE SECOND PRAYER

The priest lights the second wick.

The Second Prayer commences with the Lord’s Prayer.

The priest then prays the Litany for the Travelers, so that the Lord may graciously accompany them in their journeys, by His angel. May God be a partner with us in all that we do, so that all our deeds may be good deeds. If a person does not have any goodness and his deeds are not righteous, they cannot expect God to accompany them or help them, for as St. Paul says: *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them”* (Ephesians 5:11). The Litany of the Travelers is said while the priest is offering incense.

The Pauline Epistle to the Romans is then read: *“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak...”* (15:1-7). The reading is :

An invitation for the strong members of the family to bear the sick in love, and without complaint.

An invitation for the sick to bear their illness with patience, and hence not lose the blessing of endurance.

An invitation for the believers to be like-minded towards one another in love, so that God may be glorified.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense, and one of the attendants reads the Psalm and the Gospel. The Psalm is read on behalf of the sick, as if they are crying out to the Lord to hear his prayer, and the Gospel from St John tells the story of the repentance of Zacchaeus, in order to encourage the sick to repent from all sins, and learn to give in order to be granted salvation: *“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble, incline Your Ear to me” ... “Today salvation has come to this*

house...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Psalm 101:1-2 and Luke 19:9)

The priest then says the following supplications :

- “O Lord ... who accepts the repentants...”

“Who said, ‘The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out’” (John 6:37)

- “Who forgave the adulteress’ sins...”

- “Accept Your servant and forgive his sins, for sins many times result in illness, and their forgiveness gives health to the spirit and the body...”

- “Keep him for the rest of his life following in Your Commandments.”

It is very important for the sick person to be convinced and promise to live with God in righteousness and holiness after his recovery, for he must know that his recovery is a gift from God, just like when God added fifteen years to the life of Ezekiah the King. So that together with St. Paul, the sick person may declare: “**And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me**” (Galatians 2:20) and healed me from my sickness and pain.

THE THIRD PRAYER

The priest lights the third wick.

The Third Prayer commences with the Lord’s Prayer.

The priest prays the Litany of Waters, or Plants, or Fruits, according to the season.

- From 12 Baounah to 9 Babah, the Litany of Waters is prayed
- From 10 Babah to 10 Tubah, the Litany of Plants is prayed
- From 11 Tubah to 11 Baounah, the Litany of Fruits and Airs is prayed

The Pauline Epistle is read from 1 Corinthians (12:28-13:1-18), which speaks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and then goes on to explain the most excellent way that all Christians should follow, which is love. St Paul says, “**Love suffers long, does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not rejoice in iniquity**”, such as in seeing people sick, but hopes the best for all people, whether it be recovery, success, and blessings.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest then says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense. The Litany of the Gospel is said seven times during the Rite of Unction of the Sick, as well as the following repeated seven times : *“Those who are sick heal them, for You are the life of us all, the salvation of us all, the hope of us all, the healing of us all and the resurrection of us all.”* An attendant then reads the Psalm and the Gospel : *“O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure, for Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down”* (Psalm 37:1-2). It carries the Psalmist’s grievance of the heavy chastening of God which might come as sickness or tribulation, and asks for relief. He does not refuse the chastisement of God but asks for His mercy without anger. The Gospel is read is from the Gospel of St Matthew, which speaks about the mission of the twelve disciples sent to preach and institute of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick. The Lord Christ said to His pure Apostles, *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons, freely you have received, freely give.”*

NOTES:

The service of Unction of the Sick is given free, so that even the poor can call the priest to perform the Sacrament when they are sick.

However, those who are willing to give a gift to the church may do so at another time, as a thanksgiving offering, but not as wages for the priest.

The priest prays the following supplications, where he :

Asks forgiveness of sins of the sick person, and all those attending, including himself.

Asks the Lord to guide us and help along the path which leads to eternal life, and not eternal condemnation.

Asks the Lord to heal and fortify the sick person’s body and intentions, so that he does not return to sin and fall sick again.

Asks the Lord to hear his plea, and heal and have mercy on His servant, in the same way as the Lord heard Ezekiah in his misery, and did not reject his supplication.

THE FOURTH PRAYER

The priest lights the fourth wick.

The fourth Prayer commences with the Lord’s Prayer.

The priest prays the Litany of the Leaders.

NOTES:

The order of Prayers is the same as those in the Baptismal Rite and Laqqan :

1. The sick

2. Travelers
3. Waters
4. Leaders
5. The Departed
6. Oblations
7. Catechumens

The Pauline Epistle to the Romans is read, which speaks about enduring pain without complaint, in order to be granted the crown of long sufferance: “***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us***” (Romans 8:14-21), and, “***For our light affliction, which is put for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory***” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

NOTES:

The sufferings we face are often a means by which God cleanses us from our sins and iniquities, and when we are cleansed, we proceed forth into eternity, just like gold that has been purified by fire.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest then says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense, which is then followed by the Gospel reading by an attendant. “***Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, cleanse me from my sin...***” (Psalm 50:1-2). This is a cry of a suffering person who is aware of their sin, and begging the Lord for mercy and forgiveness of his sins, for the healing of his body and spirit. The Gospel is from St Luke, which tells of the mission of the seventy disciples in preaching and healing the sick: “***Heal the sick who are there, and say to them: The Kingdom of God has come near you.***” The reading also confirms the Institution of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, as commanded and established by the Lord Jesus Christ to His apostles.

The priest prays the following supplications, where he :

1. Asks God, who is the physician of the sick, to heal our sicknesses and forgive our iniquities.
2. Asks God to accept the repentance of the sinners and heal their illnesses.
3. Asks God to heal and forgive the sick person, and grant health to his body. He also asks God to comfort him and relieve him from all his sufferings and sorrows.

4. Believes in the power of the almighty Lord, who is able to do all things.
5. Asks God to provide refuge for the repentants, hope for the hopeless, and comfort for those in tribulation.

THE FIFTH PRAYER

The priest lights the fifth wick.

The fifth Prayer commences with the Lord's Prayer.

The priest prays the Litany of the Departed, so that the Lord may repose their souls and have mercy upon them.

The Pauline Epistle to the Galatians (2:16-20) is read, which speaks about the necessity of strong faith in Jesus Christ, which is well pleasing to Him. A person must be crucified with Christ, in terms of putting to death all lusts and passions which cause him to perish, and thereby rise with Christ and be granted the joys of eternal life.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest then says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense, which is then followed by the Gospel reading by an attendant: "***Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name. The righteous shall surround me, for You shall deal bountifully with me***" (Psalm 141:7). The suffering patient cries to the Lord to bring him out of the prison of sickness, so he may thank Him and praise Him, and glorify Him for His providence. The Gospel from St John (14:1-9), tells about how the Lord comforts the sick by saying, "***Let not your heart be troubled...***". In complete surrender, the Church teaches her children that, even after repentance if a person dies, they will be granted the inheritance of eternal life, for the Lord Jesus said: "***In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be also.***" This is the goal and the climax of a person's struggle in this life, eternity with Christ.

Christ asks us to keep His Commandments, so that they may keep us from falling into sin, and so guarantee us eternal life. In the story of when the rich young man asked the Lord Christ, "***What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?***" The Lord answered him, "***You know the Commandments...***" (Mark 10:17-18).

God gives us His Holy Spirit the Comforter who comforts and encourages us in all our tribulations, sicknesses, and sorrows so that we are able to endure trials gratefully, and without complaint.

The priest prays the following supplications, asking the Lord to :

- . "*Heal Your servant (...name) from his sickness*"

- . "*Save him from all evil*"

- . "*Raise him to be healthy and well by Your mercy, so that he may thank You and glorify You, together with all Your people in Your Church, from whom he has been deprived of*"

because of his illness, and so being well, he will abide in Your church all the days of his life.”

THE SIXTH PRAYER

The priest lights the sixth wick.

The sixth Prayer commences with the Lord’s Prayer.

The priest prays the Litany of the Oblations.

The Pauline Epistle to the Colossians (3:12-17) is read, which tells of the Apostle Paul urging us to be adorned by the virtues of tender mercies, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering, forgiveness, love, peace, thanksgiving, and praise, so that we may be as saints without blemish.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest then says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense, which is then followed by the Gospel reading by an attendant: “**Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me when I was in distress. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer**” (Psalm 4:1). The Gospel is then read from St Luke, which tells the story of the sinful woman who repented and washed the feet of the Lord Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Christ forgave her and gave her peace and joy instead of grief and worry, which was caused by sin. This Gospel presents a living example of true repentance so the sick person may learn and present a pure living repentance, so that they may be granted forgiveness of sins, and peace in their spirit. The saints often refer to repentance as being ‘the mother of life’.

The priest says the following supplications, whereby he asks the Lord to :

- *“Remember Your servant (...name) by Your mercy”*
- *“Visit him with Your salvation”*
- *“Take away from him all sickness”*
- *“Grant him back to Your Church (from which he has been deprived of because of sickness), and make him healthy, and grant healing in soul, body and spirit”*
- *“Raise him up from sickness so that he may glorify You, and witness to Your love and providence.”*

NOTES:

The sick person must thank God for healing him, and tell of how much the Lord has done for him. He must serve God and the church, just as St Peter’s mother-in-law served Christ after he healed her: “**...So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them**” (Luke 4:39).

THE SEVENTH PRAYER

The priest lights the seventh and final wick.

The seventh Prayer commences with the Lord's Prayer.

The priest prays the Litany of the Catechumens.

The Pauline Epistle to the Ephesians (6:10-18) is read, which tells of how the sick must be strong in their hope, and should not allow illness to weaken their faith. Hope in healing is half the recovery, so, ***“My brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might ... Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand ...”*** and St Peter warns us, ***“For the devil your adversary walks about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour”*** (1 Peter 5:8), and the devil will devour those who are fainthearted and in despair. Therefore, pray always, and hope that your prayers will be granted that the Lord gives you spiritual and physical healing.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung.

The priest then says the Litany of the Gospel, while raising incense, which is then followed by the Gospel reading by an attendant: ***“Look on my affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins...Oh, keep my soul and deliver me. Let me not be ashamed for I put my trust in You”*** (Psalm 24:17-18). This psalm reflects the feeling of those who are ill. He is asking the Lord not to reject him because he has his trust in the Lord, for He promised us saying, ***“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation”*** (Psalm 91:14-16). The Gospel which is read from St Matthew (6:14-18), advises those who are sick to forgive others the trespasses done against him, so that the Lord may also forgive them and consequently healed them of their illnesses, which may have been caused by sin. As the Lord said to the paralytic man, ***“Your sins are forgiven; Arise take up your bed and go to your house”*** (Matthew 9:2-6).

The priest supplicates unto the Lord to, “See Your servant (...name), and raise him from the bed of his sickness.”

Then the priest says the prayer of the laying on of hands. Here the priest places the cross on the sick person and prays the following supplication: ***“...Not by the laying on of our hands on his head, we who are Your sinful priests, but rather we entreat the forgiveness of his sins by the holy hand of this Gospel ... accept the repentance of your servant (...name).”***

Then the following supplication is prayed: “Heal Your servant (...name) from his physical illness and grant him a correct life which glorifies and gives thanks to Your greatness, O lover of mankind...”

NOTES:

It is so important for a person to live a correct life, without blemish or blame. How excellent for him to have the complimenting aspects of strong Orthodox faith, and a virtuous life.

The priest prays the Orthodox Creed over the oil. After each part, the attendants respond, "Glory be to the Father ... Now and forevermore, Amen." This is followed by the 'Gloria' and the Lord's prayer. Then the Orthodox Creed is said, followed by 'Lord have mercy' chanted 41 times.

NOTES:

It is very important that the sick person declares his Orthodox faith, for this is pleasing to God, for, "***Without faith it is impossible to please Him***" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is important for our healing as the Lord Jesus said to Jairus who's daughter Christ healed, "***Do not be afraid, only believe, and she will be made well***" (Luke 8:50). Also, the Lord said to the two blind men who asked Him to open their eyes: "***Do you believe that I am able to do this?...then He touched their eyes***" (Matthew 9:28), and to the father who asked Christ to heal his sick son, the Lord said, "***If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes***" (Mark 9:23).

It is also important that the sick persevere in asking for God's mercy, by repeating 'Lord have mercy' 41 times, so that God will have compassion on him, forgive his sins, and heal his psychological and physical illnesses.

The praise of the Cherubim is said: 'Holy, holy, holy...' followed by the Lord's prayer.

Then the priest prays the three Absolutions :

1. "Lord, who has given authority ..."
2. "You, O Lord, who bowed the heavens ..."
3. "Master, Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son and Logos of God the Father ..."

He requests absolution and forgiveness for the sick person, from the compassionate and merciful God.

The priest says the Blessing and concludes with the Lord's Prayer. First he anoints the sick person with oil with a cross on his forehead, chest and hands ...

1. **The forehead** is anointed because being the head, it is the center of the senses and thoughts.
2. **The chest** is anointed because it contains the heart, for King Solomon said, "***Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life***" (Proverbs 4:23).
3. **The hands** are anointed because they are the instruments of work and deeds.

The priest anoints the person with signs of the cross, in the name of the Holy Trinity, who sanctifies and blesses all things.

The attendants are anointed by oil in the same manner, under one condition - that they are fasting. The woman who is menstruating should not be anointed by oil.

The sick person must receive Holy Communion as soon as possible, after partaking in the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, for Holy Communion is the essence of life.

The sick person must endeavor to anoint himself with the oil for seven consecutive days, believing in the power of God, and the power of prayer. This perseverance shows his faith in the effectiveness of the Sacrament, and his obedience to the church rite. Faith and obedience are essential ingredients for recovery. Just as the sick persevere in taking medicine for their recovery, so too must they be diligent in anointing themselves with oil.

NOTES:

A question always arises: How should the holy oil remaining after the Sacramental Rite and anointment, be treated?

Answer: The priest may take the remaining oil and leave a little oil in the dish for the patient to anoint himself for seven consecutive days, as specified in the Rite of Sacrament of Unction of the Sick. Seven, being a perfect number, and so the sick person's diligence to anoint himself with the oil, proves his faith in the effectiveness of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, and his care and obedience for Church orders. This ritual is effective, and helps the sick to recover through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes every house of the believers keep a special bottle in which to place the oil of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, as a continuous blessing in the home. It is kept in a safe place so that the oil does not spill, and is used only when necessary.

After completion of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, the priest must filter the oil from the seven wicks by pressing them strongly, then the cotton wicks must be burned so that they are not trodden on. He then empties the remaining oil from the dish into a bottle, which has been kept for only that purpose, and wipes the remaining oil on the dish with cotton wool. The cotton is then burned together with the wicks.

No unbeliever should be anointed by the oil of Unction of the Sick, as it is holy sacramental oil given only to the baptized. If a non-believer asks to be anointed, a common oil is brought and the priest makes the sign of the cross on it three times, prays the Litany of the Sick, and then anoints the sick person.

No one should be anointed directly after Holy Communion, as Holy Communion is the perfection and seal of all Sacraments.

We notice in the Rite of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, that there are a great quantity of readings from the Holy Bible (7 Pauline, 7 Psalms, and 7 Gospels, apart from all the prayers and supplications). If the sick person is attentive to the prayers, these readings and prayers are a great source of consolation, patience, endurance, peace, and comfort, as well as providing the gift of healing that is accomplished in God's time. The sick person then feels he can surrender himself to God, and so his feelings of worry and anxiety are replaced with peace and calm, for *“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4).

General Kandeel on the last Friday of Lent

It is a known fact that all sacraments are accomplished in the Church, with the exception of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick as the sick may be too weak to come to church so the priest officiates it in the home. However, once a year the Church performs this Sacrament in the Church, and it takes place on the last Friday of the holy Lent (that is, the Friday before Passion Week). It is called the 'General Kandeel'.

The General Kandeel serves the purpose of :

Reminding people of the importance and significance of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, for the healing of every believer.

Serving all those believers who have not called the priest privately at home.

Anointing all the believers prior to Passion Week, for it is not permissible to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick during the Holy Week, because the Church cares for the prayers of this great week and concentrates its prayers and contemplations on the passion of Christ and the blessings of the mystery of redemption and act of salvation. Hence, the General Kandeel must take place before the holy Passion week, just as in the same way the General Funeral takes place following the Palm Sunday Mass and prior to the Pascha prayers. As no funeral rites are allowed to take place during Passion Week, for the above mentioned reasons, the church performs the General Funeral so that if anyone passes away during Passion Week, they would have already been prayed on.

The General Kandeel is performed in the Second Chorus between the raising of morning incense, and the holy Mass of the last Friday of Lent.

The Church chooses this particular time of performing the rite at the end of Lent, because all the believers are reaching their spiritual climax, through abstinences, attendance at the holy Masses, and partaking in many prayers. The prayers of the rite are powerful, therefore at this particular time of the year, because even the Lord Jesus confirmed that, "***This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting***" (Mark 9:29).

Prayers of the General Kandeel are performed in the plural forms, hence, instead of the priest saying: "*Lord heal Your servant (...name), he says: "Lord heal Your attending servants."*

At the end of the General Kandeel all the congregation are anointed with the oil of Sacrament of Unction of the Sick. Firstly, the priests anoint each other, then they anoint the deacons, and then the congregation. Then prayers begin for celebrating the last holy Mass in Lent.

NOTES:

As the anointing must always take place before the holy Mass and not after, if anyone came to Church after the anointing, the priest may anoint them before the Mass. Anointing may take place after the Mass, but as long as those who are being anointed have not had Holy Communion.

Officiating the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick in homes during Holy Lent

Some believers are accustomed to asking the priest, during the Holy Lent, to perform the Sacrament in their homes, as a means of blessing, even though they may not have a family member sick and in need of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick. Because so many people request this, the priests are obliged to visit the homes, but because of time constraints, are unable to perform all seven prayers. Therefore they only end up praying one or two of the prayers in each home. They are also obliged to perform the Sacrament any time of the day or night, even if people are not abstaining from food. All these practices are incorrect, and must be stopped because :

The Sacrament of Unction of the Sick must be performed for a person who is genuinely sick and in need of this sacrament.

The priest must pray all of the seven specified prayers of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, as seven is a perfection number and the seven readings and seven prayers have effective power. Even David the Prophet said, “*Seven times a day I praise You*” (Psalm 119:164). The prayers, being God’s word, pierce the heart like arrows, making them effective and powerful in a person’s life. The Apostle Paul said: “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernment of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12).

In order for the prayers and readings of the word of God to be fruitful, they must be done reverently and without hurry or abbreviating.

The priest and the person who accepts the Sacrament must be abstaining from food for certain hours before accomplishing the Sacrament. Hence, performing the Sacrament in the early morning whilst people are still fasting, is the most appropriate time.

Many people consider that the priest coming to the house is a blessing, especially during the period of Lent, which is a time of spiritual revival. They consider that the priest visiting the house is a way to encourage the household to continue in praying and fasting, and always practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession. There is no objection to the priest visiting and blessing homes, but there is no need for him when doing this to pray part of the prayers of the Unction of the Sick. Instead, he should pray the ritual prayers of ‘Blessing the House’; prayers which ask the Lord to dwell within the house and keep the members of the household from all evil. The Prayer of Blessing of the House, resembles one of the prayers of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick.

PRAYER OF BLESSING HOMES

It can be done at any time, in the homes of the believers. It is not a necessary requirement, however, that the members of the household, and the priest fast, for this rite is not a Church sacrament.

This Prayer can be done at any time, and as often as people like. This prayer is not just restricted to those with new homes, but all people, as a source of blessing in the home.

The prayer itself is not very long, and this is helpful for the priest who may need to pray this blessing in several homes. The priest can say this prayer at any time because abstinence is not necessary.

If the priest is called to bless the home during Holy Lent, he may pray the Prayer of Blessing the House. A jug of water is necessary during the prayers, so that the priest can pray upon it and at the end of the prayer, bless the household and the house with the water as a blessing. The priest may also anoint the members of the household with the oil of Sacrament of Unction of the Sick (a bottle which he keeps), if they are abstaining from food, but if the prayer takes place at night and the household are not fasting, then the priest may anoint them with any simple oil, (from a bottle which he keeps), or from a small plate of oil placed near the water and was present during the Prayer of Blessing Homes. Hence, the oil and water becomes sanctified through prayer and the word of God.

The Prayer of Blessing the House is powerful and a great source of blessing, for it asks the Lord Jesus Christ to dwell in the home and bless it according to His promise : ***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”*** (Matthew 18:20).

The Prayer of Blessing the House strongly resembles the Prayer of Unction of the Sick, and there are certain prayers from the Prayer of Unction of the Sick that are used in the Prayer of Blessing the House.

Following the prayers, the priest sprinkles the holy water which had been prayed upon, on the household members, and throughout the house.

THE RITE OF THE PRAYER OF BLESSING HOMES

The family places a jug of water on the table beside which the prayers will take place, and coals are heated for placing in the censer.

Then facing east, the priest begins prayers with the Lord’s Prayer, followed by the Prayer of Thanksgiving. The deacons and household members respond accordingly.

Whilst the Verse of Cymbals is sung, the priest places five spoonfuls of incense into the censer, and proceeds around the house and its rooms, raising incense.

Psalm 50 “***Have mercy upon me O God***” is prayed, followed by the priest placing more incense into the censor and prays the Litany for the Sick, asking the Lord to heal any illness members of the household may have, and to grant them at all times psychological, physical and spiritual health, “*O You the true physician of our souls and bodies, who looks after all people, visit us with Your salvation...*”

The priest then prays the Prayer for the Catechumens : “Again let us ask God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind, remember O Lord the Catechumens of Your people, have mercy upon them. Confirm their Orthodox faith in You...”

The members respond, “Lord have mercy”. Then the priest completes the rest of the Prayer: “Uproot all traces of idolatry from their hearts. Your law, Your fear, Your commandments, Your truths, and Your holy precepts, establish in their hearts. Grant that they know the steadfastness of the preaching they have received. And in the set time may they be worthy of the washing of the new birth for the remission of their sins; as You prepare them to be a temple of Your Holy Spirit, by the grace, compassion and love of Your Only Begotten Son...”

The following supplications are prayed :

“O Lord, Holy God, fearful and glorified in all His deeds with unperceivable power, whose judgments are unsearchable, who created heaven by His word and fixed earth on water, who settled the mountains by measure, and the hills by scales ... We ask You Lord to hear us and have mercy upon us” Members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“You who assigned to the sea its limits and fixed islands and great waters, who touches mountains and they smoke. We ask You our Lord to bless this place which Your servant (...name) chose for his dwelling ... We ask You Lord to hear us and have mercy upon us” Members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“O You who are clothed with light, who stretched out the heavens like a tent and made the waters above the firmament ... We ask You our Lord to hear us and have mercy upon us” Members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“O You who founded the earth and created the waters and separated them from the dry land by Your great power. We ask You our Lord bless this home which Your servant (...name) chose for his dwelling and have mercy upon us” members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“O Lord God of hosts, healer of all sickness and all maladies, look down from Your heavens and respond to our supplication and bless Your servant (...name), and this place he chose for his dwelling. Take away from him all intrigues of devils and cast away from him all unclean evil spirits and rebuke them. We ask You our Lord to hear us and have mercy upon us” Members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“O You who sits upon the Cherubim and looks to the depths. Before whom trembles the angels, archangels, principalities, powers, authorities and thrones. You who is feared by the heavens and the earth and the seas. Lord bless Your servant (...name) and all his works, accomplish it by success, grace and blessing. Make his path straight in Your pleasure and end his days in goodness and righteousness, through the intercessions of the Virgin Theotokos and all the martyrs and righteous saints. We ask You Lord to hear us and have mercy upon us” Members respond, “Lord have mercy.”

Then the following praise is sung in the ‘Adam Chant’ : “God is light, and lives in light, and is praised by the angels of light, Light shone from Mary, and Elizabeth delivered the forerunner. And the Holy Spirit awakened David saying, ‘Rise and praise for the light shone.’ So David arose and took his spiritual harp, went to the Church, the house of angels and praised the Holy Trinity saying, Through Your light we see light, let Your mercy come to those who know You ... O True light, that enlightens every man that comes into the world. You came to the world because of Your love to mankind, and all the creation rejoiced at Your coming. You saved Adam from temptation and our mother Eve from the pangs of death, You granted us the Spirit to be Your children. We praise and bless You with the angels. Truly You are blessed O You Christ our God, with Your good Father and the Holy Spirit, for You have come and saved us.”

After each supplication, the priest makes the sign of the cross, and the household members respond saying, *“Lord have mercy.”*

- . *“We ask You O Lord for the heavenly peace...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for this home and its sanctification...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for our Pontiff Pope ... , and his partners in the Apostolic ministry, our metropolitans and bishops and all the clergymen...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for this city of ours...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for the healing of the sick and all those who are affected by unclean spirits...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for those who are traveling, whether by sea, rivers, lakes, roads or by any other means...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for the air of heavens, the blessings of the Nile waters, and the fruits of the earth...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord to visit the whole world with Your mercy...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for the repose of all the souls of our fathers, and brethren who are reposed in the Orthodox faith...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for our Oblations and those who have offered them, and those by whom they have been offered, and those offered for them, and for those who desire to offer to You but cannot...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for the grace of purification, by the act of the Holy Trinity...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for this water to become healing for souls and bodies and spirits, and for casting out all power of the adversary...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for those in need of help and power from God...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for our steadfastness in the Orthodox faith...” “Lord have mercy.”*
- . *“We ask You O Lord for keeping us in Your holy hand, through the intercession of our Lady and pride of humankind, the Theotokos and pure St. Mary, and all the martyrs and saints...” “Lord have mercy.”*

The hymn of the ‘Golden Censer’ is sung, followed by, *“We kneel before You...”*.

The Pauline Epistle to the Romans (8:14-21) is read. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are Sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out “Abba, Father”. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the Son of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” “The grace of God the Father be with you all. Amen.”

The Trisagon of glorification is sung, followed by the Litany and reading of the Gospel, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble. Incline Your ear to me, In the day that I call, answer me speedily” (Psalm 101:1-2). Gospel according to St Luke... “Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him: “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for today I must stay at your house.” But when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner”. Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold”. And Jesus said to him: “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Glory be to God forevermore, Amen.”

Then the following supplication is prayed: “O Lord our Savior, who accepted entering the house of Zacchaeus and granted salvation to him and to all those in his house. Keep now Your servants who live in this house, from every harm, preserve them without falling, by the prayers and supplications lifted to You by us and them, through us the unworthy servants. Bless their dwelling in this house and guard their lives without temptation, for to You is every glory, honor, dominion and worship, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and unto the end of ages. Amen.”

The priest prays the three Major Litanies of Peace, the Fathers, and the Congregations, followed by the Orthodox Creed.

The priest then says the following supplication: “O our Lord and God, great in His thoughts and splendid in His deeds, the creator of all the visible and invisible creation, who keeps His covenant and mercy to those who love Him with all their hearts, those who keep His covenant and commandments. Who accepts the tears and has compassion on those in tribulation. For this reason You were incarnated as a servant, to grant healing to our bodies. Who said to the paralytic man, **”See you have been made well. Sin no more.”** You who spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and told him to wash. You granted him the light of vision by Your word. You who shook the rocks of the torment of the adversary, You silenced the waves of the sea of this world, and calmed the heavy waves of lusts, You O lover of mankind and King, who granted us to be clothed in a white garment made from water and spirit, now send Your grace that purifies us from suffering, by receiving this water and sprinkling it on us and our houses, our possessions and our properties. Yes O good Lord, visit us in our sickness and heal the maladies of our souls and bodies through the intercession of the Theotokos, the pure St Mary, and by the power of the honorable Cross, and supplications of the

heavenly hosts and Your martyrs and saints and Cross-bearers. Amen.”

NOTES:

The priest prays for the healing of the whole family from every sickness and weakness.

The priest prays for the home and the city according to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: “And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace” (Jeremiah 29:7).

In the Pauline Epistle to the Romans, the Church asks the members of the family to walk in the Spirit, not in bodily lusts, “***For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God***” (Romans 4:8).

The Gospel reading tells of Christ blessing the house of Zacchaeus by staying there: “***Today salvation has come to this house***”. The priest prays for the blessing and salvation of the family in the house where the prayers are being performed.

The Orthodox Creed is said, for the soul must be founded on the Orthodox faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. The soul should be filled with spiritual virtues.

The priest says a number of supplications and prayers to ask that the water prayed on, becomes a source of healing for souls and bodies, and a means of casting out all the power of the adversary from the home and those dwelling within, and for the Lord to watch over them from all the temptations of the adversary.

The whole house is sprinkled with the water, so that the house may be blest, and all works of evil abolished and forbidden entry, through the power of God working in these prayers.

THE PRAYER OF ABO TERBO (ST. TERBO)

This prayer may be done for Christians as well as non Christians

It is more prevalent amongst those dwelling in villages, rather than the cities, and this is mainly due to the simplicity of faith of the villagers.

The prayer is done for those who have been bitten by dogs who may have rabies.

The prayer is done instead of the 21 injections which are given to the person, who was bitten, in the abdominal area. The prayers, through faith are very effective and powerful. And so the person bitten can benefit from both the effective prayers, and appropriate medication.

The first person by whom the prayers were made effective, was a saint by the name of ‘Abo Terbo’ (St. Terbo). ‘Terbo’ in Greek means ‘the healer’. This saint lived during the days of Emperor Diocletian, who tortured him severely, before finally throwing him in prison, where the saint remained until the Emperor died. Diocletian was succeeded by the righteous Christian king Constantine, who released all the Christians from prison and pain, and restored peace and Christendom in the empire. Accordingly, all the Christians returned to their homes praising the Lord and preaching His name in all places.

It happened one day that as Abo Terbo was walking, a ferocious dog with rabies drew near the

saint as if to attack him. The saint prayed fervently to be saved from the dog, and so hearing his prayers, the Lord sent His angel to rescue him. The angel ordered him to stretch out his rod upon the dog, and so doing, the dog died immediately. The Lord then granted Abo Terbo the gift of healing people who have been attacked or bitten by dogs infected with rabies. Whosoever calls upon the Lord in the name of Abo Terbo will be saved.

Many miracles have been performed in his name, one of which is the story of a poor woman who had an only son, bitten by a ferocious dog. After they prayed to the Lord to heal the boy, through the prayers of Abo Terbo, the boy was healed.

The effective and powerful prayer of Abo Terbo is very popular in country villages.

THE RITE OF THE PRAYER OF ABO-TERBO

The person who was bitten by the dog, goes to the priest, bringing seven pieces of unleavened bread, seven pieces of cheese, seven dates, a bottle of water, and a bottle of oil.

The priest then gathers seven children. (Note, however, that only the priest performs the rite, without the assistance of the youths).

The priest begins with the Prayer of Thanksgiving, then raises the Pauline incense, while the deacons sing the Verses of the Cymbals.

The second Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians (2:12-17) is then read: “Now thanks to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place, for we are to God the fragrance of Christ among the believers and the non-believers...”

The Trisagon of glorification is sung, followed by the priest saying the Litany of the Gospel before one of the deacons reads the Psalm and the Gospel: “***Restore us O God of our salvation...Show us Your mercy, O Lord and grant us Your salvation, will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You. Alleluia***” (Psalm 85:7). The Psalmist is asking God to show His mercy and grant salvation, by healing the sick person, so that all the people may rejoice and praise the Lord.

The Gospel reading from St Matthew tells of the Phoenician woman who asked the Lord to heal her daughter, and although a Gentile and an unbeliever, she showed strong faith and humility. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said to her, “***O woman great is your faith ... let it be to you as you desire. And her daughter was healed from that very hour***” (Matthew 15:21-28).

NOTES:

Many people who come requesting the Prayer of Abo Terbo from the priest for themselves or even for their cattle, are non-Christians, but they always display strong faith in the power and effectiveness of the prayers, just like the unbelieving Phoenician woman to whom the Lord granted her according to her heart's desire because of her faith. Likewise, the Lord grants healing and the heart's desire to those people who believe in the strength and power of the Abo Terbo prayers, prayed by the priest.

The priest prays the Three Major Litanies, followed by the Orthodox Creed.

The priest then reads the life story of Abo Terbo, as well as mentioning the miracle of healing of the poor woman's son. Many prayers are also said, such as, "*O God of Abo Terbo, support Your servants who eat from this pastry and drink from this water. Heal them Lord and cast away the poison of this beast from this person. Do not make him anxious or frightened or confused, and may no evil affect him, nor the poison of this dog harm him ...*"

The following four Psalms are read:

"The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" (23)

"May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble" (19)

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (118)

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills" (121)

The priest then says the following supplication: "Have mercy on Your servant (...name) and heal him from the dog so that he does not suffer or become sick from the poison of the dog's mouth."

The seven children hold each others' hands and proceed around the sick person seven times saying: "Believe You are healed and saved of your sickness by the power and joy of the giving and graceful God, O You the healer, glory be to you. Amen."

NOTES:

If the priest does not find children, he may do without them in prayer.

When the seven rounds are finished, every child cuts a piece of the bread, the cheese, and a date and places it near the person who was bitten.

Now the priest divides the pastry, the cheese and the dates.

The priest makes the sign of the cross on the water and the oil, before anointing the person who was bitten, by the oil, and sprinkling him with the water.

For the next seven days, the person who was bitten, must eat of the bread, the cheese and dates each morning, must drink of the water, and continue anointing the infected area.

Through the grace of God, and the prayers of Abo Terbo, the person who is bitten will recover. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh,
So then, they are no longer two but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."*
(Matt 19: 5,6)

Matrimony is a holy sacrament, officiated by a priest, of uniting a man to a woman. Through this holy sacrament, the man and woman become one, for as the Lord Jesus said, "***For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate***" (Matthew 19:5,6).

St. Paul expressed the sanctity of the Sacrament of Christian Matrimony, saying, "***This is a great mystery***" (Ephesians 5:32), and, "***Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled***" (Hebrews 13:4).

THE THREE GOALS OF CHRISTIAN MATRIMONY

1. Cooperation between man and woman;
2. Procreation;
3. Protection against adultery and fornication.

Cooperation between man and woman:

The Lord God said: "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18), "Woman was created for the man" (Corinthians 11:9).

'Comparable to him' meaning similar to him and equal to him, helping him and supporting him in all things.

Procreation:

To preserve humankind from extinction. Bearing children makes the couple rejoice, and fills the house with joy and strengthens the marital relationship. David says in the Psalm, "***Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them***" (Psalm 127:3-5), and, "***Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, in the very heart of your house, behold thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord***" (Psalm 128:3-6).

Children are a heritage from the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward, but if it happens that the Lord God has not given children to a married couple, they should not grieve, but say, 'Let

it be Your will Lord', in complete surrender to Him. Christianity does not make reproduction the main aim of marriage, but the second aim after cooperation between the married couple.

The church does not permit divorce when one of the partners is barren, but rather advises them to continue together, without destroying their happiness over a matter that is not necessary.

Immunity against Adultery and Fornication:

St. Paul mentioned: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman, not to marry. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality let each man have his own wife, and let each woman has her own husband ... For it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7). Marriage is the remedy for human weakness, for keeping oneself virtuous, and preventing sexual immorality, which God detests.

Christian Marriage elevates the bodily union to become a spiritual union, through the Holy Spirit, just as the Holy Spirit works in the Baptismal water to make humans a new creation, and works through the Sacrament of Confirmation to ordain a person to become a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also works in the couple during the marital ceremony, through prayers and faith to unite them in the Lord. Through the commitments made by the bride and groom in fulfilling the commandments of marriage, and the work of the Holy Spirit, the two partners become one.

The Christian marriage is distinguished by certain characteristics, some of which are:

Unity

Christianity believes and insists on the law of monogamy, for in the beginning God created male and female; one Adam and one Eve. Through Matrimony the two become one in Christ. Hence, they are no longer two but one body.

Continuity

The purpose of Matrimony is continuance, without divorce, except in the case of adultery. This is because a strange person has entered and corrupted the holy unity of Matrimony, and profaned its holiness. However, if the person who sinned repented, and the partner forgave them, then the Church permits the continuation of the marriage.

The second situation in which divorce may occur, is due to the spiritual immorality or denial of faith and abandonment of Christianity by one of the partners. The matter of annulment of Matrimony, is a matter authorized by the church, in the case where a partner had deceived or cheated the other, and even issues in regards to sexual impotence.

Bearing fruits

Through the Holy Spirit, the Christian family bears many fruits...

Christian virtues in the life of its members

Children, for when the Lord grants blessed children, the family must bring them up in the fear of God and in the Church.

Service and good deeds that glorify our Father in heaven. They should deal with all people in true Christian love, living a life of service and self sacrificing. Hence, the many fruits that a Christian family bears are not only children, but love, virtues, and service.

It is advisable that the Sacrament of Matrimony take place in Church, for it is the house of God and the house of angels. Before the altar, the groom receives his bride, committing himself while standing before the altar to love her like himself and treat her as an equal not any less, and she also promises to obey him, as Sarah did with Abraham.

It is not permitted that the Sacrament of Matrimony take place in houses, except in the situation of persecutions, where the lives of the bride and groom are at risk, during the processions. It is also necessary that the houses be big enough for such an occasion.

It is also not permitted that the sacrament of Matrimony take place during seasons of fasting, or times just before fasting begins, for it would not be possible for the newly married couple to abide by the commandment of fasting, both from a food and marital relation perspective.

The Matrimonial Rite is performed for virgin couples, however, if one of the partners is widowed, for example, then there is another prayer called 'The Prayer of Forgiveness'.

It is preferable for the couple to have one confession father, after marriage, who will care for them and help them in their problems, with a fatherly spirit.

The Coptic Church believes strongly in the principle of one wife, and adopts its principle from the holy Gospels, which always alludes to man having only one wife: "***Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her***" (Mark 10:11), and as our teacher St. Paul says, "***For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,***

and the two shall become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31).

The Matrimonial Rite is divided into three parts:

- (1) Betrothal
- (2) Ceremony of Marriage
- (3) Holy Matrimony

Betrothal (Engagement)

It precedes the Sacrament of Matrimony, but is not one of the Church’s Sacraments. Betrothal is a voluntary agreement resulting from a pure and holy love between a man and a woman, who accept to marry each other willingly and by their own choice. The man is called the ‘fiancé’, and the woman is too the ‘fiancée’, being an engaged couple.

The word ‘betrothal’ is derived from the word ‘oratory’; a public declaration whereby the man’s folks speak to the woman’s family to propose marriage. Discussions are open and honest, concerning issues relating to the matter of betrothal, and the wedding and dowry, and the roles and responsibilities of each family in regards to ensuring the agreement of both man and woman about the marriage. The betrothal must be legal as it is accomplished between a Christian, Orthodox, adult male and female. The minimum age for marriage is 18 years for the male and 16 years for the female.

If one of the partners is unknown to the priest, being from another diocese/country, they must provide a certificate of Recommendation for Marriage from their local parish priest or father of confession, to prove no previous marriages had taken place. The priest must be completely sure of this information, and so write and sign an official Certificate of Betrothal in the presence of the couple, and, witnesses, who also countersign. Information contained on the Certificate of Betrothal, may include the name, address, and the timing for the wedding, together with any other relevant information.

Period of Betrothal: Begins from the time when an official agreement for marriage was declared, and confirmed publicly on the Certificate of Betrothal. The Engagement period concludes with marriage. The period of betrothal is important, for it is the time when the partners should get to know each other better, and grow together in Christian love. During this period, both partners have a common feeling of spending the rest of their lives together, establishing a happy and successful marriage, and cooperate with each other, without selfish thoughts and desires. During this period, both families become acquainted and cooperate to establish a happy house for the new family. The minimum period for betrothal is a fortnight, and although there is no maximum period, we suggest that it should not exceed a year, so that problems might not arise, resulting in the engagement breakup.

The Rite of Betrothal

The official Certificate of Betrothal is written, containing the name, age, (gift) and proposed timing of the Matrimony. The certificate is then signed by the engaged couple, the witnesses, and finally approved by the priest.

The deacons proceed the couple into the church, chanting the hymn 'O King of Peace'. The woman stands on the right side of her man, and together they proceed to the place assigned for the prayers, whether it be in church, or in the woman's house. The positioning of the woman on the right of the man is in accordance with the Psalm which says, "***At your right hand stands the queen***" (Psalm 45:9). Also, Eve was created from the right side of Adam.

The priest holds the two rings, (and any jewelry which may be offered, such as necklaces, bracelets, earrings) in his left hand in a red silk ribbon or in a handkerchief and says the following prayers together with three signs of the cross ...

On the First Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, "In the name of our Lord, our God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection, we [\[3\]](#)declare at this [\[4\]](#)Orthodox ceremony the betrothal of the blessed Orthodox son (...name) to the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name)."

(The priest makes the sign of the cross on himself, then the couple, and then the rings, (and jewelry) saying, "*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, Amen. Blessed be God, the Pantocrator. Amen.*" Then the congregation prays the 'Our Father'.

On the Second Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, "In the name of our Lord, our God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection we declare at this Orthodox ceremony the betrothal of the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name) to the blessed Orthodox son (...name)," (The priest makes the sign of the cross on the couple and the rings), "Blessed be the only begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen." Then the congregation prays the 'Our Father'.

On the Third Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, “In the name of our Lord, our God and our Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection, we complete at this Orthodox Ceremony the betrothal of the blessed Orthodox son (...name) to the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name),” (Then the priest makes the sign the cross on the couple and rings saying), “Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete (Comforter) Amen.” The deacons respond, ‘Amen’, followed by the congregation praying the ‘Our Father’.

The priest then prays the Prayer of Thanksgiving. All the tunes and hymns are in joyful tunes. Following the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the deacons sing, ‘Worthy’, and during this hymn, the rings are placed on the fingers of the couple as follows:

The priest gives the fiancée’s ring to her fiancé, and he places it on her right ring finger.

NOTES:

As soon as the fiancée stretches out her hand for her fiancé to place the ring on her finger, she is giving her consent and confirmation regarding the engagement to marry.

The fiancée wears the ring which has engraved her fiancé’s name, on her right hand ring finger, as a sign that her fiancé’ has become the ornament of her life, and the reason for her joy, “***I will make you as a signet ring, for I have chosen you***” (Haggai 2:23). Then the same process takes place with the fiancé stretching out his hand for his fiancée to place the ring on his finger.

Being the officiator of God’s sacraments, the priest does not place the rings on the fiancés’ fingers himself, for whatever work the priest does cannot be undone, for his work is from God. However, the engaged couple place the rings on each others fingers as a symbol of agreement and acceptance, so that even if the betrothal is undone, it is considered not sinful.

The fiancé wears the ring onto which is written the name of the fiancée, in his right hand as a sign that his fiancée will be his right hand, “***as a signet on my right hand***” and will help him and support him honestly and truthfully, in mutual co-operation, after marriage.

Finally, if there are any gifts, such as jewelry which is offered, then the priest gives the fiancé piece by piece for him to place on his fiancée’s wrist, ears or neck.

The two rings (and jewelry) are always gold, as gold is the purest of metals, the most beautiful and expensive, and does not rust, just like the bond of holy Matrimony which is invaluable and precious, imperishable and incorruptible. And even if it encounters hardships, it survives, for the relationship is founded on true Christian love and fidelity. The value of the marriage increases over time, through time spent in companionship and love, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, being the founder of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

The bride in the Book of Songs says, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is as strong as death ... Many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised” (Songs 8: 6,7).

Afterwards the priest says a supplication, composed of four parts. At the end of each part, the deacons respond, "*Amen.*"

The priest asks God to grant the betrothed couple His acceptance and grace, and to bless the planned - for wedding to result in happiness and in peace.

The priest asks that their betrothal be kept pure and legitimate, making them one in mind and soul, and granting them a peaceful and spiritual happiness, shepherd by God.

The priest asks God to accomplish and accept the betrothal, and to grant the couple a happy life and to preserve them in His obedience, to adhere to the principles of Orthodox faith and virtues, and to keep them from all division and vices so that their joy will be fulfilled by the blessed Matrimony.

The priest asks God to keep in peace the leadership of the Church: His Holiness the Pope, and the Bishops, and the Bishop if there is a diocese, and to bless the attendants in this blessed happy ceremony.

All pray the Lord's Prayer, then the concluding Prayer, followed by the blessing. The priest prays to bless the betrothed couple by placing the cross over their bowed heads. They then kiss the cross and the priest's hand. The priest says, "*Pekhrastos Pennooti*" (that is, 'Christ our Lord'), and as the people make the sign of the cross, they respond saying, "*Amen, Let it be.*"

Finally, the priest says, "*O King of peace, grant us Your peace ...*" followed by the 'Our Father', and then he says the dismissal, "*The peace of the Lord be with you all.*"

The deacons then lead the procession of the engaged couple to the church door, where they stand to receive the congratulations of the attendants.

The Betrothal Rite is hence concluded in peace.

Aims of the Betrothal

For the partners to be better acquainted with each other in terms of their thoughts, motivations, personality and character, style of life, and even level of spirituality.

For the partners to grow in holy, spiritual unity, away from lusts and physical intimacy, for they are only betrothed and not married.

For the families of the partners to become better acquainted with love, understanding and cooperation.

For all concerned, partners and their families, to co-operate in aspects relating to the matrimonial celebration, and helping prepare a house for the couple to live in a Christian spirit, away from extravagance, pretence, misery or failure to commit matters agreed about.

Renouncing the Betrothal

If problems arise during the betrothal that makes it impossible to accomplish the wedding, both must renounce the betrothal correctly. As they were united in love, they should likewise leave each other peacefully, and without trouble.

These are the basis of renouncing the betrothal :

Contact the priest for him to organize a certificate of renunciation.

The rejecting partner returns all the gold and the unconsumed gifts and money. The consumed gifts are now irrelevant.

The priest writes an official Certificate of Renunciation, signed by the two partners in the presence of witnesses, it is then countersigned by the priest, and each partner receives a copy.

If the betrothed couple disagree about materialistic matters, and cannot agree on finalizing certain points, then the betrothal must be broken ecclesiastically (through the Church), through the Theological Council of the diocese, a Reconciliation Council, or even Court if necessary, so that each partner maintains their civil rights.

The Ceremony of Marriage

Originally, the time of celebrating the Rite of Matrimony was Sunday morning after the ‘Matins’ (the raising of morning incense), which took place just before the Mass. Just as the Rite of Monasticism (the consecrating of a monk) takes place after Matins, for he is being joined to the Lord in a holy, spiritual life, in the same way, the bride and groom are being joined together in the Lord by Matrimony, and the sacrament took place at this time in the Liturgy to prepare them for receiving the Holy Eucharist through their attendance in the holy Mass, which takes place directly after the sacrament of Matrimony.

In the past, there was a tradition whereby on the eve of the wedding, the bride and groom, together with their family and friends, would spend vigil in the church hall praying and praising, and thereby making them ready for receiving the Holy Communion the following morning. In the morning, after the morning raising of incense, the deacons proceed the couple into the church singing the appropriate hymns, depending on the church season, in order for the Sacrament of Matrimony to take place.

Such a hall, where the family and friends of the bride and groom meet and spend the night in vigil, exists in St. George’s Cathedral in Old Cairo.

This tradition which was kept by the older generations, is derived from the Book of Tobit, (in the Deutrocanonical Books). It tells how the couple spend the first three days of their marriage in prayers and spiritual readings, thus transcending the bodily lusts to spiritual love, in order to be united with God. Hence, they start their marital life with a holy beginning, as a strong foundation like the person who built his house on rock and, **“The rain descended, the floods came and the winds tribulations and troubles) blew, and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock”** (Matthew 7: 24,25).

When the righteous man Tobit married Sarah, he said to her, “‘Rise up my sister, let us pray to God today, tomorrow and after tomorrow. As in those three days we join God. After the third night we consummate our marriage, as we are children of saints and cannot marry like Gentiles who do not know God.’ So both rose up, and prayed fervently for God to bless them” (Tobit 8:4-6).

In the past, some priests performed an engagement/betrothal ceremony called ‘Partial Matrimony’. However, this is a grave mistake because such a betrothal cannot be broken, whereas, the Engagement is a period of acquaintance, and so may continue or discontinue, depending on the partners.

Marriage implies that both bride and groom belong to each other, and are united in spiritual love and physical unity, as our teacher St. Paul says: **“The wife does not have authority over her own body but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does”** (1 Corinthians 7:4). As each partner’s body belongs to the other, they cannot defile themselves through committing adultery or fornication. Our teacher St Paul says: **“Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled”** (Hebrews 13:4). Commitment to this

principle keeps the spiritual life pure and honest and so the relationship will continue in happiness.

The Rite of the Marriage Ceremony

The priest prepares a Certificate of Marriage and contracts of official documentation, in the Church's office where all the personal information relating to the name, age, date of birth and denomination of the bride and groom, are kept (they **must** be of the same denomination). The couple sign the documentation, together with the witnesses, and finally the priest. This must all take place before the Marriage ceremony. The priest must also take care to record information correctly on these documents, so that no problems may arise later that might place him in a legal situation.

The priest should wear the full priestly vestment, or at least the 'Epitrachelion' (stole), for he will be officiating a great ecclesiastical Sacrament.

The deacons proceed the bride and groom into the Church while chanting the hymn 'O King of Peace'. The bride, holding the groom's hand, is on his right side. They proceed down the aisle, and stand in front of the two adjacent seats placed before the altar, facing the south. The bride sits on the right of the groom according to the Psalm, "***At your right hand stands the queen***" (Psalm 45:9), and, as mentioned previously, for Eve was created from the rib on the right side of Adam.

Those attending the ceremony take their places quietly and reverently, for they are in attendance of the great Sacrament of Matrimony, and not just attending a common prayer. Just as the Holy Spirit is present during the holy Liturgy, so too is the Holy Spirit present during the ceremony of Matrimony, and dwelling on the couple.

Those who are in the bridal party must take care to dress reverently and modestly, for they are in the house of God. Therefore, indecent and inappropriate clothing and excessive cosmetics, must be abandoned, for they are an insult to the house of God. In the Psalm is written, "***Holiness adorns Your house, O Lord, for ever***" (Psalm 93:5).

Inappropriate dressing also degrades our appearance as Christians before our guests, for instead of looking with the children of God, we give the impression of being mockers who profane God's house.

The priest must only start the prayers once he feels that all those in attendance are quiet and attending in reverence, and hence are respectful towards the holy Sacrament of Matrimony.

The bride and groom present their rings to the priest, which were originally placed on their right hands, and the priest then places them in a red silk handkerchief, and then begins the prayers for the ceremony of Matrimony.

NOTES:

Tying the two rings in a red handkerchief, symbolizes the bond that is being made between the couple to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the third partner in every Christian family. The handkerchief, or veil is silk, because silk is an expensive fiber, signifying that Matrimony is invaluable and precious, and so should be a strong and unbreakable relationship: “***What God has joined, let no man separate***” (Matthew 19:6).

The priest opens the curtains of the sanctuary, and the lights therein are lit.

Standing close by the couple, the priest begins by making the sign of the cross on the rings and the couple three times ...

The First Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, “In the name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection, in this Orthodox ceremony and before the altar of the Lord of hosts, we declare the marriage of the blessed Orthodox son (...name) to the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name),”

With the cross in his right, the priest makes the sign of the cross on the couple, and the rings, saying, “*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, Amen. Blessed be God, the Pantocrator, Amen.*” Then he ties the first knot in the handkerchief containing the rings. The deacons respond chanting, “*Amen,*” followed by all praying the Lord’s Prayer.

NOTES:

The prayers of Matrimony always begin with, “*In the name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ,*” as the name of Christ blesses everything and every work. This Matrimony is founded on faith in Christ, for Christian believers must be an example of the unity of Christ to the Church, which He purchased with His own precious Blood. The Lord still loves, cares and keeps the church, His bride, even after He sacrificed Himself for her, and in return, she obeys and submits to Him.

The Second Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, “In the name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection, and in this Orthodox ceremony, and before the altar of the Lord of hosts, we declare the marriage of the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name) to the blessed Orthodox son (...name),” the priest makes the sign of the cross on the couple and the rings saying, “Blessed be the only Begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.” The deacons respond chanting, “Amen,” followed by all praying the Lord’s Prayer.

The Third Sign of the Cross

The priest prays, “In the name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the founder of the laws of perfection and in this Orthodox ceremony and before the altar of the Lord of Hosts, we complete the marriage of the blessed Orthodox son (...name), to the blessed Orthodox daughter (...name),” the priest makes the sign of the cross on the couple and the rings saying, “Blessed be

the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete the Comforter, Amen.” The priest then says the following prayer silently: “Glory and honor, honor and glory to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit One God, Amen.”

The priest then ties the third knot while praying, “***What God has joined, let no man separate***” (Matthew 19:6).

Many people refer to the Christian marriage as, ‘the Nazarene knot’; a knot which cannot be untied easily. A Christian Marriage cannot be separated, except in the following circumstances: death, adultery or apostasy.

The deacons respond chanting, “*Amen,*” followed by all praying the Lord’s Prayer.

The priest prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, with the deacons and congregation saying the appropriate responses in joyful tunes. After the Thanksgiving Prayer, the priest places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer, then raises the incense for the Pauline Epistle, after saying silently, the Prayer of Incense of the Pauline Epistle: “*O God the Great and the Eternal, without beginning and without end, great in His counsel...*” and he places his hand with the cross on the couple’s head to bless them.

Meanwhile, the deacons chant the hymn ‘Censer of Pure Gold’, which is a beautiful hymn about St Mary, whom the bride should emulate in terms of her purity, modesty, spirituality and virtues.

Facing west towards the congregation, a deacon then reads from the first Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians, where he addresses those in the ceremony saying, “***God is faithful by whom you were called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord***” (1:1-10).

Although marriage is a companionship between man and woman, St Paul warns, “***Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,***” by these words, St Paul is saying, expect the second coming of Christ, and do not let any worldly matters, whether it be marriage, children, or otherwise, allow you to forget your goal and your eternity. Hence, wait for the coming of the Lord with vigilance and repentance.

St Paul then address the bride and groom, asking them to always be of the same mind and intentions, so that there be no divisions among them: “***Now I plea with you, brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment***”, and, “***endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit***” (Ephesians 4: 3,4).

The deacons sing the Trisagon of glorification, in joyful tunes, followed by the priest saying the Prayer of the Gospel, while raising incense.

Facing the congregation, a deacon reads the following: “***Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other***” (Psalm 84:10,11), in the same way that the bride and groom meet and live together, and share intimacy in love, peace, and holy union, both physically and spiritually.

The Gospel reading is from St John, which tells of Christ being the Word and incarnate God, called 'Emmanuel', meaning 'God is with us', who descended from heaven and united Himself with the Church, His bride, and sacrificed Himself for her. In the same way, this holy unity, which is accomplished through the Sacrament of Matrimony, must be present between the bride and groom. Christ then prays a deep and heartfelt intercession: "***Holy Father keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are***" (John 17:11).

The priest prays the three Major Litanies for Peace, the Fathers and for the Congregations. The congregation say the Orthodox Creed, confirming that it is upon this Orthodox faith that the holy Sacrament of Matrimony is to be accomplished, and the faith in which the couple will live by, abide by, and pass on to their children.

First Prayer : The priest prays for peace, for the Matrimony, saying, "*Peace be with the groom and his helper.*" He then makes the sign of the cross on their foreheads by his finger. In this prayer he asks God to grant them peace and unity of love through the companionship of holy Matrimony.

The deacons respond, "O Christ the Word of the Father, the only begotten God, give us Your peace, that is filled with all happiness."

Second Prayer : The priest prays, “Make them worthy of the blessing, and complete their unity without blemish, and make them please Your living will ... Now O Lord bless Your servants ... with wisdom, purity and righteousness...”

The deacons respond, “As You gave Your peace to Your saintly apostles ...”

Third Prayer : The priest prays, “Bless them and keep their pledge ... assist them in their youth ... As You gave the woman to the man to be a helper for him, and for her to give birth...”

The deacons respond, “My peace that I have received from My Father, I leave with you, now and forever.”

Fourth Prayer : The priest prays the following prayer of thanksgiving, “We thank You our Lord God ... You gathered the dispersed as one, and united two into one ... grant them an undivided love. Establish them on the foundation of Your holy Church.”

The deacons respond, “*May God bless us, let us continually praise His holy name...*” (Psalm 67), for His holy name bestows blessing and the compassion of God upon His people. The Church here pleads for the happiness of the couple, and offers thanks and praises unto God.

Fifth Prayer : The priest prays on the vestments saying, “We ask You Lord to bless these vestments (making the sign of the cross on them), so that they may become for Your two servants who are wearing them, through Your goodness, vestments of glory and salvation, vestments of joy and happiness. Preserve them both pure in the soul, body and spirit through acts of righteousness. Grant them both heavenly and earthly comfort. Fill their houses and stores with all blessings ...”

NOTES:

This is a deep, spiritual prayer which asks for health and peace, which arise from acts of righteousness, whereas evil deeds, such as drugs and alcohol, destroy the body. Whilst the church prays for their comfort and joys, they should not forget the true heavenly comfort which God provides with His saints.

The deacons chant the hymn of ‘The Spiritual Vestment’ in the joyful tunes of Psalm Sunday, whilst the priest places the priestly cloak on the groom, and the red ribbons on both the bride and groom.

The red ribbons signify them as being soldiers for Christ, struggling in good faith unto eternity (1 Timothy 6:12).

The cloak is a priestly vestment. The groom wears it to symbolize him becoming head of the house, for he will lead his family in prayers at the family altar. He offers with his family, praises, and thanks unto the Lord, for he takes the place of the family priest, responsible before God.

In Old testament times, it was the father who always offered sacrifices to God and lead his family in prayers, just like Noah (Genesis 8), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job and many others, and it pleased the Lord (Genesis 8:20).

Prayer of the Holy Matrimony

During this prayer, the priest places two crowns on the heads of the bride and groom; hereby ordaining them king and queen of their new kingdom - their house. This ritual is only done for virgins, or if one of the partners is widowed.

Rite of the Matrimonial Prayer

The priest begins by saying the 'Our Father', followed by the Prayer of Thanksgiving. The deacons sing the hymn of '*Censer of Pure Gold*', whilst the priest places five spoonfuls of incense into the censer to begin saying the Litany of the Pauline incense silently, and places the cross on the head of the bride and groom for blessing.

NOTES:

The hymn of 'Censer of Pure Gold' is a hymn about St Mary, and it is sung during the ceremony to remind the bride to emulate the holy Theotokos, and to bring up children who will be true children of Christ, and emulate Him in all things.

A deacon reads from the Pauline Epistle to the Ephesians : "Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife ... Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it ..., that He might preserve it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish (likewise the bride). This is a great mystery (Sacrament of Matrimony) ... let each one of you so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (obeys him) ... children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise" (Ephesians: 5:22 - 6:3)

NOTES:

This commandment is directed to the groom, reminding him not to neglect his parents, and to treat them with respect and generosity, especially in their old age, even though he lives apart from them with his wife. It is his duty to care for them, for the purpose of obeying God's commandment and receiving their parents' blessings. His wife must not forbid him to care for his parents.

After the Pauline reading, the deacons sing the hymn of the Holy Spirit ('Bi-Epnevma'), which asks for the Holy Spirit to dwell upon the bride and groom to sanctify and unite them.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is sung. The priest prays the Litany of the Gospel, followed by the reading by one of the deacons : "***Like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoices like a strong man to run its race...***" (Psalm 18:5-6). This is a prophecy about Christ rising from the dead in victory, and strength and joy, just like the bridegroom who comes out of his chamber filled with happiness. "***Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, in the very heart of your house. Your children like olive plants all around your table ... Blessings on those who fear the Lord***" (Psalm 128:3-4).

The person who lives in righteousness, reverence and the fear of God is blessed by God. The

Lord blesses his house with a wife who is like a fruitful vine of virtues and good deeds, and children, who are a blessing from God, who will become a holy and righteous generation. Good children (who resemble a fruitful olive vine from which the best oil is extracted), are a source of blessing and happiness for their parents and others who serve them. Through them, Christ's name is glorified. This is the splendor of a Christian house. It is a small Church.

The Gospel reading is from St Matthew (19:1-6), and mentions several important principles which are the foundations for a stable marriage and the formation of an ideal Christian house:

Unity of marriage: one man and one woman, as God created them in the beginning.

Independent living: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife”* although they have their own home, in order to avoid interference from others, they must never neglect caring and loving their parents, in order to receive their blessings, according to the Lord's commandment.

One Flesh: *“They are no longer two but one flesh”*, one spirit, one heart, one aim, and one life, for they are not two but one.

Stability and Continuity of the Family: As the Church does not approve of divorce except in the case of adultery, whoever encourages divorce is breaking a divine law which was instigated by God Himself when He wedded Adam and Eve and blessed them saying, *“What God has joined together, let no man separate”* (Matthew 19:6). Through the division caused by divorce, the couple are sinning against God and His commandments.

The deacons then chant the response of the Gospel reading: “Those that have been united together in harmony by the Holy Spirit, are praising God continually like a harp. With Psalms and praises and spiritual songs, day and night, from the heart, without failure.”

The response has much significance and meaning : Who united the bride and bridegroom ? The Holy Spirit, for a good wife is from the Lord. How did the Holy Spirit unite them? Like a harp with reviving, comforting, and soothing tunes. For what purpose did the Holy Spirit unite them? To praise God, as Isaac the prophet said: *“Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory, I have formed him, yes, I have made him. This people I have formed for Myself. They shall declare My praise”* (Isaiah 44: 7,21).

With what do they praise God? With praises and spiritual songs; by a family altar where prayers are led by the father as the family's priest, by lips confessing the name of the Lord, thanking Him for His multitude of blessings, and countless graces He provides every morning. And when do they praise God? Day and night continually. This is the Christian house, the small church which is heaven on earth.

SUPPLICATIONS

The Liturgy of Matrimony begins with praying these supplications. Therefore, it is important that all people are standing reverently, lifting their hearts to God. We ask ourselves, is it possible for the Holy Spirit to bless the bride and groom amidst a show of indecency - both in terms of apparel and also behavior? Such behavior as talking loudly, eating sweets, and photographers

running about anxious to take several shots, whilst the priest stands praying?

I hope we always bear in mind that our, “**God is not the author of confusion but the peace**” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

The priest raises the cross and prays the supplications, asking the Lord to grant blessing and grace upon the bride and groom, just as He blessed Adam with his wife Eve, and Abraham with Sarah, and Isaac with his wife Rebecca, and Jacob with his wife, and Joseph with his wife, and blessed the wedding of Cana of Galilee by His presence.

The priest prays twelve supplications, and after each supplication, the congregation respond, “*Lord have mercy.*” The deacons then say, “*O Christ, the Logos, the only begotten Son, grant us Your peace, that is full of every joy...*” The deacons’ response asks the Lord to bestow peace and joy on the couple.

The priest prays the Litanies of Peace, the Fathers and the Congregations. He prays for the peace of the Holy Church, power for the Church fathers, and bishops and teachers, to guard the Orthodox faith. He then prays for the Congregations who are in the Church and at home, that the Lord may disperse from them their enemies, and make their houses to be houses of prayers, houses of purity, houses of blessing, through the dwelling of God in them according to his blessed promise: “***For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them***” (Matthew 18:20), and, “***If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him***” (John 14:23).

All gathered pray the Orthodox Creed to remind the couple that their wedding is founded on the holy Orthodox faith of the one, holy, universal, and Apostolic Church. It is a reminder for them to keep the faith in truth, and instill it in their children as a precious gift.

NOTES:

Note the similarities between the Liturgy of Matrimony and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, with its deep Prayers, recitation of the Orthodox Creed, and the various supplications.

Now the priest prays three supplications for the unity of the bride and groom: for their union to be holy love not lust, and for them to rejoice in the birth of their children. He asks for their cooperation in every good work, so they may glorify the Lord by their blessed deeds.

The First Supplication: “Let them enter into the law of happiness and abide in truth ... grant them a living fruit out of the womb ... prepare them for every good work...”

The Second Supplication: “Bless the union of Your servants (...name) and (...name), that were united together according to Your Will. Bless them as You blessed our forefathers Abraham and Sarah. Elevate them as You did with Isaac and Rebecca, and multiply them as You multiplied Jacob and his offspring. Glorify them as You glorified Joseph in Egypt. Grant them purity, prosperity, wisdom, salvation and blessing.”

The deacons then respond with a hymn which requests peace for the new family.

NOTES:

Although the physical union between the couple has not taken place yet, the priest prays for their union to be blessed, and to be a pure, spiritual and sentimental union, which is more important and permanent.

The Third Supplication: “O Master and Lord look upon Your servants (...name) and (...name). Confirm their union, guard their bed to be undefiled. Shield them and their home with Your unconquerable right hand. Save them from all envy and intrigue. Preserve them in harmony and peace. Grant them joy...”

The deacons chant the response, “*Do not forget Your Covenant...*” If God does not forget His Covenant with us, we, the bride and the groom must not forget our covenants with our Lord: the renunciation of the devil, and abiding in Christ through Baptism. And the covenant of the Eucharist which is sealed by the holy precious Blood of Christ. We keep all these promises and fulfill them in order to receive the blessings of God’s promises which are in store for us.

The priest then says a Prayer for Submission where the couple bow their heads and the priest places his hands on them praying this prayer humbly before God : “*Listen to us O God, we unworthy sinners ... Save them from all evil, and lengthen their lives in meekness, calmness, endurance and obedience, and keep them blameless and without fall. Enlighten their hearts and minds so that they may always do Your will.*” The deacons respond, asking for their blessing from the Holy Trinity.

Anointing the Couple with Oil

The priest prays over the oil in the bottle, making the sign of the cross upon it. After each prayer, the deacons respond, “*Amen.*” The priest first anoints the bridegroom, and then the bride, while the deacons chant, “*May this oil destroy demons and evil spirits through Jesus Christ the King of Glory.*”

Anointing the couple with oil has many advantages:

It is an oil for sanctification and blessing as the Psalm says: “***You anoint my head with oil***” (Psalm 23:5).

It is an anointment of purity and incorruption and a strong weapon against all lustful thoughts. It is for power, salvation and victory over all the deeds of the adversary.

It is an anointment for health, renewal and salvation to their souls, bodies and spirits.

It is an oil of joy and gladness, according to the Psalm, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, Your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions” (Psalm 45:7). Oil was used in the Old Testament to anoint kings, and as the couple here appear as the king and queen, so too are they anointed. Oil also signifies gladness, which is being felt during the celebration of the holy Matrimony.

The priest then prays the following prayer of blessing, after having anointed the couple : “O God

guard Your servants (...name) and (...name). Protect their union in purity. Fortify them by Your pure angels ... grant us to be in the places of rest of Your saints in the Heavenly Kingdom.”

NOTES:

How wonderful and meaningful are these prayers! In the middle of the Matrimony, the priest mentions eternal life, to remind the couple not be preoccupied by earth's comfort, its pleasures and lusts, but to always focus on the better life which we will receive in heaven with the angels and saints.

Crowning the Couple

The priest holds the crowns (or one of the deacons may hold them for him) and prays over them making the sign of the cross. After each prayer, the congregation responds, “*Amen.*”

“O Holy God Who crowned the saints with unfading crowns and reconciled and united the heavenly and earthly beings. O Master, bless now these crowns which we are going to set upon your servants' heads. Make these crown for them: Crowns of glory and honor. Amen! Crowns of Blessing and salvation. Amen!”

NOTES:

In this prayer we notice that the priest does not forget the heavenly crowns, whilst holding and blessing the matrimonial crowns. Crowns of unfading righteousness, kept in heaven for those who struggle for righteousness sake, according to what our teacher St. Paul says: “***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who loved His appearing***” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Through these words, the couple are reminded of their heavenly crowns, which they must strive for in their lives, and not focus on earthly crowns, such as the ceremonial ones which will be removed after the ceremony. (It is the significance of the crowns placed, rather than the actual crown itself which is important). The priest asks God to grant the couple crowns of heavenly glory, salvation and delight and for victory against trials.

Then the priest places the crowns on the head of the groom and then the bride, saying: “*O Lord, set upon Your servants crowns of unvanquished grace. Amen! Crowns of elevated and everlasting glory. Amen!*” These words refer to the heavenly crowns which are given to the repentants and those who are victorious in their spiritual struggle. Thus, the crowns which are placed on the couple's heads are representative of the heavenly crowns; the crowns of elevated and everlasting glory.

The priest then puts their heads together, as a symbol of their intellectual and physical union, and then makes the sign of the cross on them three times, saying:

“Crown them with glory, O Father, Amen;”

“Bless them, O only begotten Son, Amen;”

“Sanctify them, O Holy Spirit, Amen!”

Through these three supplications made in the sign of the cross, the Holy Spirit dwells on the couple, blesses their wedding and unites them in one heart and body.

NOTES:

Crowns signify royalty and king/queen ship. By placing the ceremonial crowns on the heads of the bride and groom, represents that they are the king and queen of their new kingdom - their home.

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments. And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

It is important that each person have control over themselves, and keep themselves from destructive lusts and passions, and hence make themselves strong through perseverance. The wise King Solomon said, “**He who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city**” (Proverbs 16:32).

Wearing the crown signifies that the couple have become the glory of the other person: “**An excellent wife is the crown of her husband**” (Proverbs 12:4), and, “**The head of woman is man**” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

The deacons sing the hymn of “*Worthy*” for the bride and groom. It is important that this hymn be sung exactly as specified in the hymn books. In recent times, some deacons have diverted from the hymn book and sing, ““Bless, O Lord by Your Holy Name...”. However, this is not correct, because blessing can **only** be given by the priest. Commitment and adherence to the Rites saves us from committing mistakes.

The deacons then chant responses for the couple, such as, “Imperishable crowns were given by God to the bridegroom...”

The priest places the cross on the head of the bridegroom and makes the sign of the cross three times while saying:

- . “*The Lord who blessed our father Adam ..., bless you and your helper.*”
- . “*The Lord who blessed Isaac ..., bless you and your helper.*”
- . “*The Lord who blessed our father Jacob ..., bless you and your helper.*”

Then he places the cross on the bride’s head and makes the sign of the cross three times while saying:

- . “*The Lord who blessed our father Adam ..., bless this marriage.*”
- . “*The Lord who blessed Jacob ..., bless this marriage.*”
- . “*The Lord who blessed Joseph ..., bless this marriage.*”

The deacons then chant the praise of the Cherubim, “*The Cherubim worship You...*”

The priest gives a word to the couple about the creation of Adam and Eve. God created Eve from

Adam's ribs so that she be equal to him. He did not create her from his foot, so he does not tread on her and despise her, and did not create her from his head so she does not dominate him. he Lord created Eve from Adam's rib, which is near the heart, and therefore he must be caring for her.

The deacons respond, asking God to grant His peace to the happy couple.

The Rings

After placing the crowns, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which has united them, the priest then places the rings on their fingers, as a clear indication of their unity and marriage, as follows:

The priest places the groom's ring onto the finger of the bride (left hand), and then the groom pushes the ring all the way on her finger.

The priest places the bride's ring onto the finger of the groom (left hand), and then the bride pushes the ring all the way on his finger.

NOTES:

The priest places the rings onto the couple's hands, for he is the minister of God's Sacraments, and so his hand signifies the hand of Christ. Therefore, the Christian Matrimony should remain intact, for what God has joined together, no one shall separate.

The groom's ring must have the bride's name engraved on it, so that when he wears the ring, it is as if he is holding her in his hands, and is responsible for her.

The bride's ring must have the groom's name engraved on it, to signify that her groom has become her delight.

Each partner wears their ring which has been engraved with their spouse's name, as proof of their love, commitment, and possession of each other in all things. St Paul said, "***The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does***" (1 Corinthians 7:4)

The bride and groom wear the rings on the left hand, for the left side is near the heart, and so they must love one another and be close to each other's heart.

The wedding rings are made of gold, which is a precious metal that does not corrode. So too should be the value and preciousness of the marital bond. It does not crumble or fall apart during tribulations, but rather, shines greater, as gold that is purified by fire.

THE COMMANDMENT

The bride and groom rise from their chairs and the priest takes them to stand before the sanctuary

door, facing east. He gives them the commandment before the sanctuary, as a witness that they are being wedded before the Lord, and so must keep what the Church advises them, by the priest, before the holy altar of God.

The priest says, “Now since you have been present at this blessed time before the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts and His holy altar, you have been joined together and united in the blessedness of matrimony ... So you must know each other and submit yourselves to one another in love and purity.”

NOTES:

It is very important for the married couple to be aware of each other’s rights, so that they may live together in harmony, stability and joy. They must give comfort and joy to each other.

“*Submit yourselves to one other*”, is a very important commandment; they must submit in terms of sharing and exchanging and being agreeable to each other’s ideas and thoughts, not just clinging to what they want individually. There must be dialogue, advice and discussion between them, in order for them to come to a common, correct agreement, and so their lives together will be peaceful. The man must never put down his wife’s thoughts, or dominate her with his.

The deacons then sing, “O King of Peace...” Followed by, “Take unto you, O bridegroom, your bride, Jesus Christ has given her to you, and by the hand of the priest He has given her to you. And blessed you both with His holy name!” The priest takes the right hand of the bride and places it in the right hand of the groom, and then covers their hands with a small white veil. (The white veil was originally given to the couple for Holy Communion, when the Matrimonial ceremony took place before the Mass, but now the veil presents a reminder to them to be regular in their partaking of the Holy Communion).

The priest giving the bride to her groom, represents the Church giving the bride to her bridegroom, to whom he will be responsible for her before God. Their “***Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled***” (Hebrews 13:4).

He must keep her happy and do all that is good for her, and have compassion on her, like Tobit had on Sarah. Sarah’s father took her hand and gave it to Tobit saying, “***The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with you, and bless you***” (Tobit 7:15).

Then the priest says to the bridegroom: “My blessed son, may the grace of the Holy Spirit strengthen you to take unto yourself your wife, in purity of heart and sincerity. Do all that is good for her. Have compassion on her and always hasten to do that which will gladden her heart.”

NOTES:

It is an important commandment, and the bridegroom must listen well to every word in order to try fulfilling it. It is an invitation of love, sacrifice and giving in marital life, warning him against selfishness and carelessness, which is the basis of trouble and strife.

The priest must say this commandment and the wife’s commandment carefully and unhurriedly,

so the couple can hear and comprehend.

Then, as an introduction to the commandment the priest will give to the bride, the deacons sing: “Listen O bride, and lend your ear, forsake your people and your father’s home, for your chastity has appealed to the bridegroom, and he is your husband and to him you will obey!” hence, alerting her to take care to the commandment about to be given in order to try fulfilling it.

The priest advises the bride saying, “And you, blessed daughter, and happy bride (...name), you must honor and respect him, do not disagree with him but increase your obedience to him over what was commanded many times ... Receive him with joy and cheer. Do not frown in his face. Do not ignore any of his rights upon you and fear God in all your deeds with him...”

NOTES:

It is an important commandment for the bride to humble herself for her husband and so live in peace. Problems can occur when the woman wants dominion over the family. As God is the head of the Church, He placed man to be head of the family, and the woman to be the heart of the family; he centre of motherhood, compassion, love and emotions. But once his heart does not exist, problems occur, and children suffer, becoming the victims.

We wish that the Church may design a beautiful Marriage Certificate, upon which is written the commandments given to the bride and groom on their wedding day. It would be great if they can frame and hang this certificate in a place that they can read as often as possible, in order to remind themselves of their responsibilities towards each other. The marital house, is supposed to be a small church from which arises the sweet smelling incense of peace and love of God and united worship, whether it be fasting, praying, or Bible reading. Thus the Lord will be glad with the aroma of this blessed house (Genesis 8).

The deacons then chant the hymn, “*O King of peace, give us Your peace...*”, requesting peace for this new family from the first moment of its formation to the last moment of each one’s life.

The priest then prays the Prayer of Blessing on them : the bride and groom kneel before the altar, and place their joined right hands which are covered by the white veil, on the Holy Bible presented before them. Their heads are placed together as a symbol of union and marriage.

NOTES:

The placing of hands on the Holy Bible signifies an oath of promise to keep and abide by the Biblical commandments, and that their life will be according to the commandment, having the mind of Christ, to live following the Gospel of Christ.

The priest says, “*Fill your heart with spiritual love,*” speaking in the singular form, for they are now one heart, one body, and one mind.

It is a belief amongst many non-spiritual people, that the period of most fervent love is prior to marriage, during the engagement period, and that after marriage, this fervent love decreases, and in some cases even becomes hatred. This feeling was expressed by the master of the feast in the wedding of Cana of Galilee, who said, “***Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and***

when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior” (John 2:10). However, when the Lord Jesus Christ attended and blessed the wedding of Cana of Galilee and blessed the Sacrament of Matrimony, He set right the things that were not. He gave the guests the good wine (water converted to wine) after the inferior wine, to teach us that marital love has its beginnings during the engagement process, but increases and enhances, like good wine. The love that is shared between the couple, through Christ, increase over time, for as St Luke said, “*old is better*” (Luke 5:39).

The Lord Jesus Christ attended the wedding of Cana of Galilee to establish and sanctify the Sacrament of Matrimony, making the marital house a small church, which is sanctified by the presence of the Lord Christ. Within the house, the Lord will manifest His glory, just like He did with His disciples, “*He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him*” (John 2:11).

A loving couple should glorify the Lord in all they do, and manifest His greatness to others. They believe in the power of Christ and His mysterious work granted in the Sacrament of Matrimony. They surrender their lives to Him, obey Him and His commandments given to them in the sacrament, and they allow for the Holy Spirit to work in their lives.

All those gathered then pray the Lord’s Prayer, followed by the priest praying the absolution for the couple. He then says the final blessing, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Dismissal, “... *go in peace, the peace of the Lord be with you.*”

The deacons then lead the procession, singing the hymn, “*Hail Mary the Queen*”, followed by the bride and groom, until they reach the door of the church where they stand to accept the congratulations from their guests.

NOTES:

It would be a nice gesture from the Church if the priest gives a Holy Bible to the couple and two Agbias, advising them to start their life by reading the Holy Bible regularly, and praying from the Agbia together, even if only once a day before sleeping. It would be good also if the couple are regular in Repentance and Confession, and receiving the Holy Communion. It is also important that they do not neglect paying their tithes, so that God may grant them blessings and bless their house and protect them.

I hope the couple will care and take the time, during their first days of marriage, to read together certain chapters from the Holy Bible, relating to the subject of marriage and family. Examples are: Genesis 2: 18-24, Matthew 19, Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3.

The Church should care to visit the couple in their new home, and quickly address any problems that the couple may face, before they become serious. The church also remembers their new home, during the prayers of the holy Mass, in particular when the priest prays asking the Lord to grant, “*Purity for those in virginity and good life for those in wedlock.*” And in the Litany of Congregations, the priest prays, “*Houses of purity houses of blessing. Grant us O Lord and to all Your servants.*”

THE SECOND MARRIAGE FOR WIDOWS

Although the Coptic Church does not prefer it, it does not prohibit remarriage. In the Selective Council it is mentioned: “But the second marriage is different from the first. It has certain order of laws, without the blessing of the Matrimony, but rather, a prayer of forgiveness.” Our teacher St. Paul says: “***But I say to the unmarried and to the widows. It is good for them if they remain even as I am (unmarried), but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion***” (1 Corinthians 7:8-9).

St Ambrose said: “We do not prohibit second marriage, but we do not advise it.”

St Jerome said: “The first Adam married once but the second Adam (Christ) never married.”

The Church forbids the person who remarries, and any children he bears from his second marriage, to join the Priesthood.

St. Gregory the Theologian said: “The first marriage is a law, the second marriage is forgiveness, the third transgression and the fourth is clearly adultery.”

St. Jerome also mentions, “Even the pigeons and doves don’t take another partner if their companions pass away. Remarriage is even rejected by the birds.”

Rite of the Ceremony of Second Marriage for Widows

The priest prays the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Psalm 50.

A deacon reads the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, "***Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers***" (13:1-6). The couple are advised to love and respect each other, and maintain the dignity of marriage, purity of the bed, warning against adultery, the love of money and lusts, and to be content and rely on God.

Then the Trisagon of glorification is chanted, followed by the Litany of the Gospel.

One of the deacons reads the Psalm and Gospel: "***Your wife like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house***" (Psalm 128:3), which speaks about a God fearing man being rewarded by God giving him a good wife and children, who are like fruitful olive branches.

The Gospel reading is from St John, "***He who has the bride is the bridegroom...***" (3:27-29), which tells of the pure and great love between Jesus Christ the bridegroom, and the Church His bride. He purchased the Church with His own precious blood, and He manages it and cares for it, and in return, the Church obeys and submits herself to Him. Likewise should the wedded bride and groom.

The response of the Gospel reading is as follows: "This is your joy, and your delight has been consummated ... , marriage is joy, delight and jubilation, as long as it is in God."

The priest says the three Major Litanies, followed by the Orthodox Creed.

The priest prays, "O Lord, God, our Master, the Pantocrator ... bless them now with Your freedom and forgiveness, to shelter them with Your right arm, to save them from envy, to guard them and to give them one heart, and grant them delight and joy..."

After anointing them with oil, the priest gives them the commandment saying, "The woman was taken from the rib of man so that she might be in his possession and be obedient to him, and that he may be kind to her, concerned about her welfare, and as merciful towards her as he was towards himself. A man is to leave his father and mother and be with his wife. The two of them are to be one body and one heart and be in accord, fearing God and pursuing His approval ... As for you blessed sister, you are to obey your husband knowing that he alone is to lead you ... And you, blessed brother, should hasten to satisfy her and work toward her welfare, fulfilling the saying of St. Paul: "***And you men, love your women as your own bodies...***"

The priest prays the Lord's Prayer, followed by the three Absolutions.

The priest then grants the blessing and final dismissal, and so the Rite of the Second Marriage is completed peacefully.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF PRIESTHOOD

The Sacrament of Priesthood is a holy sacrament through which the bishop lays his hands on the head of the elected candidate, so that the Holy Spirit will descend on him and grant him one of the priestly ranks. He is then given the authority to officiate the Sacraments of the church, doctrines, and others.

The word ‘priest’ is designated for a clergyman who spiritually serves people and their needs. The Jewish people referred to the person who offered sacrifices and oblations as a priest. In Christianity, the priest is a member of the priesthood who performs religious rites. The word ‘priest’ is derived from the Hebrew word ‘Kohen’, meaning priest.

The word oġHb (Ooab) in Coptic, meaning ‘priest’, is derived from the Coptic word eqogab (ethoab), meaning saintly or righteous. Hence ‘Ooab’ is given to the priest to signify that he is a righteous man, adorned by holiness and purity.

In Greek, the priesthood is called IeraTioN (Eration), and the word for priest is eregV (Ereis), meaning minister (of the Sacraments and the congregation)

It is also known in Greek as the “Laying on of hands”, and in Syrian as “Ordination”, and in Arabic as “Anointment”, signifying the granting of the seal of the Holy Spirit on the consecrated person.

Institution of Priesthood

This sacrament was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ when He chose the twelve of his followers, and consecrated them for ministry, “He called His disciples to Him, and from them He chose twelve whom He named apostles” (Luke 6:13)

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them saying: “Preach saying, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:5-8)

He gave them the authority of absolution and binding: “Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18).

After His resurrection He appeared to them in the upper room in Zion and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).

Only for them He said, “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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20)

Only to them He gave the mystery of His Holy Body and Precious Blood, “And when the hour had come, He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him...He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, ‘This is my Body which is given for you do this in remembrance of Me’, likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This is the new covenant in My Blood, which is shed for you’” (Luke 22:14-20).

The honor of Priesthood:

Priesthood is a great honor as it is a consecration of the work with God for the salvation of the souls of the people of God.

Priesthood is a divine call:

“And Jesus went up on the mountain and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons” (Mark 3:13-15)

Divine choice:

“Now it came to pass in those days that Jesus went up to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God, and when it was day, He called His disciples to Him and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:12,13)

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16)

Appointment:

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1)

Selection:

“As they (disciples) ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2, 3). That is why our teacher St. Paul boasted saying, “But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace to reveal His son in me, that I might preach Him among the gentiles” (Galatians 1:15,16)

Consecration:

“And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:19). To sanctify means to consecrate. Christ consecrated Himself for the ministry and our redemption. All the ranks of the priesthood are consecrated for ministry, according to the example of Christ, the High Priest.

Faithfulness and stewardship:

“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes” (Luke 12:42, 43)

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one is found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2)

Priesthood is a great honour:

No one takes this honour upon himself, this honour is granted and given by God, just as He granted the honour to Aaron. Likewise, Christ did not glorify Himself to become high priest, but the Father said to Him, “You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.” And also, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:4-6)

Ranks of Priesthood

There are three ranks in Priesthood:

- The order of Deacons
- The order of Priests
- The order of Bishops

Deacons are servants,

Priests are teachers,

Bishops are overseers, and shepherds.

1- The order of Deacons

‘Deacon’, pronounced as such in Greek, is a Syrian word meaning ‘servant’. The deacon’s responsibility is to help the priest or bishop perform the religious ministry. The first church appointed seven deacons who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to help in service, “The twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said: ‘Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business’” (Acts 6:2,3).

“When they were chosen, they set them before the apostles and when they had prayed they laid hands on them” (Acts 6:6).

The apostles stipulated the following three conditions for nominating deacons:

They must be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

They should be appointed by the apostles through the laying on of hands with prayers.

They should carry out certain responsibilities in the church.

Our teacher St. Paul also specified the requirements of a deacon, in his First Epistle to Timothy (3:8-13): “Likewise deacons must be:

- reverent
- not double tongued
- not given to too much wine(drunkenness)
- not greedy for money
- holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience
- ruling their children and their houses well
- should be tested first, and then proved and found blameless, so they can be ordained” (1 Timothy 3:10)
- Although the rank of deacon is the most junior rank of priesthood, St. Paul praises it saying, “For those who served well as deacons, obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13).

There are five ranks of deacons. In ascending order, they are:

- Epsaltos (hymnist)
- Ognostis (reader)
- Epideacon (subdeacon)
- Deacon (full deacon)
- Archdeacon (leader of deacons)

We shall now discuss each rank in terms of responsibilities, conditions, clothing, and rites of ordination

EPSALTOS

‘Epsaltos’ is derived from the Coptic word ‘Epsalmos’ meaning Psalm or hymn. Hence, ‘Epsaltos’ means ‘hymnist’.

According to his title, his responsibilities include learning and singing the hymns and praises of the church. This rank is mentioned in some of the early Church Canons, “Hymnists also must be blessed by the bishop.”

Generally, it is the children who are ordained ‘epsaltos’ (from primary to high school). For as the Psalm says, “Out of the mouth of babes and infants You have ordained strength” (Psalm 8:2). The wisdom behind ordaining young boys is to instill within them at a young age, the faith and rituals

of the church, so that they may taste of its sweetness, become steadfast on the Orthodox faith, and an active member of the church. Hence, he will grow in the church with spirituality and holiness: “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God ... I will praise You for ever” (Psalm 52:8).

The Epsaltos is permitted to wear the tunic without the stole.

Rite of the Epsaltos

After the Reconciliation Prayer of the divine liturgy, the archdeacon or hegomen takes the children who will be ordained Epsaltos, to stand before the altar in reverence and awe. The bishop then advises them regarding regular church attendance, the importance of learning hymns, attending Sunday School classes, and the importance of respectful and decent behavior, whether in the church, home or in society. He advises them regarding obedience, and to take care not to insult, lie or swear. He also tells them regarding the importance of regular confession and receiving the Holy Communion.

He must be sure that those who are being ordained are fasting, so that they may receive the Holy Communion after the holy Mass.

The bishop must receive a verbal undertaking from the children’s parents, that they will help their children fulfill these commandments, and not forbid them from coming to church for any reason. The bishop then instructs the priest to care for them spiritually, and keep close watch on their spiritual life and regularity in confession. The bishop also instructs the older deacons to take the time to teach and explain, simply, to the young deacons, the rites and church hymns.

The bishop then begins the ordination for the rank of EPSALTOS.

The Rite of Ordination of Epsaltos

The prayer begins by saying the Lord’s Prayer, followed by the Prayer of Thanksgiving. The bishop then prays :

“Our good God, who raised Heman and Asaaf to sing in Your holy places, and who gave David the prophet the flute, harp and ten chords to praise, and who said, “Out of the mouth of babes and infants You have ordained strength.” You who placed praise in Your holy church, and Your congregation worship You by Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We ask You Lord to grant Your servants Your grace to become Epsaltos in Your holy church and praise You with hymns, songs and spiritual praises, singing with their hearts

to the Lord ... through the grace and compassion of Your only begotten Son ...”

O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O lover of mankind, for Your servants standing before You, who came to Your universal, Apostolic church, to be worthy to start faithfully and adore You in purity. Enlighten them by the sweetness of Your holy words. Grant them to sing spiritual hymns with understanding. Sanctify them. Bless them. Fill them with Your fear. Protect them by Your angelical power. Enrich them by all good gifts and perfect talent, to live by Your holy, blessed

will. May they grow into the perfection of Your Holy Spirit. By Your only begotten Son our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. Glory honor, dominion and worship are due to You together with Him and the Life-Giving and consubstantial Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.”

The bishop then does the sign of the cross three signs saying without the laying on of hands, “... (name), Epsaltos for the holy church of God ...(name of parish) ...”

On the first sign of the cross : “Blessed is God the Father, Amen”

On the second sign of the cross : “Blessed in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen”

On the third sign of the cross : “Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, Amen.”

After the bishop completes the sign so the cross, the children are given their service tunics and stoles, which the bishop then makes the sign of the cross over them three times before they wear them.

They then stand before the adult Epsaltos deacons, to share with them in the responses and hymns of the divine Mass, followed by them receiving the Holy Communion, after the older deacons. Their parents rejoice for them, and by coming to church regularly, they will grow in virtues and worship, and become righteous people..

ARCH-EPSALTOS

Instead of being ordained in the rank of ‘Ognostis’ (reader), the church’s hymnist may be ordained in the rank of Arch-Epsaltos, especially if he is blind. Arch-Epsaltos is the leader of hymnists and leads the deacons’ choir outside the altar, in the responses and hymns of the divine liturgy or any other ritual services.

After the Prayer of Reconciliation the bishop stands at the altar’s door, facing west. The person required to be ordained as Arch-Epsaltos kneels before him reverently, while holding his tunic. The then bishop begins the ordination prayer as follows:

Prayer read for the ARCH-EPSALTOS,

leader of hymnists

The Bishop prays :

“O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, who is in heaven and accepts pure souls throughout the generations. Make a sign with Your servant (...name) and make him one of Your righteous leaders of hymnists like David. Keep him undefiled to the end of ages.”

“Accomplish his offering. Grant him a blameless search for praises. Keep him in all deeds. Grant him purity in all good work, and may he conquer all the enemies. Nourish him by pure teachings and heavenly praises. Empower him at all times to fulfill Your will always. Grant him mercy and grace before Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to You together with Him and the life-giving Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.”

All say “Lord have mercy”, three times.

The Bishop continues praying :

“We ask You our Lord, and God, the lover of mankind, send the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon Your servant standing before You, to become a leader of hymnists. Fill him with power and righteousness to become an example to all and present to Your divine majesty praises of joy and salvation. Spiritual praises from the heart not lips, adoring You in spirit, truth and understanding. Grant him wisdom to manage the rank of Epsaltos, a good, spiritual management.”

“Keep him from the traps of the devil and grant him to become a holy altar for You, to be accepted before You always. Grant him goodness and humbleness of heart, meekness, faith, hope and love so his heart may abide in grace and praises ...” (Hebrews 9:11-13)

“Bless him and his service, accept his praises and prayers as sweet incense.”

“Through the grace, mercy, and love of Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to You together with Him and the life-giving and consubstantial Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.”

Without the laying on of hands, the bishop makes three signs of the cross on him saying, “Arch-Epsaltos for the church (name of parish)...”

On the first sign of the cross : “Blessed is God the Father, Amen”

On the second sign of the cross : “Blessed in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen”

On the third sign of the cross : “Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, Amen.”

The bishop then makes the sign of the cross three times on his tunic, then dresses him.

The Arch-Epsaltos then stands in his place among the choir deacons, and receives the Holy Communion at the end of the holy Mass.

OGNOSTIS

‘Ognostis’ is Greek word derived from two words : ‘Anagnosma’, meaning ‘reading’, and ‘Tis’, meaning ‘related to’. Thus ‘Ognostis’ means ‘the reader’.

Conditions of ordination:

Generally, not less than 18 years of age.

Recognized for his good manner and deeds.

Recommended (without objection) by the priest and congregation.

Tested for his reading ability of the Holy Bible, and its comprehension.

Regular in his spiritual life, such as Confession, Holy Communion, reading of the Holy Bible and coming to church.

He must be ready for service and full of zeal.

He must be humble, and not one to boast about his voice or service.

Responsibility of the Ognostis

He must be fluent (English, Arabic and Coptic) in knowing by heart the responses said before and after the Epistle readings, and read the daily readings. He must read clearly and without mistakes to enable the congregation to hear and understand.

Introduction to the Pauline epistles:

“A chapter from the Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the ... May his blessings be with us all. Amen.”

Concluding the Pauline reading, “The grace of God the Father be with you my brethren. Amen.”

Introduction of the Catholic (universal) epistles:

“A Catholic Epistle from the Epistle of our teacher St. ..., May his blessings be with us all. Amen.”

Concluding the Catholic reading, “Do not love the world, or things which are in the world. The world shall pass away and all its desires, but he who does the will of God shall abide forever. Amen.”

Introduction to the Praxis (Book of Acts):

“A chapter from the Acts of our fathers the pure apostles, may their holy blessings be with us all my fathers and brethren. Amen.”

Concluding the Praxis reading, “May the word of the Lord grow, and multiply, be mighty and be confirmed in the holy church of God. Amen.”

After the reading, the Ognostis must prostrate before the altar and kiss the cross and the priest's hand, showing his humility before God. The Ognostis must take care never to boast about his reading abilities.

Following the Commemoration, the deacon who stands inside the sanctuary, reads the names of our holy fathers who have fallen asleep in the Lord : “Let the readers, name our holy fathers, the patriarchs who have departed; O Lord repose their souls and forgive us our sins.”

The Ognostis must be familiar in all the church hymns and praises, and chanting them with the choir of deacons during the Liturgy and other occasions.

The Ognostis must be familiar with church doctrines and able to teach and give sermons. In the rite of ordaining Ognostis, it is said, “Lord show Your face to Your servant standing before You, to know by Your holy words and preach Your laws to Your people, teach them Your pure words

for their salvation.”

In the commandment the bishop gives to the Ognostis being ordained, he says: “You must learn chapter by chapter the books of the Holy Bible, which is the breath of God, for which you were entrusted with to teach the people.”

However, the Ognostis must only give sermons, and so on, with the permission of the bishop or priest.

The Ordination Rite of Ognostis

The deacon is ordained, following the Reconciliation Prayer.

He stands before the altar with the tunic, carrying his tunic, and kneel reverently before the Lord, ready to carry out the responsibility of the rank and service. The Bishop stands at the altar’s door, facing west.

The priests and individuals, from the congregation, who recommended him, stand behind him before the altar, also kneeling on his behalf before the altar and the bishop, requesting his ordination, before God and the bishop.

The bishop asks the congregation, “Do you witness that he is truly worthy of this rank?” They respond saying, “Yes we witness that he is worthy.”

The Bishop takes scissors and makes five small cuts in his hair, in the sign of the cross, starting from the middle of his head. While clipping, the bishop says, “...(name), Ognostis for the church ...(name of parish) ...”

“Blessed is God the Father, Amen”

“Blessed in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen”

“Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, Amen.”

NOTES:

The bishop questioning the congregation about the deacon’s worthiness to be a witness for God and the Church, is a validation of the Apostle’s words, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Clipping of the hair signifies the cutting off, or the removal all evil thoughts and habits (for the head seats the senses).

Clipping the hair in the shape of a cross, while the bishop mentions the Holy Trinity is proof of the graces and talents that the deacon receives from the Holy Trinity by the worthiness of Christ’s death on the cross.

The five crosses (hair clippings) symbolize the five wounds of Christ the Lord: the three nails, the crown of thorns, and the spear wound in His side. It is as I the deacon proclaims, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being

conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10).

The bishop clips the hair of each Ognostis, in the shape of five small crosses, whilst saying the three ‘blessings’ of the Holy Trinity. After completing this, all the newly ordained Ognostis stand in order to hear the prayers and the commandments given them.

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving prayer, then raises incense in the four directions...

He faces west and prays: “We ask and entreat Your goodness O Lord God the Pantocrator, accept Your servant (...name) an Ognostis in Your house. Give him reverence in worshipping You. Make him worthy to touch the utensils and become an honorable Ognostis before You.” *

* The Ognostis is authorized to touch the altar’s sacred vessels, in order to dry them after the Mass and place them in their specified place, but handling of the vessels must only be done by holding them in the white linen veil specified.

The bishop faces the east and prays: “O great God, rich in His talents ... Come and fill him with all wisdom and understanding keep him blameless in Your worshipping.”

Following the bishop’s prayer, the congregation respond, “O Lord hear us, Lord have mercy upon us, O Lord bless us.” This response is said at the end of each ordination prayer.

The bishop, facing west, holds the temples of the Ognostis between his hands, whilst praying, “O God, holder of all ... show Your face to Your servant ... to abide by Your holy sayings and preach Your commandments to Your people ... grant him a humble heart to read and study Your laws to edify himself and his listeners.”

NOTES:

The bishop’s hand denotes the hand of God that holds the human mind to open his intellectual ability and free his tongue to teach and preach the powerful living word of God.

The bishop then faces east praying: “O Master and Lord Jesus Christ, who chose His servant Ezra and gave him wisdom to read Your law to Your people ... grant him also, wisdom and the spirit of prophecy to recite Your holy sayings blamelessly to Your people.”

NOTES:

It is very important that the reputation of the Ognostis be blameless, so that he may apply his words to his deeds, and not be the cause of a stumbling block. He must offer pure service, according to the example of Ezra the great writer.

The bishop (or archdeacon if present) reads to the Ognostis, the following commandments:

- “Learn chapter by chapter of the Holy Bible”
- “Read with understanding the Lord’s commandments”
- “Preach unto the people”
- “Your reputation must be pure, as a beacon giving light to all those around you, by your words and deeds.”

At the end of the prayers and commandments, the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the vestments of service. The Ognostis' then wear them and take their place with the Epsaltos deacons, to share in the hymns and responses of the holy Mass.

At the end of the Mass they receive the Holy Communion. After the bishop drinks of the precious Blood and before he drinks water, he breathes into their faces one by one saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

A procession is made for them around the altar and the whole church rejoice.

The Ognostis' Vestments

The Ognostis wears a white tunic as white is appropriate for the service of God. Christ is the one who is dressed in light, who was transfigured and His clothes became shining, and exceedingly white (Mark 9:3). The color white signifies purity which must adorn every deacon and all other priesthood ranks.

He wears the stole crossing over the left shoulder and around his waist as a belt, and the ends of the stole hang from his shoulders.

NOTES:

'Stole' is a Greek word (Patrachelion) meaning 'grace', the rank of deacon is a grace which is taken by an individual and carried on his shoulders.

It hangs on the back like a cross to symbolize that he is sharing in carrying the cross, for the Lord says: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).

The stole comes around the waist like a belt, as proof of preparation and readiness for service, like John the Baptist who wore a leather belt around his waist.

Rules for the Ognostis

The bishop clips his hair, however, he does not lay his hands on him.

He may marry, and if his wife dies, he may remarry. This differs from other priestly ranks.

EPIDEACON

Epidiacon is a Greek word composed of two parts: 'Epi' meaning 'assistant', and 'Diacon' meaning 'deacon'. Hence, 'Epidiacon' means 'Assistant Deacon'.

Conditions of ordination

Unless he shows excellence in ecclesiastical subjects and wisdom, and faithful in his deeds, generally, the Epidiacon should not be ordained younger than the age of 20.

He must be recommended by the congregation and the (chorus) deacons.

He must be known for his righteousness and faithful deeds.

His Responsibility

He must keep watch of the church doors to forbid the entry of heretics and false teachers.

He is responsible for organizing the seating in the church, that is, the place allocated for men, women, nuns, and so on.

He is responsible for lighting the church lamps.

He is responsible for keeping in order, the church books, and the priestly and servants vestments.

He is responsible for preparing the censors

He is responsible for helping the other deacons, and replacing them if necessary.

NOTES:

These responsibilities are additional to the responsibilities he had as an Ognostis. He must still fulfill the responsibilities of Ognostis, in case he needs to step into that role at any time.

The Rite of Ordination of Epideacon

After the Prayer of Reconciliation, he kneels before the altar (without the tunic).

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving prayer, then raises the incense in the four directions

The bishop, facing the east prays, “O Almighty Lord ... accept the Epideaconship of Your servant (...name) standing here awaiting Your heavenly talents.”

The archdeacon says: “May Your grace, Lord Jesus Christ, perfect our weakness, and come upon the brother whose name was mentioned for epideaconship ...”

NOTES:

The ordination rite is done specifically by bishops only, however, priests or archdeacons may share in some of the prayers.

The bishop facing east prays, “Yes Lord make him worthy of the invitation for Epideaconship.”

The congregation responds: “Lord hear us, Lord have mercy on us, Lord bless us.” This response is said at the end of every supplication of the ordinations, or alternatively, “Lord have mercy” said three times in the same tune, may be said.

Facing west, the bishop holds the Epideacon’s temples between his hands whilst praying: “O Lord, Master and Pantocrator ... show Your face to Your servant (...name) to become an Epideacon. Fill him with Your Holy Spirit to become worthy to touch the sacred vessels of service.”

NOTES:

The Epideacon may only touch the altar vessels to dry them after the Mass, with the white linen veil specified for that purpose.

The bishop faces east and prays: “Lord look to our service ... give Your servant (...name) Your grace to be worthy to complete his Epideaconship blamelessly.”

The bishop anoints his forehead with his right thumb, saying: “We call you in the holy church of God. Amen.” And the congregation respond: “Amen.”

The archdeacon then says: “...(name), an Epideacon for the holy house of God, Amen.” The congregation respond: “Amen.”

The bishop makes the sign of the cross on the Epideacon’s forehead three times, with his thumb, (but without the laying on of hands), whilst saying : “We call you (...name) an Epideacon for the church ...(name of parish), in the name of the Father ...”

“Blessed is God the Father, Amen”

“Blessed in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen”

“Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, Amen.”

During these signings of the cross, the Holy Spirit dwells upon the Epideacon and gives him the gifts of service required of him.

The bishop then faces east and prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, giving thanks to God for fulfilling this ordination, saying: “I thank You O Master Pantocrator give him reverence and purity to become perfect in all works of service ...”

After making the sign of the cross on the tunic and stole, he dresses the Epideacon whilst saying, “Glory and honor ... peace and edification ... Amen.”

The bishop then instructs him with the specific commandments for Epideacons: “My son you are entrusted with a righteous rank ... help the deacons in service, and guard the doors of the church and keep order within it ...”

At the end of the Mass the Epideacon receives the Holy Communion, and the bishop breathes into his face saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit”. They then make a procession for him in church, to rejoice in his ordination.

The Epideacon’s Vestments

The service vestments, including the stole, are the same and worn the same way as the Ognostis. The stole bound around his waist as a belt signifies an obligation of duties and services and dedication to the church rules which he must follow and behave accordingly. (If there is no stole during the ordination the Epideacon may tie a red linen waist band around his waist instead.)

The Rules

During his ordination, the bishop does not lay his hands on him, but rather makes the sign of the cross on his head.

An Epideacon is permitted to marry.

DEACON

‘Deacon’ in Syrian, or ‘Diakon’ in Greek and Coptic, mean ‘servant’.

Conditions of Ordaining a Deacon

He must be no younger than 25 years of age.

He should undergo a period of testing, whereby his maturity is tried, according to the service he will be responsible for. The Apostle says, “Let these also first be proved, then let them serve as deacons, faithful in all things” (1 Timothy 3:10).

He must be an example unto others in his speech, attitude, love, purity, and caring for his spiritual and eternal life.

He must be of humble mind, not greedy for money, content, able to bear tribulations of the service without any complaint, he must be a man of principles, and not one to show favoritism to some and not others.

He must be consistent in his Bible reading and reading of spiritual books, in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He must be a witness for others in his chastity, honesty and love of peace.

He must be recommended by the church’s congregation as being worthy of this rank.

All the above conditions are necessary, especially if the deacon will be ordained as a full time consecrated person for church service.

The Responsibilities of a Deacon

He is responsible for saying the responses of the litanies prayed by the priest during the raising of incense and Liturgy.

He is responsible for starting prayers with the congregation.

He is responsible for maintaining order and quiet in the church, to ensure that the congregation stand with reverence and respect.

He is responsible for helping the priest in visiting the church’s congregation.

He is responsible for recording the names of the people who have offered gifts and oblations to the church, so that the priest can remember them during the Litany of oblations. In the Apostolic Canons (Diaskolia), it is written : “The deacons write every day the names of those who have given offerings, whether they are alive or departed, so that they may be remembered during the readings and prayers” (Diaskolia 35)

In the old days, there would be a private room located at the western door of the church called the ‘deacon’s room’, where the deacon sits and receives the gifts and offerings of the congregation in private, before they enter the church. He would write the names of those who offered gifts, including the names of those who have departed in whom the gifts are being offered, and the deacon would then give these names to the priest, who would mentioned them, silently, one by

one after the Litany of Oblations during the divine Liturgy.

He is responsible for cleaning the altar and putting in order the tabernacle. He must ensure the cleanliness of the altar and its coverings, before the priest comes.

He is permitted to read the Holy Gospel of the divine Liturgy. During the deacon's ordination, the bishop says: "... he is honored to read the Gospel."

He is permitted, when necessary, to carry the chalice and give the congregation the Precious Blood, by permission from the priest.

During the deacon's ordination, the bishop says to him: "... Understand the extent of honor given to you to carry it, which is the Precious True Blood giving salvation to the world."

He is responsible for the service of widows and orphans, needy, sick and imprisoned. The bishop says to him: "... visit the Lord's congregation, and widows, orphans, the oppressed, and help whoever you can, paying their needs and becoming an example for them by your good deeds ..."

By the permission of the bishop or priest, the Deacon has the responsibility to teach and preach.

He is responsible for saying the liturgical responses, inside the altar - which are specific for the deacon and archdeacon. In the past, no one was able to enter the sanctuary except the bishops, priests and deacons (that is, the deacons and archdeacons). Christian King, who were anointed by the Myron, were also permitted entry.

He is responsible for sharing with the bishop or priest, in all the ritual prayers, such as Baptism, Myron, Lakkon, Consecration of the church, Ordinations, and the ritual celebrations of feasts and others.

The Rite of the Ordination of Deacon

The ordination takes place after the Reconciliation Prayer.

After proof and documentation from the priest and congregation that the elected person is worthy, the deacon stands before the altar, without a tunic, and bows his head reverently.

All say the Thanksgiving Prayer, followed by the bishop raising incense in the four directions.

Facing east, the bishop prays, "O Almighty Lord ... accept the deaconship of Your servant (...name) standing awaiting Your heavenly gift."

The archdeacon then says this declaration: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect our weakness, and come upon ... (name)."

Facing west, the bishop places his right hand on the Deacon's head while praying, "O Master Lord the Pantocrator, show Your face to Your servant (...name) who came forward to the deaconship ... Fill him with Your Holy Spirit, wisdom and power ..."

Facing east, the bishop prays, "Yes Lord make him worthy for the call of deaconship ..." followed by, "Lord look upon us and to our service, purify us from every blemish and send from heaven Your grace to Your servant (...name) to become worthy to accomplish Your service blamelessly."

Facing west, the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the Deacon's forehead, with his thumb three times, saying, "... (name) Deacon for the altar of the church (name of parish)..."

"Blessed is God the Father, Amen"

"Blessed in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen"

"Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, Amen."

At this point, the Holy Spirit dwells upon him and gives him gifts of the service.

The bishop faces east and prays saying: "Thank You O Master Lord ... for the mystery of deaconship (the laying on of hands) which is given to Your servant (...name) through the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him. Straighten the call of his election by purity and the grace of Your goodness."

Facing west, the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the service vestments, the tunic and stole, then dresses him, placing the stole on his left shoulder, while saying: "Glory and honor to the all Holy Trinity: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Peace and edification for the one, holy, universal and apostolic church of God. Amen."

The bishop then gives the commandment for him saying: "My son you are entrusted for this service, so you must fulfill what is given to you ... "

The deacon enters the sanctuary, prostrates before the altar, and stands on the right side of the altar, while the deacons are sing the 'Worthy' hymn.

He shares with the responses of the divine Liturgy, from inside the sanctuary, then at the end of the Mass, receives the Holy Communion.

After the bishop receives the precious Blood, he breathes into his face saying: "Accept the Holy Spirit."

A procession is made for him in joy of this grace.

The Deacon's Vestments

The complete Deacon (Diacon) and Archdeacon (leader of deacons) wear the tunic and a red stole signifying the cleansing by the Blood of Christ. The stole must hang on the left shoulder which denotes carrying the cross. The hem of the stole symbolizes the angel's wings, as St. John Chrysostom said: "Notice the spiritual joy, you who resemble angels by wearing the nice stoles that is placed on your left shoulders."

The deacon and archdeacon may wear special head coverings which are decorated by crosses and images of Christ and the Saints. Whilst there are still some deacons who maintain his tradition, it is not quite so common nowadays. However, it is preferable for the Deacon to wear this covering, for it is an old church tradition.

Rules for Deacons and Archdeacons

If he is unmarried before his ordination, he must remain unmarried afterwards.

If he was married before his ordination, and his wife passed away after his ordination, he is not permitted to re-marry, just like in the case of the priest. Should he re-marry, he will lose his rank as Deacon.

The Ritual and Spiritual Duties of Deacons

All deacons, regardless of rank must :

Care to study the Coptic language, for it is paramount in all church rites, readings, hymns and praises. It is much better for the deacons to be able to read the Coptic language, instead of reading Coptic written in English/Arabic letters.

They must take care to learn the hymns, and recite them continually.

Discipleship should occur with a church's hymnist under the direction of a capable and experienced deacon.

They must partake in all liturgies and praises (tasbeha).

They must attend the Mass early. Any deacon who comes after the Servants Absolution has no right to wear the tunic and serve. If he comes after the Liturgy's Gospel, he must not receive the Communion.

Deacons, whether they are serving outside or especially inside the altar, must wear the tunic every mass. If a deacon has served in the Mass and wore his tunic, he must receive Communion. It is a grave mistake for a deacon to wear the tunic, serve in the Mass and not receive Communion.

Before the deacon wears the tunic, he must take it to the priest who will make the sign of the cross on it. This sign of the cross, made by the priest, is important for the following reasons:

It is considered as the priest granting permission for the deacon to serve in the Mass.

It is considered as permission granted for the deacon to receive Holy Communion.

It is a declaration that this deacon abides by the church laws (that is, has not been excommunicated).

It reflects an image of the obedience of the deacon to the priest, "The lesser is blessed by the better" (Hebrews 7:7).

During the blessing, the deacon bows his head, or kneels, holding his tunic and stole, awaiting to accept the sign of the cross, and blessing from the priest.

The deacon then kisses the cross and the priest's hand.

While dressing in the service vestments, the deacon says Psalms 29 and 92: "I will exalt You O Lord" and "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty"

The deacon is not to wear the tunic outside, for it is for church service only.

The tunic may only be taken off at the end of the Mass, following the dismissal of the sacrifice's

angel, and not before.

While taking off the service vestments, the deacon says Psalm 47: “O clap your hands O you people!”.

All deacons must take care to attend the vespers and Midnight Praises (Tasbeha).

Every deacon must have a confession father, and practice confession once a month. They should receive Holy Communion in every Mass they serve in.

During the distribution of the Holy Communion, the choir deacons must alternate to give each other a chance for receiving the Holy Communion.

Deacons must hold candles during the following occasions:

While the priest is choosing the Lamb, until the chosen Lamb is placed on the paten, and the wine is poured into the chalice.

While reading the Gospel of the Liturgy.

From the moment when the priest says, “The Holy Body...” to the end of the Confession.

Following the commemoration of saints, the deacon must not take the censor full of incense out amongst the congregation and blow incense in their faces, for this distracts them from worshipping and concentrating on the sacrifice upon the altar.

No deacon is to talk to fellow deacons during the divine Liturgy or enter and exit the sanctuary for no reason.

In every church, there must be an archdeacon, or senior deacon (according to his ordination), who is responsible for the organization and orderly service of deacons.

A weekly meeting must be held whereby deacons learn and study the church rites, dogmas, hymns and spiritual matters. The readings and service inside and outside the sanctuary must be distributed amongst the deacons according to their ranks and ability of service and reading.

The deacon who is absent from the Mass, or does not wear the tunic, must wait his turn the next time he participates as deacon during the Mass.

Under the direction of the archdeacon or senior co-coordinator, the readings during feasts and major occasions should be distributed, as a reward, amongst deacons who regularly attend Masses and church services, all around the year.

If, for some reason, penance was imposed on a deacon, he must be obedient and comply without complaint or pride, and so hence learn the ethics of the service of deacons, its value and spirituality.

The deacon must not be boastful with his voice when saying the responses of the liturgy, or hymns, or the readings, but rather, he must respond reverently and humbly.

The deacon must not be boastful or dominating over his fellow deacons, but deal with all in love.

The deacon must not smoke or drink alcohol, or be a stumbling block unto others.

The deacon must take care not to commit sins of the tongue, such as insulting, swearing, lying, and gossiping. For in taking care, God will accept his service and prayers, for, “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and curses. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:10). Blessing is praising and praying, while cursing is insulting, swearing and so on.

Every deacon must be committed to all the conditions and duties of his relevant rank, whether it be the style of wearing the stole, or service inside and outside the sanctuary, and the recitation of readings.

Apart from his service as deacon must in involved in other spiritual services in church, such as service in Sunday Schools and other meetings, for a deacon is a servant full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and knowledge, and not some sort of parrot mechanically reciting responses and hymns.

Every deacon must try to perform the social and spiritual advises that our teacher St. Paul ordered all ranks of deacons (1Timothy 3:8-12) “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and

great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1Timothy 3:13).

32-The deacon must be knowledgeable about various ecclesiastical subjects, not only ritual matters.

The priest, or archdeacon, or senior co-coordinator must care to perform all these duties and abide by the conditions so that the deacons may offer a blessed service which is useful and their prayers acceptable : “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

ARCHDEACON

‘Archdeacon’ is a Greek word composed of two parts : ‘Arch’ meaning ‘leader’, and ‘Diakon’ meaning ‘deacon’. Hence, ‘archdeacon’ mean ‘the leader of deacons’.

Conditions of Ordination of an Archdeacon

To be well knowledgeable and experienced in regards to the holy books, and totally learned and experienced concerning the work of the Psaltos, Ognostis, Epideacon, and Deacon, for all these ranks are lead by the archdeacon.

He must be well learned concerning church Rites and hymns for all church occasions.

He must be no younger than 28 years of age.

He must be known for his virtues, good conduct, and good deeds.

He must be recommended by the choir and the congregation.

The Responsibilities of an Archdeacon

He must lead all the ranks of deacons, specifying their roles and responsibilities, and managing

their needs.

He must become like the ear and eye of the bishop, informing him about the situations of the congregation, day by day.

He presents those who have been chosen for the various ranks of deacons.

The Rite of Ordination of an Archdeacon

The ordination takes place after the Reconciliation Prayer.

He kneels before the sanctuary, bowing his head.

The bishop hears the recommendation of the congregation concerning the elected.

The bishop prays, "O great and merciful God ... send the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon Your servant (...name), who is called for the leadership of deacons ... fill him with wisdom and power like Stephen the first leader of deacons."

In being an Archdeacon, he has the permission to:

Hold the chalice of the Precious Blood of the Blameless Lamb.

Serve the orphans and widows.

Care for the believers. Teach those who need to be taught, rebuke those who need rebuking, scold the disobedient, bring back to the church those who are lost, and organize the service of deacons.

Serve the strangers.

Become an example for everyone in the church.

The deacon responds, "Let us pray," and the congregation reply, "Lord have mercy."

The bishop prays, "Now also our King we ask and entreat Your Goodness, O lover of man, for Your servant (...name) to make him worthy for the call of leadership of deacons by the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him ..."

The bishop makes the sign of the cross on him three times, then dresses him with the service vestments, which are the tunic and stole, as he did at the ordination of the deacon.

The Archdeacon then enters into the tabernacle and attends the Mass, partaking in the responses.

Finally, he receives the Holy Mysteries.

A procession is made for him in the church, for rejoicing in this eminent rank.

His Vestments: Same as the Deacon's vestments.

The Rules: Same as the Deacon's rules.

The Rite of Undoing the Deacon's Waistband (stole)

There is a specific rite for undoing the waistband for deacons, done at the end of the Mass and procession in church for the new deacons.

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, raising of Pauline incense, and prays Psalm 50. Then the deacons chant the hymn "Censer of Pure Gold", followed by a deacon reading the first Pauline epistle to the Bishop Timothy (3:8-10).

The hymn "Holy God" is sung, followed by the Litany of the Gospel.

"Praise the name of the Lord, O you servants of the Lord! you who stand in the house of the Lord" (Psalm 133:1), followed by the gospel reading from St John. It tells about love which is the foundation of every service and every rank established for the service (17:24-26).

One of the priests says the Litanies of Peace, and Fathers, then the bishop says the Litany of Gatherings.

This is followed by the Orthodox Creed, then the supplication: "We ask and entreat Your goodness O lover of mankind, to make Your servant worthy of the community of deacons ... bless him ... abide in him ..."

After the commandment is read, the bishop unties the deacon's waist band.

Unfortunately this rite is no longer performed, and most for the time, the deacon's waist band is now undone without any prayers.

DEACONNESSES IN THE CHURCH

In the early church there were deaconesses helping the Apostles, and later they served with the bishops and priests in various services. Initially, the service was only available to widowed women over the age of sixty. The Apostolic Canons imposed a condition that deaconess must be virgin, or widow, and over the age of sixty.

St. Paul cared about the subject of widowed deaconesses in the first church and wrote about them in the fifth chapter of his first epistle to his disciple Timothy. According to our teacher St. Paul, the conditions for a successful deaconess are :

A widow who has been the wife of one man (1 Timothy 5:9), or virgin.

If a widow, she must not be under sixty years, so that she not become a stumbling block in the service, because of her youthfulness, or intention of remarrying.

She must be recognized for her virtuous deeds, manners, and previous service. "If she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she diligently followed every good work, with a reputation for good works, if she has brought up children."

Examples of these successful deaconesses are : Phoebe, who was commended by St. Paul for the

church of Rome, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church of Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also” (Romans 16:1,2).

She wrote the epistles to the Romans, as dictated by our teacher St. Paul, and carried it to the believers in Rome.

We also hear about other deaconesses, and a disciple of St. Paul, called Tekla. She believed, was baptized and became a disciple of St. Paul who assigned her for service in Iconia, her original homeland. She faced many tribulations and torture, but the Lord saved her every time, she spent all her life in service. Then when she was eighty years old, she secluded herself for meditation, then peacefully passed away in old age, after a long and faithful service.

The Greek Sixaxarium praised her saying, “Hail to St. Tekla who was martyred without shedding blood!” The Coptic church celebrates her death on the 23rd of Tut every year. The blessing of her prayers may be with us. Amen.

From the thirteenth century, the service of consecrated deaconesses in church was abolished, but due to the urgent need for the service of women in church, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, decided to revive this rite, on the Feast of Pentecost in 1981, by consecration of a large number of deaconesses for the service of Cairo churches. Today, many bishops have also consecrated deaconesses for the service within their dioceses.

During the Holy Synod meeting on the feast of Pentecost in 1992, the Synod established certain rites and conditions, pertaining to the order of Consecration for the Consecrated Deaconess. The following are some points:

It is well known that the rank of deaconess in church is not a priestly rank. There is no Priesthood for women. St. Mary the mother of the Incarnated God and the Lady of the heavenly and earthly did not have any priestly rank, although she was a spiritual mother for the apostles and was accompanying them in service.

The ranks of deaconesses are similar to those of deacons that is Ognostis, Epideacon, and Deacon, corresponding to Consecrated, Assistant Deaconess, and Deaconess.

The rite is called the ‘Rite of Consecration of the Consecrated.’

The consecration, which is done by a bishop, is performed without the laying on of hands, which is different from priestly ordinations.

These prayers take place in a private mass for women as their service is not for the entire congregation, but for a specific sector of them.

Unlike the deacons, their prayers do not take place after the Reconciliation Prayer, so they are not considered as priestly dedication.

Consecration takes place after the morning raising of incense, and starts by the bishop saying, “... (name), Consecrated / Assistant Deaconess for ... “

The consecration of a Deaconess is accomplished by the bishop saying: “We call you (...name) a deaconess for the Holy Coptic Orthodox Church of God.” But for the rank of Consecrated and Assistant Deaconess, the words “We call you” are omitted.

The signs of the cross are done without mentioning their consecration for a particular church.

If there is a meeting for children or women, she may teach, but cannot teach men in church or a common meeting attended by men. This is according to the commandment of our teacher St. Paul, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:12).

In private masses for nuns or consecrated women, they are not permitted to read the epistles, only the priest or deacon may do so.

Consecration of the consecrated is done by the bishop, and the priest has no right for consecration in his church without the knowledge of the bishop, as the bishop is responsible for the consecration, not the priest.

The Rite of Consecration of the Consecrated Women in the Coptic Orthodox Church

The person approaching for consecration reads the appropriate undertaking, then stands before the sanctuary bowing her head humbly.

1. Undertaking of the Consecrated and Assistant Deaconess

“I the weak ... request my acceptance in the way of consecration for the Coptic Orthodox Church, undertake before the altar of God, and before our father His Holiness Pope ... / His Grace the Metropolitan / His Grace the Bishop, to commit to the commandments of the Holy Bible and the Coptic Orthodox dogma, practicing the Sacrament of Confession and Communion, striving in spiritual life, faithfulness in responsibility, good dealing with others and submission to church leadership, represented by His Holiness Pope ... / His Grace Metropolitan / His Grace the Bishop ...”

“For as I receive the blessing of being dressed in this garment, ... today, the ...(date) do undertake that the continuation of my dressing is conditional to my commitment to the way of consecration to the end, by the grace of God.”

Bowing her head, she asks, “Please pray for me. Absolve me, and bless me, my master Your Holiness Pope ... / Your Grace Metropolitan / Your Grace Bishop.”

This is followed by the Lord’s Prayer and the Thanksgiving Prayer.

The bishop then says the following prayers:

2. The Prayers

“O Lord, wise in His counseling, who created human beings in Your likeness and image: male and female, He created and blessed. We ask You Lord hear us and have mercy upon us.” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“Lord who granted sonship to Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron, and to Deborah, Kalda, Anna

daughter of Phanael, and allowed Philip the preacher to have virgin

daughters who prophesy, we ask You Lord hear and have mercy upon us.” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“You who poured Your Holy Spirit on men and women altogether and gave them talents of the Spirit ... We ask You Lord hear us and have mercy upon us.” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“Lord who permitted Mary Magdalene to tell Your saintly Apostles about Your glorious resurrection and who allowed Phoebe to become a deaconess in Your Holy church ... as You allowed in the past, Lord allow today, those in Your service, and make us worthy to fulfill this service without falling into condemnation before You, and pour the grace of your Holy Spirit upon them by the grace and compassion ...”

“Lord God who does not reject women who come forward by the divine will to serve with good intention, and call them Your servants. Grant the grace of Your Holy Spirit to Your maid servants, these who will to give themselves to You, to fulfill Your service, as You granted the grace of this service to Your servant Phoebe, whom You called for work in Your church, so she was a helper to Your servant St. Paul the apostle ... Pour on them Your holy gifts, by the grace and compassion...”

“O eternal Lord, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look now to Your maid servants, those called for the service of consecration. Give them the Holy Spirit and purify them from all blemishes of body and soul, to be worthy to fulfill the work which You give them.”

“Glory and worship are due to You and Your Only Begotten son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.”

“O Lord, Holy Almighty God, who sanctified women by the birth of Your Only Son from the Virgin St. Mary, we ask You Lord ...”. All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“You who granted the grace of the Holy Spirit, not only to men but to women too. Now Lord look unto Your maid-servants, call them to service and pour upon them the gift of Your Holy Spirit. Keep them in the Orthodox Faith to accomplish Your service continually, without blame according to Your joy. Glory, honor and worship are sent to You O Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“O Holy God on high, looking to the humble, You who chose the strong and weak, and dignified those in humbleness, Lord send the grace of Your Holy Spirit to Your maid-servants empower them by Your righteousness, so that if they act by Your commandments, and serve in the house of Your holiness, they become Yours, vessels gifted for Your glorification. Grant them power O Lord, to act joyfully according to Your teachings that You drew as a rule for their service. Lord give them the Spirit of meekness, power, praise, bearing and patience, so if they carry Your yoke with joy and struggle patiently, they will be granted the crowns of service.”

O Lord who knows our weakness, perfect Your maid-servants to serve women, visit the patients and those who do not come to church, serve the poor and needy, help on the Baptismal day of adult women, teach the catechumens, organize women in church, empower them for edification

and good example. Sanctify them and enlighten them. Give them wisdom, as You are blessed and glorified O Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

“Lord listen to our prayers and send the blessing of Your Holy Spirit to them, to accomplish Your service without falling into condemnation, and become an example of holy life. Bless them Lord whom You bought by Your Precious Blood ...” All respond, “Lord have mercy.”

The deacon begins, “From the Lord we ask ...”, and the Bishop completes the prayer, “For the peace of the holy, universal. Apostolic church”, followed by the response, “Lord have mercy.”

Deacon: “From the Lord we ask...”, Bishop: “For the service of women in church, and poor sick and catechumens”, all respond, “Lord have mercy.”

Deacon: “From the Lord we ask...”, Bishop: “For those coming forward for the service of consecration, commanded from those presenting them, for the Lord to grant them grace and power, bless their service as He blessed Phoebe before”, followed by the response, “Lord have mercy.”

“And finally, make us worthy to pray thankfully, ‘Our Father who art in heaven ...’”

Then the bishop makes the sign of the cross (without laying of hands), three times, saying each time: “(...name) consecrated for the holy Coptic Orthodox Church of God, In the name of the Father ...”, then blesses the service garments (making the sign of the cross on them three times) for them to be clothed.

The Bishop then says the following commandment :

“Blessed daughter know that the Lord chose you for the service of consecration for the Holy Church, keep the commandment. Watch always to be blameless, to keep the consecration garment undefiled. Fill your mouth with praise, be always in the fullness of grace through the Holy Sacraments. Be obedient to your father the bishop, and whoever guides you into the way of God. Keep faithfully the dogma and the service to which you are entrusted from the church and may the Lord empower you by His grace, and count you amongst the wise virgins, the blessed brides of Christ.”

At the end of the Mass, they receive the Holy Communion.

Assistant Deaconess

The consecrated person may be promoted to an Assistant Deaconess after at least five years from the date of the Rite of her consecration. Her good manners, obedience, dedication, service and experience are considered with the extent of the efficiency of her work and readiness for the completion of the way of consecration.

If her promotion to an Assistant Deaconess is approved, the following Rite is performed for her:

Rite of Consecration of an Assistant Deaconess

Consecration prayers are performed after the matins (morning raising of incense in a private mass attended by women only).

Those called for consecration read their special undertaking, previously noted, before the door of the sanctuary, bowing their heads humbly. The bishop prays a thanksgiving prayer, then they stand together while he raises the incense, then starts the prayers of consecration as follows...

“O Master, Almighty Lord, wise in His counseling, powerful in His deeds, who created man in His image and likeness, created them male and female and blessed them.”

“We ask and entreat Your goodness O lover of mankind, to accept and bless Your maid-servants coming forward to You humbly, and make them worthy for the service of consecration for the rank of assistant deaconess to help the deaconess with several services specified for them, to serve You with faithfulness and purity to the last breath... By the grace, compassion and love of mankind ...” All respond, “Lord have mercy” three times.

“O God who gave sonship to Mary the sister of Moses, Deborah and Kalda and Anna daughter of Phanuel, and poured on them the talents of the Holy Spirit and made them worthy to serve You an acceptable service. Accept Your maid-servants and pour upon them the talents of Your Holy Spirit, to live a life of consecration and community with all love, peace and faithfulness, and help the deaconesses in the women’s service. Accept their service as a fragrance of incense before You, as You accepted the service of wise women dedicated for the service of the tabernacle, whom You arose their hearts by wisdom so they waved by their hands and brought blue and purple scarlet yarn and fine linen thread necessary for the tabernacle (Exodus 25:37). Keep them by Your right hand from the tribulations and traps of Satan, enemy of all righteousness... By the grace, compassion and love of mankind...” All respond, “Lord have mercy” three times.

“O Master Lord Jesus Christ our God, who was incarnated from the Virgin and holy saint Mary and made her Queen of the heavenly and earthly. You who accepted the service of the women who followed You, believed in You like Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob and Joses, the mother of Zebedee’s sons, Joanna the wife of Chuja, and Susanna and many others who provided for You” (Matthew 27, and Luke 8).

“You who accepted the service of the spikenard that was made by Mary the sister of Lazarus, and You praised her and defended her” (John 12).

“You who accepted the two mites of the poor widow, and praised her as she faithfully gave all that she had, her whole livelihood” (Mark 12).

“You who sent Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to preach Your Sainly apostles of Your Glorious Resurrection.”

“You who filled the daughters of Philip the preacher by Your Holy Spirit and granted them the grace of sonship and accepted the service of Phoebe, the deaconess of the church of Canchrea, and Tekla the disciple of Your great apostle Paul.”

“Accept the service of Your maid-servants, grant them the grace of the Holy Spirit, and purify them from all blemishes of body and soul to accomplish reverently the service that the church

gives them.”

“Keep them in the Orthodox faith to fulfill Your service blamelessly according to the joy of Your goodness as glory and honor are due to You for ever Amen.” All respond, “Lord have mercy”, three times.

“O Holy God living on high and looking to the humble, look now from the loftiness of Your heaven to Your maid-servants. Empower them by Your truth. Keep them by Your grace. Bless them by Your Holy Spirit to walk in Your service faithfully and joyfully according to Your goodness.”

“Grant them the spirit of humbleness, chastity, purity, power, endurance, bearing, meekness, to endure joyfully Your holy yoke, and fight patiently in the struggle placed before them. And when they have fought the good fight, finished the race and have kept the faith, finally there is laid up for them the crowns of righteousness that are incorruptible and undefiled and that do not fade away... By the grace, compassion and love...” All respond, “Lord have mercy” three times.

The bishop then makes the sign of the cross on them three times (without laying of hands), saying “...(name) an assistant deaconess in ... In the name of the Father ...” He then makes the sign of the cross on her garments three times before she dresses in them.

They then receive the Holy Communion at the end of the Mass.

THE DEACONNESS

The assistant deaconess is promoted to deaconess after five years of her consecration as assistant deaconess. This promotion is done according to her good manners, obedience, dedication, experience in service, the efficiency of her work and her readiness to complete the way of consecration to the end, with the commitment for the life of virginity or widowhood to the last breath. The promotion to the rank of a complete deaconess is decided by the high committee of affairs of consecrated women.

If the bishop and the committee of affairs of consecrated women agree to promote her to a deaconess, the following Rite is performed for her:

The Rite for Consecration of a Deaconess

The prayers of consecration are performed after the morning raising of incense (matins) in a private mass attended only by women.

Those called for the rank of deaconess read their special undertaking, then stand before the Sanctuary reverently and humbly.

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving Prayer and raises incense, before beginning the following prayers from the Apostolic Canons ...

“O Eternal God Father of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, Creator of man and women, who filled Mary, Deborah, Anna and Khelda by Your Holy Spirit, and did not disdain that Your Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ is born of a virgin”

“Now look upon Your servant standing before You, chosen for deaconship. Fill her with Your Holy Spirit. Purify her from every blemish of body and soul.”

“Honor unto You and Your Christ who is with You, and the Holy Spirit, glory and worship forever, Amen”*.

(*The words put together by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III when he consecrated some deaconesses at Pentecost on 14/6/1981).

“O Lord wise in His counseling, who created humans as male and female, created both of them in His own image and likeness and gave them the same blessing and authority over all creatures.”

“Lord who granted sonship to Mary sister of Moses and Aaron, Deborah, Khalda and Anna daughter of Phannuel, and allowed Philip the preacher to have ten virgins who prophesy.”

“You who poured Your Holy Spirit upon men and women together and gave the woman spiritual talents like men.”

“O Lord who sent Mary Magdalene to preach Your saintly apostles of Your glorious Resurrection and allowed Phoebe to become a deaconess in Your Holy church.”

“As You allowed in the past Lord, please allow the woman to share in Your service today and make us worthy to accomplish this service without falling into condemnation before You, and pour the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon Your maid-servants. By the grace and compassion ...”

“O Lord God who does not reject women who give themselves - by the approval of the divine will – to serve in Your holy places, but allowed them to be called Your servants. Give the grace of the Holy spirit to Your maid-servants, those who will to give themselves to You to accomplish Your service, as You gave grace of this service to Your servant Phoebe whom You called to work in Your church, so she became a helper to Your servant Paul the apostle.”

“Pour upon them Your holy talents, by the grace compassion and love ...”

”O eternal Lord Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and woman, who filled Mary, Deborah, Hanna and Khalda of the Holy spirit, who did not disdain for Your Only Begotten Son to be born of a woman. In the tabernacle and the temple You appoint women to guard Your holy doors. Look now upon Your maid-servants, those called for the service of deaconship. Grant them the grace of the Holy Spirit, purify them from every blemish of body and soul, to accomplish worthily the work given to them. Glory and worship are due to You and Your Only Son and the Holy Spirit for ever, Amen.”

“O Lord, Almighty, Holy God who sanctified women by the birth of Your Only Begotten Son from a virgin.”

“O Lord who granted the grace of the Holy Spirit not only to men but to women too.”

“Now Lord look at Your maid-servants, call them to the service and pour unto them the rich talents of Your Holy spirit. Keep them in the Orthodox Faith fulfilling Your service continually without blemish according to Your goodness. Glory, honor and worship are due to You O Father, Son and Holy Spirit. O Holy God looking towards the humble, who chose the weak and strong

and dignified those in humbleness. Send Lord the grace of Your Holy Spirit to Your maid-servants. Empower them by Your truth, so if they obey Your commandments and serve in the house of Your holiness, they become honorable vessels for Your glorification. Give them power, O Lord, to rejoice according to Your teaching that You made as rules for their service. Grant them Lord, the spirit of humbleness, endurance, power and patience so if they carry Your joke with joy and enduring the fight, they may have the crowns of service.”

“Yes, Lord who knows our weakness, perfect Your maid-servants to praise in Your house and serve women, visit the sick and those absent from church, serve the poor and needy, help adult women for Baptism, teach the catechumens and organize women in church. Empower them for edification and good example. Sanctify them. Enlighten them. Encourage them. As You are blessed and glorified, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

“Lord listen to our prayers and send for them blessings from the Holy Spirit to accomplish their service without falling into condemnation, and give an example for holy life.”

“You who gave Anna daughter of Phanuel to spend eighty four years in her widowhood serving blamelessly in the temple. Give Your maid-servants to keep their vows before You, to live in chastity and purity, in obedience to Your commandments and in faithfulness to the service. Grant them to live as brides for You only by the grace of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.”

From the Lord we ask:

“For the peace of the Holy, Universal, Apostolic church (from the Lord we ask), for the service of women in church, the poor, the sick and the catechumens.”

“For those widows and elderly virgins coming forward for the service of diaconship, commended by their churches, for the Lord to grant them grace and power, bless their service as He blessed the service of Phoebe before (From the Lord we ask)”...

“At last make us worthy to pray thankfully, ‘Our Father who art in heaven....’”

Then the bishop makes the sign of the cross three times on each deaconess (without laying of hands), while saying: “We call you (...name) a deaconess in the Holy church. In the name of the Father...”, then blesses the specific service garments (by making the sign of the cross on them three times before they wear them). They then attend the mass and receive the Holy Communion.

Service of Deaconesses in the Church

The deaconess can perform many services in the church, such as:

Helping the priest during the Baptism of elderly adult women (not in the Rite or Prayer but in caring) as the priest has only to place his hand on the baptized woman’s head while she is in the Baptismal font, dipping her thrice in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, then after she gets out of the font, she gets dressed. The priest then comes back and gives her the Sacrament of Myron, anointing only those parts of her body which appear. The presence of a deaconess during the process of a female adult being baptized is preferable, because she may assist her with what should be done before and after Baptism.

Organizing the seating of women in church

Organize those coming for Communion, that is, the deaconess must ensure that they must be Coptic Orthodox Christians who practice confession regularly, also modestly dressed for appearance must be carefully regarded if coming to have the Holy Communion. A woman must cover her head and hold a linen veil in her hand as preparation for Communion. Thus she helps the priest for Communion of women.

Helping in the service of young girls and women in church meetings.

Visiting young girls and women to encourage them to come to church for masses and meetings.

She can help in Sunday School Service by attracting children to come through her tenderness.

She can serve in the church's child care center, for she would be the best person to endure a child, cherish them and help in their upbringing.

She can work and serve in various church social services, such as serving widows, needy and poor.

She can serve the orphans..

She can work and serve in nursing homes, looking after the needs of the elderly, whether it be food, health, cleaning or nursing.

Visitation of sick women, whether at their houses or hospitals, giving them a word of comfort, as well as speaking the word of God. She represents the church in caring for them and tells the priest about cases in need of Communion or visitation.

Supervising women's activities in church, such as sewing, and so on.

Supervising the cleaning of the church and organizing its furniture – except for the sanctuary where no woman can enter.

Supervising administrative departments at the church's or bishopric's clinics.

Supervising youth (girls) houses who are in desperate need of accommodation and care. Their supervision is for their protection and success.

Service of wayward girls who need spiritual care and guidance.

Service of handicapped girls or women, to help them live a normal, spiritual and psychological life.

2- RANK OF PRIESTHOOD

The word 'priest' or 'presbyter', is derived from the Syrian word 'Kashisho' meaning elder, and the Greek word 'Epresvateros' also meaning 'elder'. It is so called due to the significance of his work and reverence given unto him even if he is not yet an old man.

The word ‘elders’ (priest) is mentioned frequently in the New Testament: “They had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23)

“For this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5)

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord ...” (James 5:14)

An elder is a priest of God and a minister of the mysteries of God. He has the authority to administer the Church Sacraments except for the sacrament of ordination (which only the bishop has the right to do).

Usually, the ordination of an elder takes place from the age of thirty, for this is when Christ the Lord started His service. At this age a person will have reached intellectual maturity to help him to manage the service respectfully.

He must be husband of one woman and his marriage correct and legal.

If he is widowed, he should not remarry another woman, for being the father of all women, he cannot marry one of his daughters.

Our teacher St. Paul mentioned in his first epistle to his disciple, Timothy the Bishop (chapter three), many conditions for bishops that also apply to the elders (priest) as their priestly work is one and their pastoral specifications are similar. Of these conditions are, he must be :

Blameless, commended by others

The husband of one wife according to the first divine law.

Sober-minded not lazy.

Self-controlled to serve without trouble, “he must be sober-minded, just, holy, self controlled” (Titus 1:8)

Modest: distinguished by his simplicity in all things; his food, clothing, and so on. The same principle must also apply to his wife and children who must be modest, not extravagant, not known for their disobedience, and not a cause of stumbling for others.

Hospitable to strangers, merciful with the poor and needy who are brothers to the Lord.

Able to teach: as a minister is a teacher and must explain the word of truth rightly, well learned in the Holy Bible and ecclesiastical subjects to nourish his congregation by sound Orthodox doctrine, and fill them by his knowledge, ready to answer any question correctly and exhort all.

Not given to wine as “wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). As drunkenness opposes wisdom and fullness of the Holy Spirit and causes mockery and lack of reverence.

Not violent, for a priest must gather people through fatherly love, not dominate them by terror.

Not greedy for money: the minister must not care or strive in collecting money by any means, for in so doing, he degrades himself amidst people, and leads himself to serve the rich and disregard the poor. Hence, his service is unacceptable before God and blamed by people who will spread rumors against him, and this will destroy the dignity of priesthood, for, “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which draw men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:9,10).

Like his master Jesus Christ, he must be gentle, not quarrelsome. For Christ, “will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruise reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench” (Matthew 12:19,20).

Must be gentle and considerate while dealing with the congregation and servants. he must not be proud and a generator of troubles and strife, for these qualities do not suit a common Christian, let alone a minister, who is to have a gentle spirit. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, with patience and humility, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God will grant them repentance that they may know the truth

He must rule his own house well, for if a man does not know how to rule his own house how will he take care of the church of God? For the house is a small church and the father is the head of the family and its first provider and guardian. If he runs his household efficiently, and his family live in the fear of God, fulfilling the Biblical commandments and church teachings, his family will become content, and so he will prove his ability as a leader, which is an important quality of a successful minister.

His children should be obedient and revering, for children are a mirror image of their parents and proof of their ability (or inability) for correct, ecclesiastical, evangelical, and Christian upbringing. If the children live righteously in obedience to their parents, holding fast Christian principles as they have learned from their parents, this is proof of the success of their father who is being recommended for priesthood, “having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination” (Titus 1:6).

He must be faithful and not puffed up with pride. He must be known and experienced in his service in the church. He must be able to carry the yoke of Christ humbly and patiently, so that he does not fall into condemnation and become a stumbling block in the service, but rather, contribute to its growth and progress. He must be a source of comfort and joy for the people, rather than a cause for worry. He must bring people back to the church, instead of driving them away.

The difference between the bishop and the minister is that the bishops have the right to appoint priests (right of laying on of hands). Our teacher St. Paul says to his disciple Titus, the Bishop of Crete: “...that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as commanded you” (Titus 1:5).

He also says to his disciple Timothy, the Bishop of Ephesus: “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily,

nor share in other people's sins" (1 Timothy 5:22). The church canonical laws mentions that the priest is to be appointed by one bishop, but the bishop is to be appointed by the laying on of hands of no less than two or three bishops (headed by the Patriarch of course).

The bishop has the right to judge priests, as St. Paul said to his disciple Bishop Timothy to justify such judgments, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19).

The bishop has the right to reward elders, as St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy in the same epistle: "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).

RANKS OF PRIESTHOOD

There are three ranks of priesthood:

- Priest
- Archpriest (hegomen)
- Khoori Episcopos

The Priest

This is the first and essential priestly rank.

Priest means elder and also an intercessor in the holies of God for the congregation.

He is a presbyter who has the right to administer all the church sacraments except the laying on of hands and appointing priestly ranks, which is the right of a bishop or overseer or someone above him.

He is a teacher who teaches the people the word of God and leads them to the way of God, virtues, mysteries of the religion, and explains the dogmas and rites and details the word of truth, "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7).

He is a father who pastors his children compassionately, visits them with tender care and love as he is zealous for the salvation of the souls of his people and leading them to Christ, as his salvation is related to their salvation, "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8). He humbly serves them as a servant to a master as Lord Christ washed the feet of His disciples, so his service is successful and acceptable before God and people too.

The Rite of Ordination of the Priest

If a servant, who was not previously a deacon, is recommended for the rank of a priest by the elders and congregation, and is commended for his humility and manners, successful service and good deeds, and being learned in doctrine, and married according to the law of the Gospel, then he is ordained for this rank as it is a perfect rank of deaconship.

After the Reconciliation Prayer, he stands before the sanctuary, faces the congregation and recites, after the priest, the specific undertaking of the priest. The text follows :

Undertaking of the new priest

“I, the weak ... called for the grace of priesthood for the altar of the church of ... in the suburb ... of the city ... undertake before God the Lord of hosts and the Pastor of all pastors before His angels and saints, and before my father, His Holiness Pope ..., and the clergymen and congregation, to stand fast in the Orthodox Faith till the last breath, and to respect the canonical rules of the Holy church, and to keep its Tradition, Rites and Teachings. I undertake to love the flock, deal tenderly and wisely with them. I will sacrifice myself to visit and care for the congregation to the best of my ability, to seek the lost and return them, to gather the sheep of God who are scattered. I shall not neglect the disabled and push aside those who have no one to remember them, I will be patient and cheerful in dealing with people, I shall have no selected group but I shall care for all.

I undertake to place the benefit of the church above every other consideration, and to avoid love of possession and love of the greater share. I will not pride on the congregation, nor neglect them or ask them beyond their endurance, or order them to disobey God’s commandment, I shall not reject a returning repentant or fall short of serving any of them.

I undertake to submit to the leadership of priesthood represented by His Holiness Pope ..., with my respect and reverence to his partners in the apostolic service the fathers the Metropolitans and Bishops.

I ask the Lord to grant me power by your prayers, to fulfill this serious responsibility and perform faithfully all the work of the grand priesthood required of me.

Pray for me my fathers and saintly brothers.

This is a prostration for all of you.”

Then he stands before the sanctuary facing east and wearing the robe of deacons and bowing his head before the altar and the bishop.

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving Prayer with the attendants together, then raises incense in the four directions, after saying the mystery of the Pauline incense.

He prays this prayer while facing the east: “O Lord of hosts who gave us entry to this service ... accept before You the perfect priesthood of Your servant (...name) standing awaiting Your heavenly gifts.”

The archdeacon says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ perfecting our weakness come upon (...name).”

The bishop prays facing the east: “Yes Lord make him worthy for the call of priesthood ...”

The bishop looks towards the west and places his right hand on his head and prays saying: “O Master Lord Pantocrator ..., look at Your servant (...name) who came to priesthood by the recommendation of those who brought him, fill him by the Holy Spirit, grace and counseling to

help and provide for Your people with a pure heart.”

He then continues saying: “Yes Lord hear us, grant him a spirit of wisdom to be filled by healing deeds and doctrinal words to teach Your people meekly and adore You purely ...”

Then he looks towards the east praying, “Lord look upon us and our service, and purify us from all blemish and send Your grace from heaven upon Your servant to be worthy to accomplish Your priesthood straight forwardly.”

The bishop looks towards the west, makes the sign of the cross on the ordained with his forefinger while saying, “We call you to the Holy church of God. Amen.”

The archdeacon says this declaration: “(...name), the new priestly name, a priest for the Holy altar of the church of ..., at the city (or village) that love the Lord Christ.”

NOTES: It seems that the archdeacon used to have a prominent position, as he was the first one to pronounce the newly-ordained priest by name.

The bishop makes the sign of the cross on the new priest three times, and each time saying, “We call you (...name) a priest for the Holy altar of the church of ... in the city of ...”

The first signing: “In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Blessed be God the Father the Pantocrator. Amen.”

The second signing: “Blessed be His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The third signing: “Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Amen.”

The bishop makes the sign of the cross on the priestly vestments and dresses him in them amidst the cheer of the congregation and the ‘Worthy’ (Aksios) hymn sung by the deacons.

NOTES : The priest’s cloak has no rear fold, different from the bishop’s cloak that has a rear fold.

Then the bishop looks towards the east and prays the following for thanksgiving: “We thank You Master Lord Pantocrator ... walk with this ordination which is for Your servant through the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him, straighten the call of his selection in purity by the grace of Your goodness.”

The bishop reads the commandment for him which is very important. It explains to him his priestly duties and every priest must carefully listen to it and practice every word. It is preferable to keep a copy of the commandment to look at it frequently, to remember his priestly duties, so as not to forget it and deviate from the straight way.

The Priestly Commandment includes:

To teach people by good example and inspiring sermons.

Caring for the congregation as a father not a hireling.

To offer a faithful service and so receive the wages of a faithful steward.

To work for achieving the food of eternal life which does not perish, rather than that which

perishes?

Is diligent in his virtues, and so becomes an example for his congregation.

Continuous growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He must escape from the love of money which is the source of all evil deeds.

He must be aware of drunkenness and bodily lusts as it darkens the enlightened mind and converts a man to a lustful animal.

He must avoid envy and strife, unkindness, mockery and pride, so that he does not lose and destroy his service.

He must avoid gossip, boasting, hypocrisy and pretence, for they are terrible vices which cause problems and make people stumble.

He must avoid being double faced, double tongued, and false witnessing.

He must not frighten or dominate people, but rather, be compassionate and patient.

He must love God and all creation with all his heart and soul.

He must possess the virtues of righteousness, mercy, chastity, humbleness, content, contrition, endurance and patience, resembling his master and teacher Christ Jesus in His virtues and good behavior.

He must not deviate from the true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who is the foundation of religion and by whom all Christians are saved.

He must persevere in studying the Holy Bible, and other ecclesiastical books, canonical rules of the church in all areas.

He must treat the congregation of God with compassion and skill, leading them by the tenderness of Christ, endurance and compassion.

He must care to acquire the first Christian virtue, which is love, by the sincerity of conscience and true witnessing, "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5).

He must care for the Holy Mysteries, especially the sacrament of Communion which are the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Christ Lord, and watch these treasures and gems as the cherubim guarded the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

He must not give the Holy Communion except to the worthy and ready and repentant, whose conscience is pure.

He must refrain from giving Communion to an evil person so that he does not become guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and eats and drinks judgment to himself and (the priest) becomes a partaker in this sin and its penalty.

He should distribute the Holy Body and Blood in order and quietness, must examine the paten

carefully and asks one of the deacons or the partaking priests, with good vision, to look at the paten after the distribution of the Mysteries, wiping the paten with extra care to ensure there are no remaining jewels.

He must have an elderly confession father who is well experienced in spiritual life, to become his disciple, asks for advice and guidance so he may be able to discipline others and teach them out of experience.

He must treat every one of his congregation adequately, so that he who is sick with sin is healed and reaches spiritual health.

Hence, he will be worthy of double reward from God for his love and service, and so will hear at the end of his days, the joyfully voice of Christ saying: “Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

This ends the commandment of the priest

After the ordination and recitation of the commandment, the new priest enters the altar with his right foot first, prostrates before the altar, stands and kisses the cross and the hand of the bishop, then stands at the right of the altar.

The bishop starts the prayer of the Mass and allows the new priest to partake with one of the liturgical prayers like the commemoration or others.

At the recitation of the last confession in the Mass, which contains the essence of the Orthodox Faith about the nature of Lord Christ, the mystery of incarnation and redemption, the bishop lets the new priest to partake with him in the recitation of this confession, so the new priest washes his hands with water, but the bishop takes the central part of the Holy Body on his left palm and places his right palm over it, then tell the new priest to place his hands around the bishop’s palms that carry the Pure Body of Jesus Christ.

Then the bishop recites the last confession quietly, sentence by sentence, and the new priest repeats after him until the end of recitation of the confession.

The bishop here hands over to the new priest the true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, His incarnation, nature and redemption by the cross, then the sacrifice of His Holy Body and Blood which is an extension of the sacrifice of the cross, and His Body and Blood are given for us as salvation and forgiveness of sins and eternal life to whoever worthily receives them.

The new priest receives the Holy Body and Blood from the bishop.

After receiving the Precious Blood, and before he drinks from the dismissal water the bishop gives the new priest the breath of the Holy Spirit as follows...

The bishop says to the new priest: “Receive the Holy Spirit”, just as the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. 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).

Some sources say the bishop says to the priest: “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it” (Psalm

81:10) and the priest responds, “I opened my mouth and panted” (Psalm 119:131), and opens his mouth so the bishop breathes into it the breath of the Holy spirit and repeats these words and this breath three times.

The breath of the Holy Spirit is used by the priest in all the Sacramental prayers and other prayers, such as praying on a sick person, or blessing oil or water. By the authority of the Holy Spirit, the priest manages the Church and officiates the Sacraments, teaches the congregation and is granted the authority of binding and loosening.

After the Mass and the angel of the Sacrifice is dismissed, the deacons make a procession for the new priest, in the sanctuary and church according to the common procession Rite, while he is still dressed in the white service vestments and holding the cross with a candle in his right hand and the gospel in his left.

NOTES:

He holds the cross for blessing and for officiating the sacraments, and he holds the gospel because he is granted a rank of teaching the Holy Gospel which is the good news, but he holds the candle for the priest is to become a light and enlightenment for his congregation through his teaching and example, then to sacrifice himself for his congregation as the candle sacrifices itself to shed light unto others.

After the procession, the priest undresses the service vestments and the bishop makes the sign of the cross on the black garments and priestly hat, and dresses the priest. The priestly hat is a sign and symbol of priesthood and the priestly crown and honor of his priesthood.

After he accepts the congratulations, he goes to one of the monasteries for retreat and fasts for forty days (as our fathers the apostles fasted after the Holy Spirit descended upon them).

In the monastery, he receives the Rites of the Liturgy and other Sacraments. He learns the Mass and partakes in it daily, he receives the sacrifice, then prays daily Masses to practice the Mass efficiently.

The benefit of fasting and prayers during the retreat, is to stir and kindle the gift of the priesthood and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the new priest, as our teacher St. Paul advised :
“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).

After the forty days, a delegation from the church goes to the monastery to take their new priest to the church where he will be serving, during the time of Vespers. The Rite of Reception of the new priest is performed, where he receives his church and service, to serve with righteousness, zeal and enthusiasm for the salvation of the souls of his congregation.

The Rite of Reception of the New Priest

Upon his arrival to the church, the deacons lead the procession chanting the hymn “O King of Peace”, until he stands before the sanctuary.

The new priest wears the cloak and prays the Thanksgiving Prayer. Then the senior priest hands

the censer to him to raise the incense as usual, proceeding around the altar, praying the mystery of the Vesper's incense, then Litany of Peace, Fathers and for the Congregation.

The deacons meanwhile sing the Verses of the Cymbals according to the order on 'Adam' days by the 'Amoini-marin

oosht' tune, and on 'Watis' days by the 'Ten oosht emeviot' tune.

The priests leave the sanctuary and the new priest remains standing facing east. The new priest offers incense, and then the elder priest takes the censer from him, faces east and raises incense toward the altar, and then toward the new priest.

The priest now prays the Litany of the Deceased, then proceeds into the sanctuary, stepping first with his right foot. Adding one spoonful of incense into the censer, he proceeds around the altar once before leaving the sanctuary and offering incense to the gospel and priests. He then proceeds around the church with the incense and before him two priests carry candles. Meanwhile the deacons sing the doxologies as usual, including the doxology of the twenty four elders, followed by the introduction to the Creed, "We honor you, Mother of True Light" and finally the Orthodox Creed.

The new priest prays "Evnooti-Nai-Nan", and the deacons sing "Kerye-Eleyson". Then they chant the hymn of "Ti-Shoori" and the hymn of the Intercessions then the hymn of "Tenoo-osht emmok".

The Pauline Epistle is read in Coptic, followed by the hymn "Pi-Ehmot-Ghar", meaning 'the grace of God the Father be with you all'. Then the Pauline is read in Arabic, from the readings of 24 Hatoor, the commemoration of the twenty four elders (1 Timothy 5:17 - 6:2). "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "the laborer is worthy of his wages." Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins, keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise can not be hidden. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things". The grace of God the Father be with you all. Amen.

Then the hymn of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, "Pi-Epnevma-Em Paracleton" is chanted.

The hymn "Agios" is said and the new priest prays the Litany of the Gospel and the Gospel is read in Coptic and Arabic (Psalm 132 : 9,10,18 & John 1 : 1-17) and these are from the readings

of 24 Hatoor ...

“Let our priests be clothed with righteousness. For Your servant David’s sake I will prepare a lamp for My anointed, but upon Himself His crown shall flourish” (Psalm 132) Alleluia.

“In the beginning was the Word and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the True Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying” “This was He of Whom I said: ‘He Who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ” And of His fullness we have all received and grace for grace.

For the law was given through Moses but, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1)

Glory be to God for ever, Amen.

Candles are lit by the priests who proceed with the deacons around the altar thrice while singing the hymn “Ni-Ethnos-Teero”.

They then proceed around the church thrice while the new priest carries the Holy Gospel wrapped in a white silk veil, with his wife and priests around him. When they complete the hymn, they say: “Thok-sa-patri...”, followed by “Ek-ezmaraoot”, and “Sheri-pi-goot-Efto-ambers-veveteros”..

The following declaration is said in the Palm Sunday tunes :

“Honor the Lord with me and exalt His Name together. For the grace that you accepted our reverend father ..., guarding us by his prayers, to watch us from the enemy and devil. May you enjoy peace and exaltation our father ... (Name).

Good that you come to us to comfort us by your enlivening words, our father (Name). It is good that you came to us today O chosen by Christ, who resembles angels, our father (Name) to forgive us our sins. (A praise for our dignified father and entrusted presbyter).

Exalt the Lord and glorify His great Name for the grace that is accepted by our blessed father, the priest (Name). Whom God chose and made a teacher and guide and gave him the great priesthood to serve the divine mysteries and gather the congregation for teaching as a mother to her children. Truly our blessed father, the priest of God, you received this great grace and high rank from the

High Priest to teach the flock of Jesus Christ the words of life like our teachers and masters the pure Apostles, because you accepted the Holy breath and became a teacher and guide for the salvation of souls, that is why we praise you saying:

“AKSIOS (thrice), ... Pi-Epres-Vateros” (chanted by the congregation).

The rank of Aaron, Zachariah and Simeon, the priests. Truly this eminent priesthood is better and greater as those fathers and priests had fleshy sacrifices that does not benefit eternal life and the heavenly Father, because what you have been entrusted to, you and your fellow priests, can not be looked at by the angels as our glorious Lord said in His pure Gospel, “Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear” (Matthew 13:17 & Luke 10:24).

Today the children of this church and the Orthodox congregation attending here, are rejoicing, for your pure priesthood that performs prayers and supplications for the forgiveness of the sins of the congregation. Truly great is your lofty rank for Christ who chose you for the service of His pure sanctuary and He entrusted you with His Pure Body and Precious Blood, for this we bless you and say: “AKSIOS (thrice) ... Pi-Epres-vateros.”

We praise you with the pure Apostles saying: “And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4.)

You became a partner with St. Paul who said in his epistle: “Elders who are among you I exhort. I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being Lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1Peter 5 : 1-4).

You, beloved of Christ, do not boast over the congregation of God, but stand fast in perfect love to the congregation of God and be humble as pride is detested before God. Follow the Lord’s words in His holy Gospel, when He said: “Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:25), and St. Paul the teacher of the church saying: “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:14.)

Be very careful in handling and distributing the divine mysteries and do not give it to whoever is unworthy, otherwise if you do give it to an unworthy person, you will be condemned, for the penalty of negligent priests is very grave.

Stand fast with purity , without which no one can see God, so if you fulfill this you become worthy to hear the splendid voice saying: “Well done good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21). And God will help you, exalt you and keep us by your prayers, through the intercessions of the pure Virgin Mother of Light and all the heavenly hosts and the twenty four elders who shine and all the saintly martyrs and by the prayers of all who please the Lord.

Amen.”

The congregation responds chanting “Khen Evran” followed by “AKSIOS ... Pi-Epres-veteros.”

The new priest then gives a sermon.

The priest prays the Litanies of Peace, Fathers, the Church, the Plants, and Congregation, and concludes with the Lord’s Prayer.

One of the senior priests read the three absolutions at the sanctuary’s door and meanwhile the eldest priest places his hand, holding the cross on the head of the new priest and his wife while they are sitting on the chairs at the right of the sanctuary’s door.

Conclusion is as usual, “Amen Alleluia”, followed by the blessing and dismissal.

The Hegomen

The word ‘Hegomen’ or ‘Egomenos’ is derived from the Greek word meaning ‘provider’ or ‘presenter’, and the ‘Egomenos’ is the ‘senior’ or ‘leader’ priest in church. If there are a number of hegomen in the church, then they must consider he who is the oldest in ordination, or the most active and knowledgeable in the rank of hegomen, as the church’s provider and the first responsible person in the church.

During the raising of incense, the priest is given one spoonful of incense, the hegomen two spoonfuls, and the bishop three spoonfuls of incense.

The Rite of the Rank of Hegomen

Hegomen is only a promotional rank from a priest to a hegomen, within the rank of priesthood, and is not considered as a new ordination.

The rite of hegomeny takes place after the Reconciliation Prayer of the Divine Liturgy, as follows ...

The priest selected for the rank of hegomen stands before the sanctuary, dressed in the priestly vestments, bowing his head in submission and reverence.

The bishop prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, raising the incense in the four directions after praying the prayer of the Pauline mystery.

The bishop facing east prays: “O Lord God of hosts who gave us entry to the share of this service ... and accept the perfect hegomeny of Your servant (Name) standing here awaiting Your heavenly gifts ...”.

The archdeacon says the following declaration: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that perfect our weakness ... dwell upon (Name) ... the grace of the Holy Spirit to dwell upon you.”

The congregation say “Amen” thrice.

The priest faces east and prays saying: “Yes Lord make him worthy for the call of hegomeny ...”

The congregation says: “Lord hear us, Lord have mercy on us, Lord bless us.”

The bishop faces the west and places his hand on his head saying: “O Lord God the Pantocrator ... You chose Your servant (Name) to become a father and to provide for Your servants ... Look upon him and bless him and purify him by the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him ... Grant him, our Master, a leading spirit and humbleness, love, endurance and goodness to become acceptable to You.”

NOTES:

The bishop asks God to grant the hegomen a leading spirit to become a leader of priests and provider of the church and a confession father and provider for the congregation, but at the same time asks for love, as leadership and responsibility do not prevent a person to be loving and meek, or does not take responsibility for domination and giving orders proudly.

The bishop faces east and prays saying: “Look upon us Lord and upon our service, and send Your grace from heaven to Your servant ...”

The bishop faces west and makes the sign of the cross, with his thumb, on the hegomen saying: “We call you (Name) a hegomen for the holy house of God, Amen.”

The archdeacon says this declaration: “(Name) Egomenos (hegomen) on the holy altar of the holy, universal, Apostolic church of God, in the city (.....) beloved of Christ.”

The bishop, with his thumb, makes the sign of the cross on his forehead three times, each time saying: “(Name) hegomen for the church ... in the city ...”

The congregation respond each time saying: “Amen”, then chant the “AKSIOS” hymn.

The bishop faces east and prays saying: “We thank You O Lord God the Pantocrator ... walk with the consecration of this hegomeny of Your servant through the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him.”

The bishop then reads the following commandment which is specific for hegomens:

“May you have greatness of care for the words of teaching to manifest it first by your good deeds.”

“May you be vigilant for the souls of your congregation and guide them to good deeds.”

“Rebuke the sinners meekly and cheerfully.”

“Suffer with them as they are your members.”

“Be aware not to let the devil touch the flock (church congregation).”

“Endure the weakness of the weak as St. Paul’s advice: “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself but as it is written “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me” (Romans 15:1-3).”

“To hear that voice saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21).”

After the commandment, he enters into the sanctuary with his right foot first, prostrates before the altar, then stands and kisses the cross and the hand of the bishop. Then the bishop permits him to partake in the Liturgical Prayers, and distributing the Holy Mysteries, and finally, a procession for him takes place, for joy of this rank.

NOTES:

The hegomen fasts for one week after his ordination.

This is for respect of the gift of the Holy Spirit for being granted this rank, as the apostle said: “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).

Khoori - Episcopos

KHOORI-EPISCOPOS is a Greek word meaning ‘bishop’ or ‘villages’ or ‘fields’. He helps the bishop or metropolitan of the diocese in the service and visitation of the villages.

The rank of Khoori-episcopos (or the bishop or overseer) came to existence by the end of the third century AD in Asia Minor when the dioceses extended and their division was not preferred, so there existed an utmost need for the presence for the bishop to visit and care for them.

Members of the Nicene Council in 325 AD included 15 Khoori-episcopos from Asia Minor and Syria.

The rank of Khoori-episcopos disappeared from our Coptic church a long time ago, and was then revived by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III when he ordained some monks to the rank of Khoori-Episcopos to become assistants to some metropolitans and bishops who required them to care for the needs of the service in their large dioceses. His Holiness promoted most of them later on, to general bishops and bishops of dioceses.

The rank of Khoori-Episcopos is unclear in features and specifications, as some consider it a bishopric rank, and it is nearer to the bishopric rank than to priesthood.

Khoori-Episcopos is a word meaning ‘villages’.

The candidate of this rank bears the title ‘Anba’ which is given to bishops or higher.

His choice is fulfilled among monks, just like the bishops.

His crown is like the bishop’s with a very slight difference.

He has authority to ordain various ranks of deacons.

He is a member of the Holy Synod of the church, like the bishops.

His name is mentioned like the bishop, in all prayers and church hymns.

Before the Nicene Council, this rank was for the married, but the Nicene Council restricted it to monks, just like the bishops.

It seems that the rank 'Khoori' or 'clergy', present now in other fellow churches, which is equal to the rank of hegomen in our church, is derived from 'Khoori-Episcopos.'

The fathers Khoori-Episcopos ordained by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, are ordained after the Reconciliation Prayer.

The Rite of ordination of Khoori-Episcopos was not found in the Ritual Books of the Coptic church, it was borrowed from the fellow Syrian church and needs to be Coptimized.

The Lord Christ and the Church Ranks

The Lord Jesus Christ practiced during His service on earth, certain services and practices that became the essence of the church ranks, like:

Ognostos: The most important work of an ognostis is reading the Acts of the apostles in church during the Mass, the Lord Jesus practised the work of an ognostis (reader) when He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord".

Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him (Luke 4:16-20).

Then He began to explain to them these words and clarify to them the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Epodeacon: Most important work is keeping the doors of the church from entry of heretics or false teachers. Lord Jesus practiced this work when {Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves"} Matthew 21:12,13, so He organized the temple and quietness of prayer in it.

Deacon (or servant): Most important work is the service inside the sanctuary during the Divine Liturgy, like responses of the deacon, washing hands of the priests upon choosing the Lamb and at start of Mass.

Lord Jesus practiced the work of the deacon (servant) when "He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet and wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" John 13:5 and said to them: "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger and he who leads as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the one who serves" Luke 22:26,27, as also He said

to them “Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant (deacon) and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28.

Archdeacon (leader of deacons): The most important work is managing the rank of deacons and distributing the deeds for service among them.

Lord Jesus practiced the work of an archdeacon when He distributed the service among His disciples, saying in the first mission: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying ‘The Kingdom of heaven is at hand’” Matthew 10:5-7. “The Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Luke 10:1. Then He sent His pure apostles to the whole world saying: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”. Mark 16:15.

The presbyter (elder or priest): The most important work is performing the Mass, sanctification of the Mysteries, giving the congregation of the Holy Body and Precious Blood. Lord Christ practiced the rank of a presbyter when He sanctified the Bread and Wine and transubstantiated them into His Holy Body and Blood and gave them to His disciples on covenant Thursday few hours before His arrest and crucifixion “Jesus took bread, blessed it and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My Body’. Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them” ‘This is My Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many’ and when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” Mark 14:22-26.

The hegomen or egomenos: The most important work is providing the church matters and organizing its various services with spiritual provision of the church congregation and servants. As the word hegomen means provider.

Lord Christ practiced the rank of hegomen or provider when He managed all the matters of the first church, and provided for living matters of His disciples and their service too.

As the disciples had a money box of donations to spend for their needs of the service, supervised by the Good Teacher. When the Lord said to Judas Iscariot “What you do, do quickly. But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that had said to him: ‘Buy those things we need for the feast’, or that he should give something to the poor.” John 13:27-29

As Lord Christ was guiding him in common circumstances as the money box was with him.

7- Bishop (overseer and pastor): Most important work of the bishop is pasturing the congregation, teaching them and keeping them in the church and Faith.

Lord Christ practiced this work as He was wandering through cities and villages teaching guiding and visiting people who “were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd” Matthew 9:36.

He raised them by His sermons and guidance “He went about doing good and healing all who

were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” Acts 10:38.

He cared physically and spiritually for people, teaching them and healing their sickness, and does not let them go away hungry lest they fail in the way but feeds them miraculously by five loaves and two fish (Luke 9:13). He said “I am the good Shepherd and I know my sheep and am known by My own gives his life for the sheep” John 10:14,11.

And our teacher St. Peter says: “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (Means Christ Lord)” 1Peter 2:25.

(8) THE PATRIARCH

He has the high leadership of priesthood. He ordains bishops to become his partners in the Apostolic Service. The ordination is usually by the laying on of hands and the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Christ practiced this work of the patriarch when He “Lifted up His Hands and blessed them (the pure apostles).” Luke 24:50. And when “He breathed on them and said to them Receive the Holy Spirit. 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. And also He said to them: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” Matthew 18:18, so He gave them the authority of binding and loosening in the church.

So we find Lord Christ practiced all the priestly ranks and jobs despite their variation to establish and bless them, and so that every person may find in any priestly rank of Jesus Christ, a good example to follow its light and resemble His Master and Teacher Jesus Christ, and knows that however small his rank is, it is not lowly as Lord Christ practiced it by Himself, so he cares for his rank and service, and does not neglect the gift taken by him to serve as the faithful steward who awaits the good reward from Lord Christ in His second dreadful and glorious coming.

Glory, be to Him in His church. Amen.

RANK OF BISHOP

+ This is the highest rank of priesthood and its owner has the perfection of priesthood and leadership of priesthood.

+ The word EPISCOPOS is a Greek word that means supervision or looker from above

+ The Bishops are chosen among celibates who were not previously married.

+ Our teacher St. Paul mentioned in his first epistle to his disciple bishop Timothy in the third chapter, some important qualities for the bishop, saying that the bishop must be:

Blameless: -

Every virtue is engulfed in this quality. In the Old Testament, the law says: “For any man who has any defect shall not approach to offer the bread of his God” Leviticus 21: 17-21. He must be completely blameless.

The Husband of One Wife:

St. John Chrysostom said: “The apostle did not place this order as a basis that he must be a husband of one wife, but he forbids from this rank the individual who married more than one woman, as he wanted to choose the most pure and modest for a bishop rank, but as the door of celibacy and monasticism is opened, so the bishop is ordained among the celibate monks who never married at all.

This order has started since the Council of Nicea on the year 325 AD when a decision was made that priests must be married as according to the nature of their service, they enter houses and solve family problems but the bishops must be celibate and this was according to the request of St. Pafnotius, Bishop of Luxor who was attending the council with Pope Alexandros of Alexandria.

(3) Temperate: -

Cautious and attentive to his service and has many eyes around him from the priests and deacons, long sighted as the bishop is the guard of the Church and the congregation of God. He must have an acute enlightenment and care for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his congregation.

He must not be confused by administrative matters or preoccupied by various problems from his spiritual mission. St. John Chrysostom says: “The bishop must be vigilant and zealous, very committed and careful more than a leader towards his army”[5]

(4) Sober – minded:

Behaving moderately and wisely, dealing adequately with every one of his congregation.

(5) Of Good Behavior:

In clothing, attitude and words as these flows out of the heart and reflects on the behavior.

(6) Hospitable:

As a sign of generosity, love and giving and Hermas says in his book: “The Shepherd” that the bishop must be hospitable with strangers, welcoming with joy at all times, the servants of God.

(7) Able to Teach:

In the Dioscolia is written: “Bishop take heed to doctrine, and explain the Holy Books. Feed your congregation and fill them from the light of the law so they care for your teachings”. Our teacher St. Paul advises his disciple Timothy saying: “Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Take heed to yourself and to doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you”. Timothy 4: 13, 16. In the apostolic teaching, they say to the bishop: “Take care of every one to save him”. In the apostolic canons we find this text: “A bishop satisfied by the minimum of doctrine, is not a bishop but a lire (a canon from the apostolic canons).

(8) Not Given to Wine:

Applying the apostolic advice: “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation but be filled with the Spirit” Eph: 5: 18. Drunkenness by wine excites physical lusts that is enjoying bodily

pleasures, thus he is dead, 1Tim. 5:6, it leads a person to misery, mockery and disrespect, “Who has the woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly, at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper”. Proverbs 23: 29-32.

(9) Not Violent:

Does not beat any of the congregation for the purpose of fear or domination by force or imposing an opinion by violence.

(10) Not Greedy for Money:

Does not love money as love of possessions is the source of all evil it corrupts the conscience of any responsible person and fails in many sins like simony, bribery, and hypocrisy which stumbles others.

(11) Gentle, not Quarrel some:

Has the spirit of his Master who “will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets” Matthew 12: 19 to present the good example of love and endurance to the congregation of God, so he conquers evil by good, and strife by love and patience.

(12) Must have a Good Testimony among Everyone:

With a good reputation without any mistakes that affects others and distract them away from Christ, as our teacher St. Paul says: “We give no offence in anything that our ministry may not be blamed, but in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God”. 2Cor 6:3,4.

+ Our teacher St. Paul repeated these qualities necessary for a bishop in his epistle to Titus in the first chapter, urging for them.

+ Sometimes after reading the Pauline Epistle in Coptic, during the presence of the Patriarch or bishop, they mention twelve virtues in the hymn of virtues. They ask God to dwell upon him with the following virtues:

The first: Love, The second: Hope

The third: Faith The fourth: Purity

The fifth: Celibacy The Sixth: Peace

The seventh: Wisdom The eighth: Righteous

The ninth: Meekness The tenth: Patience

The eleventh: endurance The twelfth Asceticism

If the bishop gains these great virtues he becomes an ideal bishop whom resembles his Master, the source of virtues and holiness.

+ Lord Christ made overseers in the Church to shepherd the Church whom He purchased by His

own Blood. Acts 20:28 and to be stewards of the mysteries of God 1Cor 4:1 and to be guards on faith, dogma, Tradition, Rites and all the other doctrines of the Church to keep them, and to stand against the heretics, false teachers and contradictors of faith and dogma.

+ So you find the responsibility of the bishop before the throne of God is much more awesome than any leader in any position in the world , so that our teacher St. Paul was trembling from the burden of its responsibility , he says “but I discipline my body and bring it into submission, lest, when I have preached to others[6]. I myself should become disqualified 1Cor: 9:27.

+ Lord Christ was called an Overseer as here our teacher St. Peter says: “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” 1Pet 2:25 , as the overseer must resemble Christ the Good Shepherd Who gives his life for the sheep.

+ The overseer is called an angel in the book of Revelation as Lord Jesus says to John the apostle: Write to the angel of the Church of Ephesus.... And to the angel of the Church of Pergamos write Rev. 2, so the overseer or bishop must be angelic in his life, behavior words, management, service, love, humbleness, purity...etc.

+ The bishop is distinguished from the priest by having the perfection of priesthood , and the authority of laying on of hands and ordination of all the ranks of deacons and priesthood in his diocese, also the authority of punishing the wrong doers and rewarding the active and committed persons.

+ The bishop is a priest and sacrifice at the same time. He gives his life and service as an offering acceptable before God the High Priest, when he gives his life as a living, acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to God on the altar of service , consecration , effort and offering for the comfort of the congregation as our teacher St. Paul said: “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls” 2Cor. 12:15

+ The ordination of the bishop is accomplished on a Sunday after the reading of the Praxis or Acts of the Apostles, as his service is an extension to the service of the Apostles.

+ The bishop has a blessing or offering from the cities and villages, following the diocese, according to their ability, given to him each year to help him in his living and expenses of his diocese, guests, the poor and the needy who come to him.

+ The bishop takes from the money of the diocese an amount to cover his need for clothing, food and others. It is inappropriate for the bishop to wear silk or linen, or decorate his table with all kinds of food while the poor of his congregation are hungry or naked[7]

+ The bishop must not lay hands on anyone hastily but carefully after his goodness is testified.

+ Does not accept any complaint about a priest or a deacon except from two or three witnesses.

+ Judges rightly among his congregation without hypocrisy.

+ May reward or punish any deacon or priest in his diocese after he assures his deeds and attitude and service, and after hearing the witnesses and giving him a chance to defend himself.

+ Does not absent himself from his diocese except by a permission from the Patriarch and for a

period no more than six months.

- + Does not transfer from his diocese because it is small or due to poverty, draught or small number of congregation, to another richer or larger diocese .
- + The bishop does not occupy himself with any worldly work like trade or industry so that he is free to shepherd his congregation.
- + The bishop reads the Gospel of the Liturgy in Coptic, facing the west, and standing before the door of the temple.
- + In the presence of the Patriarch, the bishop does not hold a stick or a cross in his hand for blessing, also the priests and hegomens do not hold crosses or bless anybody in the presence of a bishop.
- + If the Patriarch is sitting on his seat in Church outside the temple, the bishops sit on his left side. If the Patriarch is sitting on his seat inside the temple, the bishops sit on his right.
- + Bishopric is not inherited or willed for. The bishop must not write his will recommending a priest or deacon or any matter concerning the shepherding of his succeeding bishop.
- + The bishop may not contact timely authorities without the permission of the Patriarch.
- + The bishop has to follow the invitation of the Patriarch to attend the Holy Synod, and if he has a health problem or others, he must contact the Patriarch about it, or else he falls under the sentence of the Church Canons.
- + Whatever applies on the bishop from rules, specifications and responsibilities, it also applies on the metropolitans as they have the same bishopric rank.

Rite of the Vesper of the Bishop's Ordination

- + He is recommended by the priest, deacons and congregation of the diocese where he will become a bishop, as the congregation has the right to choose their shepherd.
- + If the patriarch accepts the recommendation and is definite about its correctness and the absence of any defect in the recommended person , then he specifies a day for ordination and it must be a Sunday.
- + Night of the Ordination Sunday: at the night before ordination, His Holiness the Patriarch descends from his dwelling place, wearing his priestly vestments, walking in an ecclesiastical procession to the Cathedral, preceded by the deacons with Church hymns, then the bishops. The recommended person for the bishopric walks between two bishops holding his hands until the temple of the Cathedral , where all kneel before the temple and every one takes his place.
- + Prayers of Vespers start as usual and His Holiness the Pope prays: “Eleyson – E mas” .. Then the Thanksgiving prayer, raises incense around the altar and before the temple.
- + Prayers continue for the vespers as usual until the Arabic reading of the Gospel.
- + The recommendation is presented from the choir and congregation of the diocese before all the

attendants and the recommended person standing in the middle, facing the people.

+ He goes down amidst two of the bishops, deacons in front of him singing Church hymns, walking among the congregation, so every one is sure that he is the recommended and selected person to become a bishop for them and they identify him.

+ When he returns to stand before the temple facing west towards the congregation, bowing his head, the Patriarch asks the diocese choir and congregation: Is this the person you accepted to become your bishop?

They respond: Yes our Master.

+ The selected person for bishopric reads the specific undertaking for the bishop behind one of the metropolitans who reads it quietly with an audible voice.

The text of the undertaking as used in ordination of bishop at the time of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is as follows:

I, the weak, unworthy, called by the grace of God for the eminent bishopric work, undertake before God the Lord of Lords and Pastor of Pastors, the unseen head of the Church, and before His Holy Altar, and before my father His Holiness Pope, and before my fathers the metropolitans and bishops and the remaining members of the Holy Synod and choir and all the congregation, to stand fast in the Orthodox Faith to the last breath, and to respect the Holy Church's Canons founded by the pure Apostolic fathers, and established by the three Ecumenical Councils assembled in Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus, and also the Canons approved by the Church for the provincial councils and the great fathers, teachers of the Church, as I also undertake to spread the preaching of the Gospel as best as I can.

I undertake to keep the Traditions of our Coptic Orthodox Church, its rites and teachings, and toil in teaching the true faith to the congregation, and their leadership into the life of holiness and righteousness and try to become an example in every good deed. I undertake to love the flock and treat them kindly and wisely, and do not have a selected group but I care for every one, and do not judge anyone by hearing or in anger, but I give him a chance to defend himself.

I undertake to continue to live in asceticism which I vowed, and do not consider the church's money as my own.

I undertake to submit to the high authority of the Church represented by His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of our Coptic Orthodox Church.

I ask the Lord to grant me power by your prayers to accomplish this dangerous responsibility and shepherd very carefully this flock, whose blood will be required from my hand.

Pray for me fellow saint fathers and brothers.

This is a bowing for all of you

+ He bows humbly before all of them.

The general bishop's undertaking:

The general bishop has another undertaking which varies slightly from the undertaking of the bishop of a diocese, as the general bishop is considered as an assistant to the Pope in missionary matters , and does not need a recommendation from the congregation.

This is the text of the undertaking of the general bishop:

I, the weak, unworthy, called by the grace of God for the eminent bishopric service.

Undertake before God the Lord of Lords and Pastor of Pastors and invisible head of the Church, and before His Holy Altar, and before my father His Holiness Pope and before my fathers and brothers the metropolitans and bishops and the remaining members of the Holy Synod and all the congregation, to stand fast on the Orthodox Faith till the last breath , and to respect the Canons of the Holy Church founded by the pure fatherly Apostles, and established by the three Ecumenical Councils assembles in Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus, and also the Canons approved by the Church for the provincial council and the great fathers, teachers of the Church.

I also undertake to spread the preaching of the Gospel as best as I can. I also undertake to keep the Traditions of our Coptic Orthodox Church, its rites and teachings and do my best in teaching the congregation the true faith, and lead them into the life of righteousness and holiness and become an example in every good deed.

I undertake to continue in the life of asceticism which I vowed and struggle to achieve the virtues adequate for the bishopric rank. And I undertake to submit to the high leadership of the Church, represented by His Holiness Pope and in the Holy Synod of our Coptic Orthodox Church, and to walk in my work as a general bishop according to the directions of His Holiness the Pope and his guidance.

I ask the Lord to empower me by your prayers to accomplish this dangerous responsibility and honestly do all the work required from me.

Pray for me my saintly fathers and brothers.

This is a bowing for you all .

+ Then he bows humbly before all of them.

+ During the reading of the undertaking, the special service vestments of the new bishop, (bishop of a diocese or a general bishop) are placed on a small table besides the chair of His Holiness the Pope.

+ Then The candidate recommended for the bishopric rank finishes the recitation of the undertaking ,while bowing his head facing east.

+ His Holiness the Pope signs the vestments with the first sign saying: (In Coptic)

“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God” Blessed be God the Father the Pantocrator”.

+ The singers respond: Amen.

+ Every one of the attending bishops come forward, according to the order of their ordination and he signs the second sign saying:

“Blessed be His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, our Lord”.

+ The singers respond: Amen.

+ His Holiness the Pope signs the vestment with the third sign saying:

“Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete”.

+ The singers respond: Amen.

+ The recommended candidate for the bishopric rank stands before His Holiness the Pope, while the Pope stands on the steps of his Apostolic seat to give him the three signs as previously done, with pronouncing the name of the new bishop at every sign saying: “We call you... a bishop on the cities (City) lover of Christ.... and other cities and villages.

+ His Holiness holds the cloak from the table and dresses up the new bishop saying: “ Wear the divine pure vestment of the Apostles”. Enlighten your feet by the preparation of the Gospel to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and accompany and follow our Lord and God our Savior Jesus Christ, glory be to Him forever Amen.

Then His Holiness says a sermon to the congregation for this happy occasion.

+ Then they complete the vesper (evening raising of incense), so the five litanies are said, and Our Father Who art in heaven, then the Pope prays the absolution while every one is bowing his head before him. Then they rise up and say the conclusion of prayers of raising incenses. So the vesper rite is concluded. The new bishop accepts the congratulations from the bishops, priests and congregation.

RITE OF ORDINATION OF THE NEW BISHOP

+ The choir and congregation gather in the Cathedral to attend the ordination prayers and the Divine Liturgy.

+ His Holiness the Pope descends from his location, wearing his priestly vestments, also the metropolitans and bishops wear their priestly vestments, and walk in an ecclesiastical procession to the Cathedral, preceded by the deacons in two rows, with the new bishop in their middle, wearing his black monastic clothing, then two bishops, one with the lamb and the other with the wine bottle, then His Holiness the Pope holding the Cross and Copper serpent. The procession walk till the Cathedral’s temple and all kneel down before the temple.

+ The new bishop with his black clothing stand inside the temple on the right of the altar.

+ His Holiness the Pope washes his hands and chooses the Lamb, lifts it on the altar, prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, reads the absolution and raises the Pauline incense.

+ Prayers continue as usual until the Praxis reading and the Synaxarium.

+ Some bishops bring the new bishop who bows for His Holiness the Pope and stands with a

bowing head, in submission, before the temple, and the ordination prayers start as follows:

+ His Holiness the Pope stands before the temple and prays the Thanksgiving Prayer and raises the incense.

+ His Holiness the Pope prays this prayer”-

“O Lord God of hosts Who gave us entry to the share of this service, Who arouses human understanding, Who examines hearts and minds, accept the perfect priestly leadership of Your servant standing here awaiting Your heavenly gift. As You are merciful and gracious

+ The bishops partaking in the ordination surround him, and must not be less than two, and at extreme necessity there must be one bishop with the fatherly Patriarch “Every word From two or three witnesses”. Timothy 5:19

+ The archdeacon says: “Let us all scream saying: Lord have mercy”. So the congregation says: Lord have mercy.

+ The bishops complete these supplications saying: “Ask for the peace of the one, holy universal, Apostolic Church, and the salvation of people. Lord hears us. The congregation responds: Lord have mercy, and so on till the end of this supplication.

+ Then the congregation says: “Lord have mercy” (Kerye’ Eleyson) fifty times.

+ The archdeacon says: O bishops lift your hands, so they lift up their hands and place them on the shoulders and arms of the new bishop.

+ The Patriarch prays facing west, while placing his hand on the head of the new bishop and says: “O Lord God the Pantocrator and Lord of all ... because You are the Leader of Leaders and Lord of lords and Master of masters and King of kings. You gave the authority to the one whom you preceded and chose and granted him to loose and bind accordingly

NOTE:

If the bishop is a Patriarch, God is the High Priest Who granted him this authority so he must live in humbleness to Him and His law, to keep His Church which is His Bride that He Purchased by His Blood.

+ One of the bishops says this prayer facing west:

“The grace giving salvation to the weak ... comes upon (Name) the servant of God, the presbyter and monk who is from the monastery of (.....) to be a bishop for the holy church in the city (.....) that loves Christ instead of Anba (.....) who passed away to the Lord and left us a good memory. Ask all of you, and pray to the Lord, you attendants, so the grace of the Holy Spirit may dwell upon him by our saying

All the congregation and attendants say: Lord have mercy.

+ The Patriarch looks towards the east and prays saying:[8]

“Yes Lord make him worthy for Your priestly call to serve Your Name and Your Holy Altar, and shepherd Your people by purity and justice, to gain the inheritance of the saints, by the grace and compassion”.

+ The Patriarch faces west and places his right hand on the candidate chosen for the bishopric rank and the archdeacon cries out saying: “Stand well, stand with reverence, stand quietly, stand humbly, stand fearfully”.

Pray all of you with the gathering bishops.

+ The Patriarch places his hand on the chosen candidate and prays:

O existing Master and Lord God the Pantocrator Pour now the power of Your Holy Spirit Whom You granted to Your Holy Apostles in Your Name. Grant this same grace to Your servant (.....) whom You choose as a bishop to shepherd Your Holy flock and become a servant for You without blame and supplicate to Your goodness day and night, and gather the number of the saved, and offer oblations in the Holy Churches. Yes O Father the Pantocrator grant him through Your Christ, the unity of Your Holy Spirit to have the authority to forgive sins as a commandment of Your Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, make the choir by his authority of priesthood, loosen all the church ties, make the new houses, churches, sanctify the altars, and pleases You by meekness and humbleness of heart as he offers you blamelessly and without blemish, a holy unbloody sacrifice of the New Covenant”.

+ The archdeacon says: from the Lord we ask.

+ The Patriarch completes: “Fill him Lord with the gifts of healing, and doctrine to become a guide for the blind and an enlightenment for those in darkness, teacher for the ignorant and a lamp stand for the world. Decides by the word of truth and resembles the True Shepherd who gives His life for His flock, to prepare the souls entrusted to him, and also become ready to do Your Holy Will and find the means to stand in liberty before Your awesome throne to await the great reward that you prepared for those who struggle in the missionary of the Gospel... etc”.

+ The Patriarch faces east and prays saying:

“Look upon us Lord and upon our service, and purify us from all blemish. Send the grace of leadership of the priesthood upon Your flock without blemish and become responsible for Your Church as You are still merciful.... etc”.

+ The Patriarch faces the west and signs the candidate’s head thrice saying: “We call you (Name) a bishop for the Holy Church in the city (.....) that loves Christ and its suburbs – Khen Evran ... Evezmaroot – Enje – Evnooti – Pi –Pantocrator.

Then he repeats the same words for the second and third signs.

+ The Patriarch signs the priestly vestments of the new bishop and dresses him up, piece by piece, by the help of the attending bishops, while saying:

Honor and glory to the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Peace and edification for the one, holy universal, Apostolic Church of God, Amen.

+ The singers say the Holy Spirit hymn (Pi – Epnevma.....).

+ The archdeacon says some supplications and the congregation answers him saying Kerye – Eleyson, then Aksios hymn to the new bishop.

+ The Patriarch prays a thanksgiving prayer facing east and says:

“O Lord God the Pantocrator ... bless this ordination of the leadership of priesthood which became for Your servant (.....). Straighten the call of his selection by purity and grace of Your Holy Spirit and choose us with him for goodness to please You, and take the reward of stewardship..... etc”.

+ The Patriarch recites the following commandment to the new bishop to hear it and become committed to it.

“Dear blessed brother. This bishopric rank is great and eminent and it is shepherding God’s people and His Holy flock that He bought by His Precious Blood and the leadership of priesthood and its rank and its offering” [9]

+ And God made you faithful over His Church and people, you must know the value of this grace and continue in gratitude to its gift and accomplish its duties and deeds.

+ Be humble, cheerful, merciful having peace and love.

+ Visit your congregation and shepherd them in fertile pastors or by divine spiritual doctrine.

+ Do not worry or get angry.

+ Do not get drunk or boas.

+ Do not love money but be compassionate to widows, orphans and strangers and comfort them by visitation.

+ Judge truthfully as if you stand before God and avoid hypocrisy.

+ Rebuke the sinners and teach him cheerfully.

+ Accept the repentant and do not let the weak perish.

+ Carry peoples’ sins like Lord Christ Who died for every one.

+ Count your sheep and return the lost.

+ Do not be lazy in teaching your congregation.

+ Do not take simony for ordination of a priest or others[10] Act 8: 18-21.

+ Do not be dissipated and preoccupied by worldly pleasures and do not care for delicious foods.

+ Do not take a bribe to respect the sinner as bribery blind judges.

+ Do not waste the Lord’s money and use it as if it is yours, but spend only what you need and become a faithful steward knowing you will account to God.

+ Give the orphans, needy and oppressed.

+ Do not follow your ideas in any of your matters.

To get the blessedness and hear the joyful voice saying: “Well done, good and faithful steward. You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” Matthew 25:23. And the glorious God will bless you, prosper and save you and the poor miserable souls through the intercessions of the Pure Lady and all saints Amen.”

+ The new bishop bows before the temple, then enters the temple by his right foot and kneels before the altar, then kisses the altar and stand at its right.

+ The Patriarch says: Eshlil, Irini Pasi. Then the Litany of the Gospel, then the Psalm and Gospel are read. The Patriarch composes a sermon and completes the Mass as usual, and the new bishop receives the Holy Mysteries.

+ After the Patriarch receives the Holy Body and the Precious Blood, and before he drinks the dismissal water, he gives the new bishop the breath of the Holy Spirit as follows:

1- He says to him: “Receive the Holy Spirit, or open your mouth wide and I will fill it” Psalm 81:10.

2- The new bishop says: “I opened my mouth and panted” Psalm 119:131

3- The fatherly Patriarch breathes into the mouth of the new bishop the breath of the Holy Spirit.

4- This is repeated three times.

+ After the Mass, a procession is made for the new bishop according to the known rite of the procession, while he is wearing the priestly vestments so his congregation may rejoice for him.

+ After the procession he undresses the white service vestments and stands before the Patriarch who is standing on the steps of his Apostolic See, to dress him the black garment and black turban specific for the bishop, and hands him the pastoral rod and cross.

+ The new bishop accepts the congratulations from the Patriarch and his fellow bishops, priests, the congregation of his diocese and it is a day of joy for everyone.

+ They celebrate a spiritual festival for three days by performing divine liturgies for three consecutive days.

+ The new bishop fasts for one whole year after his ordination, but he may unfast only in the major Lords’ feasts like Christmas , Epiphany and Easter (Resurrection)[11]

THE RITE OF SEATING THE NEW BISHOP

+ The new bishop stays a while with the Patriarch (the minimum is seven days) until he learns the means of shepherding , and the limits of his specifications as a bishop and what is to be read to the congregation of his diocese at the festival for seating him.

+ The Patriarch signs on this tradition by his signature and stamps it by his seal.

+ His Holiness the Pope elects a number of bishops[12] to accompany the new bishop to his diocese to seat him on the diocese seat at the Cathedral of the bishopric. The festival of seating is usually performed on a Saturday evening at evening raising of incense , so that the new bishop may pray his first Mass in his diocese on Sunday morning. But the previous rite for seating the bishop was on Sunday morning Mass. It was a tedious long rite that resembles to a certain extent the rite of seating the Pope on his ordination. (Look at the Book of Holy Prayers for ordination of the selected for ranks of clergy, Part 1 page 230 to page 285).

+ Upon arrival of the bishops at the bishopric Cathedral, bells are rung to rejoice for the new bishop and welcome the accompanying bishops.

+ Upon arrival of the new bishop to the Church's door, he wears the cloak and walks into the Church in an awesome procession, preceded by the deacons by their white vestments and holding the crosses of the procession , while singing by the cymbals the appropriate hymns followed by the priests and bishops, then the new bishop.

+ When he reaches the temple, he kneels before the temple.

+ The new bishop starts the prayer of evening raising of incense as usual, so he opens the curtain of the temple while saying: Eleyson – Emas, ... Our Father Who art in heaven.... Then he prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, raises incense on the altar after he and the bishops share placing incense into the censer with the known rite.

+ One of the attending bishops or priest prays the litany of the deceased as usual for the vesper, then does the usual round in the Church.

+ The new bishop prays Evnoti – Nai – Nan. The congregation responds Kerye – Eleyson thrice.

+ He says: Eshlil – Irini Pasi, then lets one of the priests recite the Litany of the Gospel.

+ The new priest reads the Gospel in Coptic before the temple facing west, and one of the deacons carry the Bible for him.

+ One of the deacons read the Gospel in Arabic.

+ Then the Rite of seating the new bishop starts as follows:

+ The eldest bishop takes him to his seat where he gets seated.

+ The attending bishops start to sign their names on the special tradition of the new bishop signed and stamped by His Holiness the Pope.

+ After the signatures end, the bishops start reading the tradition audibly before the congregation. Every bishop reads a paragraph and at its end the deacons say: AKSIOS – ABBA ... PIE POSCOPUS, means: Worthy ANBA ... the bishop.

This is the text of the tradition of the bishop:

BISHOPRIC TRADITION

O

n the day...

By the providence of God and His good choice, the ordination of the blessed brother, ornamented by spiritual virtues and experienced in ascetic life, knowledgeable in wisdom, ecclesiastical and pastoral matter, is accomplished.

The monk hegomen....

From the monastery famous to become a bishop on the diocese..... .

In the Great Cathedral of St. Mark in Anba Rows, Cairo, by the laying on of my hands, I Anba, called by the grace of God: Pope of Alexandria in succession of the Apostles and by the sharing of a number of (.....) from my beloved brothers the metropolitans and bishops, members of the Holy Synod of St. Mark's missionary and by the attendance of abbots of monasteries, to bless this choice and supplicate to God for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon this blessed father. This was done after I enquired about the opinion of the congregation through representatives of the diocese, headed by the diocese priests, servants and members of the Coptic Charity Committee, deacons and official Coptic organizations , all the rulers and sober minded persons and all decided for the selection of the monk hegomen to become their bishop and after recommendations were given specifically to choose him, I ordained him with the fathers metropolitans and bishops, by name:

Anba

Bishop....

By his ordination as a bishop, he has the perfection of priesthood, and from his mouth and hand the authority of the Holy Spirit and laying on of hands and ordination of priests and deacons, with all their ranks shepherding, guiding them and checking their deeds. It became his authority to anoint the temples, altars and churches, with all their vessels and icons, he also has the authority to loose and bind every matter as a steward of God. He is the provider of all Church matters in all the diocese, as he is responsible about the souls of all people, managing their spiritual matters and behaving wisely with their donations and offerings. He is the supervisor of every pastoral work in all his churches, and has to carefully organize them through the teachings of the Holy Bible and Church Canons and Tradition, so their matters continually improve.

Peace, grace and Apostolic blessing is to you, blessed sons, hegomen, priests, deacons and the congregation who love Christ in the diocese ... and all its suburbs.

God responded to your prayers and accepted your tears and contrition before Him, and did not wish to leave you as orphans after the passing away of our beloved brother Anba Your previous bishop.

Now you have a new bishop, his grace Anba The great elder of the diocese, the high priest

and your father, leader, and judge to whom you go for counseling your problems and hurry for all matters, you show him love and confidence surround him and listen to him, obey him with all what he commands you according to the Christian law which he speaks in secret and in public, as his lips keep knowledge and from his mouth you request the law as he is the angel of the Lord of hosts and His apostle to you. Love your bishop, obey him and submit to him and revere him as a father to all of you and a ruler from God, as the Holy Bible says: “Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you”. Heb 17:13, as our Savior Lord Jesus Christ said to His pure Apostles : “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me”. Matthew 10:40, and also He said: “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you, rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him Who sent Me”. Luke 10:16

So blessed sons you have to accept him with joy and awe, as sons accept fathers and know the extent of spiritual dignity which he has got, do not neglect your duty towards him, remember to share with him in prayers and supplications and persevere in attending to Church, listening to Masses and sermons. Do not neglect confession of your sins and receive the Holy Mysteries. Do not forget acts of charity, tithes and vows as “with such sacrifices God is well pleased” Hebrew 13:16.

The Great Pastor of all pastors, our Lord and God and King Jesus Christ may bless your bishop and all of you. Blessing is for obedient children and keeps your souls, spirits, and bodies perfect without blame on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and you grow in all virtue and spiritual knowledge.

Through the intercessions of the Pure and Blessed our Lady and pride of our humankind the Virgin and Saint Theotokos, and the honorable martyr St. Mark the apostle, and all the angels, martyrs and saints.

To our God Glory, honor and worship now and forever Amen.

Pope

(Signature) (Stamp)

We , the delegates of His Holiness Popeour blessed father, to seat our honorable beloved brother Anba on his seat in the diocese

Bishop’s Signature

.....

NOTES:

(1) The bishopric tradition is considered like a letter from His Holiness the Pope to the priests and deacons – congregation of the diocese to accept the bishop, cooperate with him in all the burdens and responsibilities of the service.

(2) The bishopric tradition includes three important points:

(a) The bishop's authority: he has the perfection of priesthood and authority of laying on of hands, loosening and binding and managing the matters of the churches of the diocese, its priests and deacons.

(b) The bishop's duties and responsibilities: Solving the people's problems and caring for their spiritual life.

(c) The congregational duties towards him: To surround him, listen to him, love him and obey him.

(3) The tradition urges the congregation to care for spiritual lives, attendance of masses and meetings, perseverance in Confession and Communion, paying the tithes, charity deeds and others.

+ After the recitation of the tradition the attending bishop folds it and hands it over to the new bishop.

+ Then the attending archbishop hands the copper serpent to the new bishop , and it is a symbol of priestly ruling and shepherding.

+ Then the diocese priests come forward according to their ranks and give incense to the new bishop composes an adequate sermon.

+ Then the special five litanies of raising of incense are recited, followed by Our Father.

+ The new bishop stands at the temple's door and prays the absolution, while holding the copper serpent.

+ All pray the Canon of conclusion of prayers saying: You have gained grace.

+ The new bishop says the blessing O King ... Christ our God, and Our Father.

+ He dismisses the congregation peacefully saying: "Go in peace, the peace of the Lord be with you all."

+ The new bishop accepts the congratulation from the attending bishops , priests and congregation, then undresses the cloaks.

+ The new bishop goes with his guests of the attending bishops, invited and responsible persons to the diocese reception to accept the congratulations from the responsible persons and congregation, and it is a day of joy for every body.

+ He starts his pastoral duties for the diocese.

+ They celebrate three consecutive masses for him and the congregation rejoice.

2- METROPOLITAN

T

his is derived from the Greek word: Metropolitans which means the mother city or the major city

of the diocese[13]

Metropolitan is the bishop of the progressing Mother City.

- + Metropolitan is progressing the bishops in all Church Rites.
- + Rank of metropolitan is only a promotion from bishop to metropolitan on the same diocese with the same name.
- + Dwelling place of the metropolitan is called bishopric. This is the common name used even for dwelling places of bishops. May be because in the past eras the selected candidate was ordained bishop and metropolitan at the same time as Ritual books witness, then he goes to his bishopric as a metropolitan and lives there. The name bishop was not famous, as all were metropolitans.

Rite Of Ordination Of The Metropolitan

- + It takes place during a Sunday Mass.
- + Ordination is after the Praxis and Synaxarium, like the bishop.
- + His Holiness the Pope prays the Thanksgiving Prayer and raises incense.
- + His Holiness the Pope prays this prayer facing east[14]

“O existing Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, Father of Compassion and Comfort, the Father of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who created all things by His Power and Wisdom. He fixed the whole universe by His counseling, Who knows things before their existence, Who adorned crowns for His upright, Who gave fear to all creatures to submit to His power, Who granted us true understanding to know the Spirit of His goodness, Which made Churches with luminous brightness of His Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Who chose Abraham His beloved for the inheritance of faith and transferred Enoch His Saint to the treasurer to light because he pleased Him, Who granted Moses meekness and Aaron the perfection of priesthood. Who anointed kings and rulers to rule His people with justice. Who did not leave His holy heavenly Altar without service since the foundation of the world. You also founded Your service in Churches to be perfected by priests and deacons, who are examples of the heavenly, so that earthly and the heavenly creation agree in service to bless Your Holy Name , O true God with Your Only Son and the Holy Spirit, by whom we ask and entreat Your Goodness for Your servant (....) whom You choose and glorified as a metropolitan for You and a father for Your Church, to become a ruler and representative of Your congregation. O Lord enlighten him by the light of Your countenance so his heart illuminates by the spring of Your Glory to truly know Your hidden mysteries.

Fill him with Your knowledge by Your Holy Spirit,

Whom You poured over Your Holy Church to renew in every generation to be pleasing to the Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Perfection, and the Comforter Whom You gave to Your saintly Apostles and pure prophets.

Lord grant him the Rod of your power that sprang from Jesse, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his rods. The spirit of the Lord shall rest

upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” Isaiah 11: 1-2.

God fill him with Your Fear to judge your congregation truly and stand fast in the right faith without blemish. Dress him in the holy garment of Your Glory. Anoint him by the oil of joy to become a faithful shepherd of Your house which is the Holy Church, serving You blamelessly all the days of his life, day and night without delay by pure sacrifices and pure hearty prayers, a caring soul, by pure fast and deeds, love, meekness and faith without hypocrisy. By prophecies and spiritual declarations, with pure offering all the time, raising a pure incense for You for the weakness of Your congregation, grieving for the sinners, and lack of understanding as they are Your holy flock, to attract them from traps of sin to Your worshipping O Holy God.

Grant him and Your congregation peace, and give him Lord the authority of Your Holy Spirit to untie the bonds tied by the enemy.

Grant him to gather the scattered members of the Church to unity, and keep his priesthood without blemish to the end, to serve You by spiritual sacrifices always, like the rank of the Great Heavenly High Priest Jesus Christ.

Glory, honor, dominion and worship are due to You with Him and the Living, Consubstantial Holy Spirit now and to the end of ages, Amen.

After this long touching prayer for the bishop selected to be ordained a metropolitan standing before the temple, facing east, with a bowing head and wearing his priestly vestments, the Patriarch signs him thrice saying:

(...) Metropolitan for the seat..... “In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen. Blessed be God the Father the Pantocrator”. The deacons and congregation say: “Amen.”

“Blessed be His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. The deacons and congregation say: Amen.

“Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete”, and the deacons and congregation say: “Amen.”

Then the singers say:

Worthy Anba (.....) the Metropolitan.

He kneels before the temple then enters the temple, kisses the altar, stands at the right of the altar and shares in the Mass, receives from the Holy Mysteries and a procession is made for him and he accepts the congratulations. It is a day of joy.

3- THE POPE: PATRIARCH

+ Patriarch is a word derived from Greek word “Patriarchies”, composed of two parts: Patria: the tribe & Arches: ruler, so it means ruler of the tribe.

+ But the word ‘Pope’ is said to be derived from Greek word Papas, which means father. Others say it is a compound word from father of fathers, then simplified to Pope for ease of

pronunciation. It is historically known that this surname is specified for the Pope of Alexandria first, since Pope Yarokloos (the thirteenth Pope) and from Alexandria it conveyed to Rome.

+ There were only five Patriarchs in the Christian world after division:

Patriarch of Jerusalem: the City of our God where incidences of salvation took place and there is the tomb of our God Savior.

(2) Patriarch of Alexandria: the owner of the See of St. Mark the Evangelist, and still the Patriarch of Alexandria is the official surname of the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church although his location transferred from Alexandria to Cairo, the capital of the country since the tenth century After Christ.

(3) Patriarch of Rome: the capital of the Western Roman Empire.

(4) Patriarch of Constantinople: which is the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. The first location was in Ephesus seat, and the preaching site of John the Apostle and Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, then it transferred to the king's capital Constantinople.

(5) Patriarch of Antioch: it is the See and preaching site of St. Peter the Apostle and St. Ignatius the adorned by God. Now the See of the Patriarch is in Damascus, capital of Syria. But the surname of Patriarch of the Syrian Church is still Patriarch of Antioch and the East.

+ The Patriarch is the highest rank in the bishopric level and has the highest or greatest ruling of priesthood.

+ Patriarch is the leader of the Church, bishops and all metropolitans.

+ Patriarch is the successor of the Apostles and first father of the Church.

+ Patriarch is entrusted by Christ for all the congregation and the souls of the flock in his ordination. The archbishop says to him, after he places the rod of pastorate on the altar: "Receive the rod of pastorate from the hand of the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ, the Ever Living Son of God, to shepherd the flock, nourish it by living doctrine as He entrusted you on the soul of His flock, and from your hands their blood will be asked." So it is a great and difficult responsibility, and needs its carrier to pray a great deal for God to help him to carry it and accomplish its many serious duties.

+ Patriarch is symbol of unity of Church: around when priests, deacons and bishops gather with all the congregation. Any one who behaves different to this basis, is condemned by the Church canon to isolate him or dispossess him from his rank.

+ Patriarch has the right to ordain bishops. Two bishops or at least one bishop must accompany him. No ordination of bishops takes place if the Patriarchal See is void.

+ Patriarch has the right to promote the bishop to the rank of metropolitan.

+ Patriarch has the right to make Myron whenever it approaches depletion, while the bishops and metropolitans share its making.

- + The Patriarch is distinguished from the bishop or metropolitan by these two rights: right of ordination of bishops and their promotion, and the right of making the Holy Myron for the whole Church.
- + The Great Cathedral is the location of the Patriarchal See where bishops are ordained and promoted by the Patriarch.
- + Patriarch is the first guard of the Church's faith dogma, canons and rites, to keep them from every heretic, or deviant.
- + Patriarch heads the sessions of the Holy Synod of the Church.
- + Holy Synod is the highest authority in the Church, composed of the Patriarch, metropolitans, bishops, khoris-episcopos, abbots of monasteries and stewards of the Patriarchate.
- + Patriarch heads the Common Denominational Council and all the official Coptic organizations like the organization of Endowments and others.
- + His age must not be less than forty years upon his ordination.
- + Patriarch must be chosen from among scholar, spiritual, capable monks for leadership and rightly defining the word of truth, or from among common bishops who have no dioceses, as the Church Canon forbids transfer of bishop from one diocese to another for whatever reason.
- + In the Coptic Church, there is a specific list now, approved by the State, including basis and conditions of selection and election of the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. It is the list approved by the President of the Republic on 2 November 1957.
- + Included in the articles of the list is that the age of the recommended candidate for the Patriarchate, no less than forty years, and years of his monasticism no less than fifteen years.

RITE OF ORDINATION OF

THE PATRIARCH

- + After the official procedures for the selection of the Patriarch, whether nominations, elections and temple lot and others, the Rite of Inauguration of the winner of patriarchy if he is a bishop, or Rite of Ordination if he is a hegmon, is as follows:
- + His ordination must be on a Sunday.
- + Rite of Ordination of the Patriarch is considered an ordination and an inauguration at the same time.
- + One of the bishops performs the offertory of the Lamb as usual. Chapters for 17th Hatoor are read (commemoration of repose of St. John Chrysostom Patriarch of Constantinople) and chapters of reading of this whole day is about shepherhood and service.
- + Pauline: 2Tim 3:1 – 24, 4: 1-22

This chapter is about the struggle of our teacher St. Paul in service and shepherhood and includes pastoral advices to his disciple Timothy, bishop of Ephesus.

+ Catholic Epistle: -I Peter 5: 1-14

Our teacher St. Peter advises the shepherds: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock”... etc.

+ Praxis: - Acts 20: 17-38

Includes examples of the struggle of our teacher St. Paul in the service.... “serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me And how I kept nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you..... But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus..... For three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears..... I have coveted neither one’s silver nor gold or apparel.... I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”.

The chapter includes many commandments to Shepherds, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own Blood.... Therefore WATCH”.

+ Psalm 73: 23, 24, 28

“You hold me by my right hand, You will guide me with your counsel and afterwards receive me to glory, but it is good for me to draw near to God, I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all your works”.

NOTE:

This is the Patriarch’s impression at the start of his

ordination, asking God to hold his right hand, Who holds the seven stars (seven bishops) in His right hand, walking in the midst of the seven lampstands (seven churches). He also asks God to guide him and lead him by His blessed good Counseling in managing His Church and shepherding his holy flock, and accept him in His Eternal Glory at the end of his life, with the Apostles and Pastors who served the Lord faithfully. “As if the New Patriarch says: ”as for me it is good for me to stay to the Lord and rely on Him to help me in this difficult task, and I do not rely on my power or wisdom to shepherd the congregation of God....etc.”

+ Gospel: John 10: 1-16

Gospel of the Good Shepherd as the Patriarch has to resemble Christ the Good Shepherd since the day of his ordination.

+ “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep”.

+ “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My sheep and am known by My own”.

+ “I am the door of the sheep”.

+ “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture”.

+ “I lay down My life for the sheep”.

+ “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; then also I must bring and will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd”. As if the Church places a comprehensive program of shepherhood and service before the new Patriarch, through the readings of the ordination day.

+ After the Praxis reading (Book of Acts of the Apostles) and Synaxarium (Saintly stories), they start the ordination procedures. As the Patriarch’s service is a continuation of the apostolic service recorded in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, so you notice the Book of Acts does not end by the word Amen. This is a proof that it is open to comprise the service of Patriarchs, successors of the Apostles everywhere, at all times, and the procession is continuous and does not stop until the Second Coming of Christ. Also the Patriarch’s service is a continuation of the saintly Patriarchal service, whose manners are recorded in the Synaxarium.

+ The priests come out to the Patriarchal location with their censers, and the deacons with the crosses of the procession, where there are the metropolitans and bishops, with the selected one for the Patriarchal See, to bring them along in an ecclesiastical joyful procession to the Cathedral.

+ The Cathedral door is closed and the keys are given to the archdeacon , to stand by the door awaiting the new Patriarch to give him the keys.

+ The procession starts from the Patriarchal location, preceded by the deacons, priests, then metropolitans and bishops by their

priestly vestments, surrounding the new Pope who wears his black monastic vestments.

+ While walking in the procession, the deacons say the hymn of Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord...Hosanna (Save us)... Before the archbishop, one of the archdeacons walks carrying the Gospel, and the procession walks to the door of the Cathedral, then the archdeacon precedes the new Pope and gives him the Cathedral keys.

His Holiness opens the door of Cathedral while saying: “Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go through them and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous shall enter. I will praise You for You have answered me and have become my salvation” Psalm 118: 19-21. The gates of the Church is the gate of righteousness and the gate of the Lord through which we enter to the Church to thank the Lord and praise Him for His uncountable blessings.

+ Upon opening the door, the Cathedral bells are rung to welcome the new Pope and rejoice for his arrival.

+ The procession enters to the Cathedral and the deacons say the hymn of “O Only begotten Son of God” until the procession reaches the gate or door of the temple and all kneel before the holy temple.

+ The Pope stands before the temple between two bishops while the metropolitans and bishops ascend to the temple and the priests and deacons take their specified places.

+ The archbishop stands before the temple's door, facing east and prays the Litany of the Gospel, specifically this one: "O Master Lord Jesus Christ our God who sent His saintly disciples and pure Apostles to all the world, to preach His Kingdom and teach all nations the true knowledge. We ask You Our King to open our hearts to hear the words of Your Holy Gospels through the prayers of Your saints."

The deacon says: "Pray for the Holy Gospel."

The congregation says: "Lord have Mercy".

The archbishop completes: "Open the senses of our souls, bodies and spirits to become worthy not only to hear but to act according to Your Holy commandments according to the Will of Your Good Father....etc".

NOTE:

The archbishop begins the ordination prayers by this Litany, as the new Patriarch is an example of the Apostles, whom Lord Jesus sent to the entire world to preach the Kingdom and teach all nations the knowledge of God and His worshipping. As He said to them: "Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to every creatures". Mark 16:15, and also "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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" Matthew 28:19, 20. He also asks God to open his heart and all the attendants and the senses of their souls, bodies and spirits to hear and act according to the Holy Commandments of God , which are the constitution of our salvation and the light that guides our feet in the way of peace.

+ The archbishop hands over the recommendation signed by all the metropolitans and bishops and all the members of the Holy Synod, to one of the archdeacons to read it on the pulpit (now the metropolitans and bishops read it).

This is the text of the recommendation: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The inseparable Holy Trinity One God Our Lord, we the Orthodox Christians.

We rely on Him to the last breath, and send to Him on High Glory and honor forever.

We the metropolitans and bishops and priests and deacons and the entire congregation who love Christ, in the cities of Alexandria, Cairo and all provinces of Egypt.

After we were stricken by the affliction of the orphanhood by the passing away of His Holiness Pope..... to the heavenly paradise, who gained all the holy promises and passed to God Who loved him so he heard the joyful voice saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

When we were orphaned, and the Holy Church of God which he shepherded by His teaching, was widowed, we supplicated to God to lead us to a person worthy of the great leadership of

priesthood, to shepherd us into the Way of the Lord and guide us to the harbor of salvation. So by heavenly love and the Holy Spirit's work, we all agreed in good heart to elect the worshipper of God.... From the monks of the monastery of... a Pope and Patriarch and ruler of bishops for the Apostolic See of St. Mark the Evangelist, preacher of Egypt, Ethiopia, Nuba, Sudan and five Western cities (Pentapolis) and all the provinces of the Markan preaching in Africa, Asia, Europe, America and Australia.

We selected him because he worships God, loves strangers, with understanding and knowledge, pure, perseveres on keeping the Church Rites, Faith, Dogma and tradition, and we present him as a ruling pastor, Pope and Patriarch for Holy House of God to shepherd it with meekness and compassion.

That is why we wrote this recommendation and have signed it with gratitude to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit One God Amen.

+ Then the metropolitans and bishops stand before the temple for the ordination of the Patriarch, so the elected person kneels on his knees and the archbishop prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, raises the incense and says this prayer:

“O Lord God of hosts who qualified us for this holy service... We approach You and supplicate to you to grant the grace of the high leadership of Priesthood to Your servant ... standing here awaiting your heavenly gifts....”.

+ The archdeacon says the following supplications:[15] and the singers respond after every supplication saying: “Lord have mercy: -

Let us all say ,God answer us and have mercy on us for the reign of peace in the Holy House of God.”

+ There are five supplications and the singers say Lord hear us by the tune, Lord have mercy Lord bless us, or Kerye-Eleyson, Kerye-Eleyson, Kerye-Eleyson, at the end of each supplication.

+ The archbishop says this prayer: O Master Lord God the Pantocrator, Lord of all.... Grant Your servant....grace. Grant him wisdom to shepherd Your Church purely in justice, Dominion and honor due to You.....

+ The archdeacon says: From the Lord we ask and the singers say: Lord have mercy.

+ The archbishop places his hand on the chosen candidate (if he was a hegomen) and does not place it if the candidate was a bishop.

+ The archdeacon says this declaration:

The divine grace that heals sickness and accomplished deficiencies, and gathers the scattered led us to know the worshipper of God... to present him Pope and Patriarch for the two cities of Cairo and Alexandria and all provinces of Egypt and all the Markan preached areas instead of the late blessed Who passed away in blessed age and left to God.

Let us pray then begging the Lord of grace to dwell on him the grace of the Holy Spirit and let us all say: Lord have mercy.

+ The singers say: Lord have mercy.

+ Then the archbishop places his hand on the chosen candidate's head (if he is a hegemon) saying: Yes Lord make him worthy for the call of high priestly leadership, to become worthy to pastor Your congregation with purity and righteousness to win the share of the saints. By the mercy of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, blessed art You with Him and the Consubstantial Holy Spirit, now.....

Then says: Peace be with all. Irini-pasi. And the singers respond: and with your spirit.

+ The archdeacon says: Stand well. Stand in purity, Stand in reverence and quietness and let us all say: Lord have mercy.

The singers say: Lord have mercy thrice.

+ The archdeacon says: Come on gathering metropolitans and bishops and place your hands on our father chosen by God (if he was a hegomen), or pray for our father chosen by God (if he was a bishop).

+ If he was a hegomen, the metropolitans and bishops place their hands on his shoulders and arms but the archbishop places his right hand on his head . If the chosen candidate is a bishop who was already laid hands on, then the metropolitans and bishops stand around him without laying on of hands, even the archbishop does not lay hands on him.

+ The leader of metropolitans prays this prayer of ordination: O Master Lord God of all, source of all compassion.... We ask and entreat Your goodness O Philanthropic One for Your servant..... Whom You chose a high priest for Your Church to become ruler over Your congregation and a pastor for them. Shine on him Lord by the light of Your Countenance to enlighten his heart by the spring of Your glory, to know Your Holy Mysteries.

+ Pour on him the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the spirit of perfect comfort whom You gave to Your saintly Apostles and pure prophets. Lord grant him the spirit of wisdom, understanding, power and counsel, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. God fill him with Your fear to judge Your congregation with justice and defend the True Orthodox Faith. Adorn him by the vestment of Your Holy Glory and place a crown on his head and anoint him by the oil of joy, of Your Goodness to become Your high priest, faithful over Your House, to glorify You without blame all the days of his life. By pure sacrifices, and faultless prayers and a bright spirit, by fasts and good deeds, love, meekness, faith without hypocrisy, and offers oblations for the ignorance of Your congregation and rescue them from the traps of sin and return them to Your holy fold. God grant Your congregation peace and grant Your servant... the Spirit of Your Holiness to undo every bond of the enemy, and gather the children of the Church to become one flock for one pastor, and keep his priesthood blameless to the end, to serve You by spiritual sacrifices at all times like the rank of the Great High Priest in heaven Jesus Christ our Lord, Glory and dominion due to Him.....

NOTE:

This is a very important prayer that includes all the responsibilities of the Patriarch who is:

- (1) Spiritual ruler of the congregation.
- (2) Pastor of pastors.
- (3) Judges the congregation in justice and uprightness.
- (4) Protector of the True Orthodox Faith against heresies and deviations.
- (5) Offers oblations and prayers to intercede for the congregation before God.
- (6) Rescues sinners from fire of sin and evil.
- (7) Returns the lost to the holy yard of faith.
- (8) Works and prays for the salvation of the congregation.
- (9) Gathers the scattered, children of God to one.
- (10) Gives absolution and forgiveness to all repentants who are tied by the devil by sin and its horrific bonds.

+ The leading metropolitan faces west praying: “Lord look upon us and upon our service, purify us from all blemish and send Your grace of leadership of priesthood of Your servant.... To be worthy to please You and shepherd Your congregation without blame, because You are merciful and righteous ... glorydue to You

+ Then he turns his face and faces west towards the chosen candidate and signs his forehead by his thumb (if he was a hegomen) saying: “We call you Anba Pope and Patriarch and leader of bishops of the Markan See.

Likewise he says the three signs and the hymnists say Amen, every time.

NOTE:

By these three signs and pronounciation the ordination is accomplished actually and the chosen candidate becomes the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon him.

+ Then they dress him the tunic and seat him on a small chair in the middle while the metropolitans and bishops sit around him and the deacons chant St Mark’s doxology.

+ The archbishop read the tradition specific for the Patriarch Pope. This is a text of the tradition[16] of Anba Head of bishops of the great Alexandria. From the bishops gathering to all those who love God: hegemons, priests, deacons, epodeacons, ognastoses, hymnists, the fatherly monks and all the believers and the Orthodox congregation in the great city of Alexandria which loves Christ and the congregation of Cairo and all Egypt and all the congregations of the See of St. Mark that love Christ.

We (the metropolitans) and bishops who gathered by the mercy of God, say to you: sing by the harp in a festival day for you, how exceedingly rich is God

and His wisdom and knowledge , as He is our Master and true God Jesus Christ Who knows

everything before existence, Examiner of hearts, Who still is with the Father and the Holy Spirit the counseling true Judge, Who has the hidden treasures of wisdom, the True God, and God accepted the spirit of the good works our father the Patriarch Anba ... who gained the inheritance of the saints and the share of the righteous. Necessity obliged us to gather according to the Apostolic Canons by one agreement, we the metropolitans and bishops of Egypt and the clergy and all the congregation of the great city of Alexandria and leaders of Egypt. So we counseled supplicating to God to manifest His good will in the choice of whoever is worthy of the great leadership of priesthood , to shepherd us in the Lord's way and guide us to the harbor of salvation. So we decided to fulfill the Will of God and supplicate His Providence and entreat His Compassion and Goodness, perseveringly asking Him to guide us to the worthy person for the greatest leadership of priesthood rank and the grace of God led us to the worshipper of God ... from the monastery of

Who was brought up by saintly fathers and gained their grace like Elisha with Elijah the Tishbite regarding the angelical eskeem, as written by the apostle: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined ... these He also called, whom He called, these He also justified, and whom he justified, these He also glorified". Rom 8: 28-30 and He said also: "And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was" Hebrew 5:4. So we promoted him to this eminent rank of the greatest leadership of priesthood to become a father and shepherd to shepherd us in the fertile meadows of true knowledge, that is why we lifted him to the succession of the evangelist theologian St Mark the apostle, full of all spiritual graces, when he gained the gift of the Paraclete by apostolic voices, as we dressed him the vestment of the greatest leadership of priesthood from God and His pure apostles, and became a high priest, shepherd and teacher.

As he gained this authority from God the King of heavenly and earthly creation, it became his right to loose and bind, ordain bishops and clergy, sanctify altars and consecrate new Churches, practice the authority given by our Lord Jesus Christ to His pure apostles and sanctify the Myron. As he is filled by the grace of the Holy Spirit and become a new man by the great rank bestowed upon him by God, Who exalts the lowly and raises the poor and seats him with His congregation. We are filled by joy bestowed on us by Jesus Christ, the Word of God Who incarnated from the Virgin St. Mary, became man, suffered, physically died and rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father and sent the Holy Spirit the comforter to His pure apostles and fulfilled them , holy by the heavenly rank, so they organized the church every where by the unity of faith and gathered the scattered, those worthy by the providence of His goodness.

God Who chose him, bless him by speech on opening his mouth as a benefit for ourselves and become peace for the Church and salvation for all Orthodox people in his time and may He bestow upon us all mercies. By the intercession of our Lady and Queen Theotokos St. Mary and the prayers of our father the beloved St. Mark the pure evangelist ... and all the saints acceptable before our Lord Jesus Christ, glory and dominion are due to Him with His good Father and the living consubstantial Holy Spirit, now..... .

This is a message of the tradition of Anba Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of the St. Mark decided by us, metropolitans and bishops, gathering here and performed his blessed ordination and seating him on the See of St. Mark the apostle and evangelist and theologian in the Church of according to the canonical tradition and approved it by our handwriting Glory be to God, Amen.

+ Then signatures of all the metropolitans, bishops, abbots of monasteries members of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

+ The archbishop folds the tradition after reading it and hands it to His Holiness the Pope Patriarch and says audibly:

“Receive the tradition of Greatest leadership of priesthood for many peaceful, glorious, dignified years to come”.

The hymnist say: Doxology of His Holiness the Pope. Then the archdeacon says the following supplications[17] “for the peace and harmony and organization of the Holy Church of God. To the Lord we ask”.

The hymnists say: Lord have mercy.

For the congregation of God...etc. at the end, the congregation says: Aksios.

+ The leading metropolitan places the four Gospels on the head of the Pope[18].

The hymnist chant the Aksios hymn. Then the Gospels are lifted from his head while the metropolitans and bishops come forward and kiss them.

+ The archdeacon says:

Pray O father’s righteous metropolitans and bishops. The leading bishops says this prayer on their behalf:

We ask for the beloved by God and his servant Anba Eminence of the rank and steadfastness in worshipping on one, holy universal apostolic Orthodox Church of God that He purchased by His Precious Blood, to establish just judgments, splendid gifts and faithful teachings, to pray for the support of the Church and victory of rulers.

Then the three signs, and the hymnists say Amen at every sign, then they say the hymn of Aksios.

NOTE:

It is nice for the Church to be patriotic with a strong national belonging so it ordains the Pope Patriarch to pray for the victory of the ruler of state and his success in politics and plans for the welfare of the country and happiness of people. In the Church there is a special litany called Litany for the King (chief, where we say: Remember O Lord the ruler of our land, Your servant keep him in peace and justice and power. Let all nations wanting war, submit them to him. Talk to his heart for the peace of Your one, holy universal Apostolic Church. Grant him to think about us in peace, in Your Holy Name so we too may live quietly and abide in righteousness and purity.

+ One of the priests come forward and places the rod of shepherdhood on the altar, near the

cross-folded in a linen veil[19] The hymnists say the hymn of Ni-Saf-if-

+ Metropolitans and bishops starts dressing the Pope Patriarch the vestment of leadership of priesthood:

(1) When they dress him the sticharion (.....) the archdeacon says[20] “Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Your saints shout for joy” Psalm 132:9.

(2) Then they dress him the stole (Epitrachelion)

and the archdeacon says:

“God be blessed, Who poured of His grace upon His priests like oil upon the head, running down on the beard. The beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Herman” (Psalm 133).

The hymnists say: Now and until the end of all ages, Amen.

(3) Then they dress him the waistband (or belt) and the archdeacon says: “God be blessed Who girded my waist by power and made my ways blameless always” The hymnists say: Now and for all.....

(4) Then they dress him the right armlet sleeves and the archdeacon says: “Your right Lord is glorified by power. Your right hand Lord crushed the enemies and by the power of Your arm You perished the deceivers. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord made miracles always” Psalm 118. The hymnists say: Now and forever..... .

(5) Then they dress him the left armlet sleeves and the archdeacon says: “Your hands have made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments. Those who fear You will be glad when they see Me Psalm 119:10. The hymnist say: Now and forever

(6) Then they dress him with the girdles, and the archdeacon says: Gird Your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, with your glory and your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility and righteousness and your right hand shall teach me some things” Psalm 45: 3,4 – they hymnists say: Now and forever.....

(7) Then they dress him with the phelonion (Bornos) and the archdeacon says: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior as He dressed me the garment of salvation and joy always” Luke 1: 47. The hymnists say: now and forever.....

(8) Then they place for him the crown and the archdeacon says: “The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty ... He has girded Himself with strength, Psalm 93:1 “and adorned my head by precious crown.

The hymnists say: “Now and forever

+ After the placement of the crown on the Pope’s forehead, the metropolitans and bishops lift their crown and wear the SHEMLAH and ascend with him to the altar to receive the cross and rod of shepherhood from above the altar. The leading metropolitans looks at him saying:

Receive the rod of shepherd from the Hand of the Great Shepherd of shepherds Jesus Christ the

living Son of God , to Shepherd His flock and nourish it by living teaching as He entrusted you to the souls of His flock and from your hands, their blood will be asked for”. The Pope comes forward to the altar and receives the rod of shepherdhood, signs it and places a handful of incense into the censer, and the bishops and metropolitans share with him in the second handful.

Then he signs the third sign and places incense into the censer.

+ The archbishop faces east and prays: “We thank you Lord Pantocrator on every occasion, in every condition and for all things, and we praise and glorify Your Holy Name as You made great things with us and poured Your rich gift onto Your servant Anba

We ask and entreat You Lord hear us with the multitude of Your mercy and walk with the ordination of leading great priesthood that become to Your servant Anba.... The righteous leader of bishops by the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit upon him. Straighten the call of his selection by purity, and choose us with him to work and win the profit of the mites , and get the wages of the wise faithful steward with whoever fulfilled Your will, at the coming of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, for whom is glory... .

+ Then they ascend the Pope to the seat of leadership (having three steps) and while he is ascending the first step, the archbishop says: “We seat the leader of bishops on the seat of the apostle and evangelist Mark in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, then says the first sign in Coptic: “Blessed be God the Father, the Pantocrator.” and the hymnists say: “Amen.”

While ascending the second step, the archbishop says: “We seat the leader of bishops, called from God Anba Patriarch on the See of St. Mark. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Then says the second sign in Coptic: “Blessed is His Only begotten Son.” And the hymnists say: “Amen.”

+ Then they seat him on the seat and the leading archbishop says:

“We seated Anba ... Pope and Patriarch on the Apostolic See of St. Mark the Evangelist, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Then he says the third in Coptic: “Blessed is the Holy Spirit....” The hymnists say: “Amen.” Then the hymn of AKSIOS.

+ Then they forward to His Holiness the Pope, the Gospel of St. Mark, he kisses it and holds it so all metropolitans and bishops come and kiss it in his hands, while the deacons are chanting the hymn of: the censer (Tai-shoori) then the hymn of: Blessed the great, then one of the priests reads a chapter of epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Hebrews 4:14 – 5: 1-6 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest.....”.

NOTE:

It is an appropriate text for the ordination of the high priest to resemble Christ the Great High Priest.

+ The hymnists and congregation say the Trisagon .

+ One of the priests says the Prayer for the Gospel.

+ The archdeacon says the Psalm in Coptic with a tune.

+ Then the archdeacon says: Stand in the fear of God. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel from His Holiness Anba. . . ., then His Holiness the Pope says the introduction of the Gospel.

+ Then the archdeacon says this warning:

Stand in the fear of God and listen to the Holy Gospel from the mouth of our righteous honorable blessed, father of fathers, shepherd of shepherds, leader and high priest, successor of St. Mark the Apostle, the great of patriarchs, beloved of Christ, our pure father Anba. . . ., the Pope of the great city of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of the Apostle St. Mark. May God in heaven abide him on his seat many years and peaceful times, and may all his enemies submit to him and give him peaceful and joyful times and grant us grace and mercy by his prayers and supplications.

The Holy Gospel, a chapter from the Gospel of our teacher St. John the evangelist and pure disciple may his blessing be upon us all. The hymnists respond: Amen.

+ His Holiness the Pope says in Coptic: “Our Father and our God. . . .”. Then recites the Gospel in Coptic from John 1: 1-16, while standing and at its end, the congregation say: Glory to You O Lord.

+ Then His Holiness reads the Psalm in Arabic Psalm 73: 23, 24 & 28, and its introduction is:

A Psalm of our teacher David the prophet and king may his blessing be upon us all, Amen.

Then he recites the Psalm: “You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel and afterwards receive me to glory. But it is good for me to draw near God. I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all your works. Alleluia” Psalm 72: 23, 24 & 28.

Then the archdeacons says: “Let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. He makes their families like a flock. The righteous see it and rejoice” Psalm 107: 32, 42 and “ The Lord has sworn and will not relent. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at your right hand, our father the saint Pope and Patriarch Anba May the Lord keep your life. Amen. Alleluia”. Psalm 110: 4, 5.

NOTE:

When his Holiness the Pope recites the Psalm: “You hold me by my right hand as if he supplicates to God saying: “Hold my right hand and lead me in the right way, guide me by Your good, divine, blessed counsel to perform this great responsibility with righteousness and uprightness. Lord let me abide in You, trust in You and do not put confidence in men, or my power or my understanding or knowledge or any one else except You. Help me to praise You by prayers and spread the correct teaching in all the Church (daughter of Zion)”.

+ His Holiness the Pope recites the Gospel in Arabic while standing. It is the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, to resemble Christ the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep, Who knows His own sheep by name, and Whose voice the sheep know and follow Him, to shepherd then in green pastures which are the evangelical teachings and they drink His living teaching.

+ Every time the Pope says: I am the good shepherd when he reads the Gospel. The hymnists say:

Amen.

+ After the end of reading the Gospel in Arabic, the metropolitans and bishops come and kiss the Gospel while the Pope holds it and the hymnists chant the tune of Pi-Epnevma.

+ Then the Pope or whoever delegates for him, says an appropriate word about the Gospel of the Good Shepherd and for that festival.

+ After the sermon the hymnists say the response of the Gospel with the joyful tune characteristic of that day[21] .

+ The Pope, metropolitans, bishops, priests and the archdeacon enter the altar and pray the mass as usual, and all receive the Holy Mysteries and all happily rejoice for this joyous anniversary.

+ At the end of the mass , His Holiness the Pope undresses the service vestments, wears his black vestments and descends in an ecclesiastical procession, preceded by the deacons by tunes to the tomb of St. Mark, preacher of Egypt, and the first of her patriarchs, to follow his steps in the faithful shepherdhood.

+ All are peacefully dismissed, glorifying God and rejoicing for this blessed ordination and the Pope starts practicing his pastoral responsibilities directly.

+ He fasts for one year after the ordination except for the major Lordly feasts.



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