

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH: THE CHURCH

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES:

**Verse:** “Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander

### LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this lesson are to learn about the Kingdom of God on Earth, which is the Church. In particular, in this lesson, we will study a) the definition of the Orthodox Church and its contrasts with other denominations, a) the attacks against the church and the people who bring them about, c), the four orders in the Orthodox Church government, and the parables in the Bible that are directly related to the Church and church service.

**INTRODUCTION:** Christ is the Church and He came to establish His Church on earth through His Incarnation. The church then must be totally based on Christ, His work, and His teachings. The church is absolutely essential in

establishing the Kingdom of God in our life. In Ephesians Chapter 5, St. Paul talks about this as he says, “Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). In this chapter, St. Paul also talks about marriage and ties in marriage directly to the Church and Christ.

In Ephesians 5:24-32, St. Paul says, “Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything.”<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,<sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,<sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.<sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.<sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.<sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.<sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

In a word, the Icon of the Last supper gives the entire definition of the church.

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## LESSON BODY:

### **1. The Definition of the Church:**

The Orthodox Church defines the church by three fundamental elements. These are 1) A community of believers, 2) around the Eucharist, who are 3) led by a legitimate Bishop. For the Catholic Church, it is 1) A community of believers, 2) around the Eucharist, who are 3) led by a legitimate Bishop, and 4) belonging to the Pope of Rome. In the Protestant church, the church consists of two elements: 1) a group of believers and 2) the Holy Trinity. The Canon Laws have five hierarchical

levels: 1) Apostolic laws, 2) Ecumenical Councils (3 Ecumenical councils), 3) Canons of Local Councils, 4) Church Fathers, and 5) the Holy Synod.

The Coptic Church, for example, recognizes the three Ecumenical Councils: 1) Nicea (325 AD), 2) Constantinople (381 AD), and Ephesus (431 AD). These councils discussed the divinity and humanity of Christ, as well as the three persons of the Holy Trinity. These councils are what led to the writing of the Nicene Creed.

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## **2. Attacks Against the Church Today**

In today's society, we very often hear the words "I love Christ but I hate the church." This saying has been popularized by the Protestant movement. This saying is now very popular among young people. Why do people say this? One reason is that these people, especially young people, have been disillusioned by the Church through church corruption and wrongdoing. For example, the corruption in the Catholic Church in the early centuries as well as today with all of the sexual scandals and improprieties in handling money, etc... People are fed up with the church because they see it as corrupt. They view organized religion like organized crime, in that the church leaders are dishonest and immoral.

However, the behavior of people does not define the Church. The Church was established by Christ as Holy and pure, and the actions of people are what defile the church. Thus, the church itself is innocent and pure. People must understand this distinction and therefore they will have the correct view of the church. Value in the Church has never been about what we see, it's always been about what God says. As St. Peter says, "But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

God's language is faith. Nothing is impossible with God (see Matthew 19:26). God never speaks negatively. He speaks truth. Even when He speaks truth, He speaks it by faith, because He sees what can happen. Faith doesn't mean that you don't see the problem. Faith means you can see past the problem to the answer. You're not saying, "There is no problem." You're saying, "There is an answer!" This is the correct way to view the Church.

Indeed, one of the tragic aberrations of so-called modern religion, is "Churchless Christianity." The assertion is that it is Christ who saves us, not the Church, so "all you need is Jesus." Few who claim to be Christians would argue against the statement that it is Christ who saves. For He is the eternal Son of God who assumed human flesh, and has done so "for us and for our salvation" (Nicene Creed). Thus St. Paul writes, "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5). But because this Mediator established the Church with His body, we who are joined to Him are joined to His Church as well. To say we love Christ, who is Head of the Church, and at the same time reject His body is to deny New Testament teaching.

**a) *The Gospel and Acts.*** The first use of the word "church" (Gr. *ἐκκλησία*) in the New Testament comes in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when our Lord gives His approval of St. Peter's confession of faith and promises, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus Christ builds, and we cooperate with Him. The Book of Acts amplifies what Jesus meant in Matthew 16. When Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost concludes, those present ask for guidance toward salvation: "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Following Peter's word, they are baptized and join with the other believers, three thousand of them (Acts 2:38, 41). Having been joined to Christ and His Church, these baptized believers begin living as the body of Christ. We find them looking after each other, using their personal resources for one another's care, continuing together in prayer and in the Eucharist (Acts 2:42-47). From this point on "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47), and throughout Acts, we see the Church being built as the Gospel of Christ spreads.

**b) *The Epistles.*** St. Paul's instructions in his letters to the churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean clearly show what it means to be member of Christ: to be the Church and to be in the Church. Nowhere in the New Testament is St. Paul's teaching on the Church more fully disclosed than in Ephesians 4. He instructs us that:

The Church is *one*, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). There is one Church, one God, one doctrine, one baptism.

The Church is *people*, men and women who are energized by the Holy Spirit. For "to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7). We are not all given the same gifts, but together we are equipped to do God's will.

The Head of the Church is *Christ*, "from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit together" (Ephesians 4:16).

The Church is "the *new man*" (Ephesians 4:24), the new creation, made to be righteous and holy. We are no longer alienated from God (Ephesians 4:18); we are being renewed together (Ephesians 4:23), "members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25).

The Church, then, is that place established by Christ where we each may become what we are created to be, maturing and being perfected, while the Church receives what it needs from each of us, so that it too is being perfected. The Church as the body of Christ carries us beyond our pretty and worldly personal concerns, stretching our vision to the eternal and heavenly as we ascend together to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We do see today many coverts to Orthodoxy, because they see Orthodoxy as pure and Holy, and the true Church that Christ came to establish.

### **3. The Four Orders in Church Government**

The New Testament teaches that all four "orders" which form the government of the Church-laity, deacons, presbyters, and bishops-are necessary to the proper

functioning of the body of Christ. All four are clearly visible in St. Paul's first letter to Timothy.

(1) The laity are called "*saints*" (Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:10), the "*faithful*" (Ephesians 1:1), and "*brethren*" (Colossians 1:2). The laity (Gr. *laos*) are all the people of God, the "*priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:4-10). Technically "laity" includes clergy, though in our day the word usually refers to those in the Church who are not ordained. It is from among the laity that the other three orders emerge.

(2) The deacons, literally "servants," are ordained to serve the Church and must meet high qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8—13). The Apostles were the first to take on the service tasks of deacons, and when the workload became too great they called for "*seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business*" (Acts 6:3). Besides serving the material needs of the people, deacons occupy a crucial role in the liturgical life of the Church.

(3) The presbyters, or elders, are visible throughout the New Testament. Their ministry from the start was to "rule," "labor in the word" and teach true "doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17) in the local congregation. St. Paul "appointed elders in every church" (Acts 14:23) and later instructed his apostolic apprentice, Titus, to do the same in Crete (Titus 1:5). From the word "presbyter" came the shorter form "prest," which was used in the early Church and finally became "priest." In no way is the ordained Christian priesthood seen as a throwback to or a reenacting of the Old Testament priesthood. Rather, joined to Christ who is our High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6, 10), the Orthodox priest is likewise a minister of a New Covenant which supersedes the old.

(4) The bishop is the "overseer" of the congregation and clergy in a given area. Often the terms "bishop" and "elder" are interchangeable in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28), with the bishop being the leader of the elders. The qualifications for bishop listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9 underscore this role. Nonetheless, "bishop" is a specific office both in the New Testament and in the early Church. The Twelve were the first to hold this office (in Acts 1:20 "office" is literally translated "bishopric") and they in turn consecrated other bishops to follow them. For example, Timothy and Titus are clearly of a separate order from that of elder (see 1 Timothy 5:17-22; Titus 1:5). Early records show James was bishop of Jerusalem by A.D. 49 and functioned accordingly at the first council there

(Acts 15:13-22). St. Peter is on record as the first bishop of Antioch prior to A.D. 53, and later first bishop of Rome, where he was martyred about A.D. 65.

Perhaps the strongest early reference outside the New Testament to the presence of the four orders in Church government occurs in the writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch from A.D. 67-107, the very heart of the New Testament era. To the church at Philadelphia (see Revelation 3:7-13) he writes of “Christians [laity] at one with the bishop and the presbyters and the deacons. . .” (Ign. Phil., salutation; italics added).

In the Orthodox Church, authority is resident in all four orders, with the bishop providing the center of unity. His authority is not over the Church but within the Church. He is an icon of Jesus Christ, “*the Shepherd and Overseer* [literally, “Bishop”] *of your souls*” (1 Peter 2:25). Church leadership is not one of more of the orders functioning without the others. Rather the Church, with Christ as Head, is conducted like a symphony orchestra, a family, the body of Christ, where all the members in their given offices work together as the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity.

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**CONCLUSION:** Christ is the Church, and came to establish the Church. There is no hope salvation without the church. As we discussed the statement “I love Christ and hate the Church” is a huge deception and contradiction. If we truly love Christ, then we would love the Church automatically. He who hates the church must also hate Christ. Let us not be deceived by today’s worldly standards and erroneous opinions about the church. We must stand strong and cling to the teachings of the Bible and the Apostles.

The Church also has definition, hierarchy, and order. It is not a church of chaos or arbitrariness. It has precision and order, just like Christ. The Icon of the Last Supper gives an encompassing visual definition of the Church. The church consists of 1) A community of believers, 2) around the

Eucharist, who are 3) led by a legitimate Bishop. The Orthodox definition of the church is different from that of the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

The church has hierarchy in leadership and in the Canon Laws. The Church has structure and four different orders of government. The Church is composed of 1) laity (the people), 2) the deacons, 3) priests, and 4) bishops.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

## 2. PARABLES AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO THE CHURCH

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
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## LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this lesson are to learn about the connections of the parables of Christ to the church. We also discuss some of the Epistles of St. Paul that talk about spiritual gifts and their connections to the church. The parables of Christ shed much light on the importance and essential aspect of the church in our spiritual life.

### INTRODUCTION:

Most of the parables of Christ play an essential role in discussing various aspects of the Church and the Kingdom of God in general, in heaven and on earth (the church). There are several parables to make specific references to church life. These include the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), where both of these parables establish the connection of repentance with the church. Secondly, the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) as well as 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and Romans 12:3-8 talk about the importance of using our God-given talents for serve God in the church. St. Paul argues that using our talents to serve God in the church results in church unity and makes clear how we are all members of the body of Christ. Thirdly, the church is what makes us spiritually alert and watchful, and the parables of the Vigilant Servants (Luke 12:35-40) and the parable of the Wise Steward (Luke 12:42-48) discuss this point very strongly. Fourthly, the church is what provides spiritual nourishment and growth. This is discussed most nicely by the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32). Indeed our entire spiritual life begins as a seed and grows into a beautiful garden through the Church. The Church is what makes our spiritual potential realized and a reality, and without the church this mustard seed will never grow. It will always stay a seed.

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## LESSON BODY:

### 1. The church is a hospital and the only place of repentance

The church fathers call the church a “hospital.” Indeed, the church is where we go to recover from our sins. It is a place of forgiveness through confession and repentance and it is a place for recovery and spiritual change and growth. This notion is beautifully exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Prodigal Son.

**A. Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).** This parable tells us that the church protects us from sin and is a place of repentance and recovery. This parable is about repentance and a return to the church. In this parable, when the Good Samaritan (who represents Christ in the parable) sees the man in the ditch (we the sinners), He does not question or interrogate him, or ask him to perform any action, but comes to him personally where he fell and stoops over him with His affection, washes and dresses his wound by His own wound, stops his bleeding by His own bleeding, and pours on Him the oil (Holy Spirit) of His compassion and of His life, carrying him on the arms of His mercy, offering him a ride to the Inn of His Church, asking His angels to serve him, and expending His grace on him till he recovers. Thus, the Inn in this parable is the Church, and the Church is where we go to recover from our wounds (our sins). The Church is a hospital only open to sinners!

Good Samaritan in this parable is Christ, and it is Christ who through His church picks us up from the ditch (the ungodly world) of our sinful life, and heals our wounds (sins) by His blood on the Cross and through the Sacrament of the Eucharist which is only given in the church. Christ then leads us to the church, which is the Inn in the parable, a hospital, where we recover from our sins and lead a new life.

**B. Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).** In this parable, the house of the father in the parable represents the Church. This parable is also about repentance, and shows us that the church is our home, it is the house of

Christ, and it is the only place where we can meet Christ. Life outside of our Father's house is like living and eating with pigs. This type of life leaves us helpless, in want, empty, and yearning. It is only when we "come of ourselves," that is, reason within ourselves, that we realize the importance of the church in our happiness, security and well-being. This is exactly what the prodigal son realized in the parable. No one forced him to go back to his father. He reasoned within himself and realized his emptiness, loneliness, and helplessness. The church provides us security and support. It is our Father's house where we can take comfort and certainty of our future. It is the place of a feast, of utter joy of being and enjoying the company of Christ. The parable of the prodigal son shows very clearly that those who live outside of the church are lost and helpless and will never find security or joy. They depend on the ways of the world which lead to destruction and misery.

## **2. The church is a place where God expects us to use our God given talents**

As active members of the body of Christ, we cannot go to church just to watch. We are not observers or spectators, but active members of the Body of Christ. Being active in church is an essential part of being a member of the Body of Christ. This zeal for Christ is greatly exemplified by the parable of the Talents and in St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Romans.

**A. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30).** This parable talks about three types of servants. First, there is the servant whom God have given many talents (5 talents), and that servant invested his talents in the church and glorified God, and as a result, God was pleased with him and doubled his talents. Then there was the servant who had few talents (2 talents). That servant also invested his talents in the church and glorified God, and as a result, God was pleased with him and doubled his talents also. Then there was the servant who had one talent. He was lazy and did nothing with it. He buried it and had an excuse for his master when has was questioned about it. As a result, he was condemned for his laziness in refusing to serve God. If we are lazy and bury our talents, this does not please God, and we will be judged accordingly. We must be active servants in church!

**B. Unity in Diversity (1 Corinthians 12:1-31).** In this chapter, St. Paul talks beautifully about how achieve unity in the church by having diversity in the gifts that God has given us to serve him. St. Paul says,

“Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: <sup>2</sup>You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup>But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: <sup>8</sup>for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

### **Unity and Diversity in One Body**

<sup>12</sup>For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>For in fact the body is not one member but many.

<sup>15</sup>If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup>And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup>If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? <sup>18</sup>But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. <sup>19</sup>And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

<sup>20</sup>But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no

need of you.”<sup>22</sup> No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.<sup>23</sup> And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty,<sup>24</sup> but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it,<sup>25</sup> that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.<sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. <sup>29</sup> *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?* <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

St. Paul clearly states here that it is the same Holy Spirit who gives everyone talents and gifts, and there is no gift that is more important than another gift. They are all equal. St. Paul says “There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.”<sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” Someone who has the gift of singing is as important as one who has the gift of teaching or administration, or healing, or speaking, etc...

Everyone is equally important in their gifts. St. Paul says, “But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body.”<sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”<sup>2</sup>

**C. Serve God with Spiritual Gifts.** In Romans 12:3-8, St. Paul says “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”<sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.<sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith;<sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;<sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Again, St. Paul is emphasizing here the oneness in the Body of Christ, and each person has a different but equal spiritual gift to serve God. St. Paul says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

## **D. Use Your Spiritual Gifts to Unify the Church.**

In Ephesians 4:1-16, St. Paul connects unity with that of spiritual gifts.

### **Unity**

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup> with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

### **Spiritual Gifts**

<sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

<sup>8</sup>Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”

<sup>9</sup> (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first<sup>[c]</sup> descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

<sup>11</sup> And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may

grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

### 3. The church is what makes us spiritually alert and watchful

**The parable of the faithful and evil servant (Luke 12:35-48).** In this parable, we read

“Let your waist be girded and *your* lamps burning; <sup>36</sup> and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. <sup>37</sup> Blessed *are* those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down *to eat*, and will come and serve them. <sup>38</sup> And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. <sup>39</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>40</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

“And the Lord said, “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? <sup>43</sup> Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. <sup>44</sup> Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. <sup>45</sup> But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, <sup>46</sup> the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers. <sup>47</sup> And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. <sup>48</sup> But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

This parable talks about how to be vigilant, strong, and persevere in our church life. It tells us to never be lazy, to never give up on the church, to not be discouraged if things do not go our way, and not be dismayed if we see things in church we don't like. The Church belongs to Christ, and thus is pure. The actions of people do not define a church, Christ does. In order to really follow Christ, we must be spiritually and mentally tough, to never be lazy, and to always be persistent, alert, and watchful. This parable also tells us to always be ready for we do not know the time of our death, and the time Christ calls for us. It is the church which makes us ready to meet Christ. We cannot compete in a race without training and preparation, and it is the church which gives us this training and preparation. The church makes us faithful to Christ, and those on the outside of the church, Christ calls "evil servants." Recall the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21.

#### **4. The church provides nourishment and spiritual growth**

The parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32) is an excellent example of how the church is the essential instrument of spiritual nourishment and growth. Our spiritual life starts like a mustard seed, which only grows and becomes a garden through the church. Thus, the church is the only place that enables the mustard seed to grow. In this parable, we read

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, <sup>32</sup> which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Our spiritual life starts like a mustard seed, which only grows and becomes a garden through the church. Thus, the church is the only place that enables the mustard seed to grow. This parable thus tells us about the fruits of life in the church. We become a spiritual "tree" and "the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." That is, we become the support group, the support system for those who are still seeds who are the kids and those young in the faith. Thus, the church is a home to give support not only to those who are tired and weary, but it also acts as a support system, a tree, for those who are young in the faith and still learning. God expects



us to be this support system when we mature. We all have a responsibility to use our talents and gifts to be this support system for others.

**CONCLUSION:** The parables of Christ have very strong connections with the church and its life. In this lesson, we discussed four different aspects of the connections of the parables to the church: 1) repentance and the church (parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son), 2) the church and its connection with our talents and spiritual gifts (parable of the talents, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8, and Ephesians 4) , 3) the church and its connection with being faithful and watchful (parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant), and 4) the church and its connection with our spiritual nourishment and growth (the parable of the Mustard Seed). The church unifies us in the one body of Christ, and it makes us faithful, full of life, filled with the Holy Spirit, zealous to serve God, spiritually alert and astute, able to work hard to serve God and not be lazy, it gives us hope, encouragement, and meaning in life, and it makes us humble.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

### 3. THE FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

#### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

## References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
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5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander

## LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this lesson are to learn about the four characteristics (marks) of the church. The church is One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic. We will learn about what these four elements mean, and how they define the church. We will discuss each characteristic in detail and give several Bible example of each.

**INTRODUCTION:** In the Nicene Creed, we profess, "We believe in one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church": these are the four characteristics (marks) of the Church. They are inseparable and intrinsically linked to each other. Our Lord Himself in founding the Church marked it with these characteristics, which reflect its essential features and mission. Through the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church fulfills these characteristics.

The **Four Characteristics (Marks) of the Church** is thus a term describing four specific adjectives — ***one, holy, catholic and apostolic*** — indicating four major distinctive marks or distinguishing characteristics of the Christian Church. The belief that the Church is characterized by these four particular "marks" was first expressed by the First Council of Constantinople in the year 381 in its revision of the Nicene Creed, in which it included the statement: "*[I believe] in one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.*" The Four Marks represent a summary of what is considered the most important affirmations of the Christian faith.

## **1. History**

The ideas behind the Four Marks have been in the Church since early Christianity. Allusions to them can be found in the writings of 2nd century early Church Father and bishop, St. Ignatius of Antioch. They were not established in doctrine until the First Council of Constantinople in 381 as an antidote to certain heresies that had crept into the Church in its early history. There the Council elaborated on the Nicene Creed, established by the First Council of Nicea 56 years before by adding to the end a section that included the affirmation: "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."

Roman Catholics believe the description "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" to be applicable only to the Catholic Church. They hold that "Christ established here on earth only one Church" and they believe in "the full identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church". While "there are numerous elements of sanctification and of truth which are found outside her structure", these, "as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity". This implies that the Orthodox Church and other churches, which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, "lack something in their condition as particular Churches". This Catholic belief according to Orthodox understanding is false. The word Catholic means universal and the word itself has nothing to do with the Catholic Church per se. The Orthodox Church, which is in disagreement with the Roman Catholic on this issue, regards itself as the historical and organic continuation of the original Church founded by Christ and his apostles. However, the communities born out of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation do not believe in apostolic succession and in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constituent element of the Church.

### **"One" as a mark of the Church**

St. Paul says, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:5-6). This list in the Pauline letters of factors making Christians one body affirms the oneness of the body, the church, through what Christians have in common, what they have communion in. Elsewhere, St. Paul says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). This statement was about Christians as individuals, but it applied to them also as groups, as local churches, whether composed mainly of Jewish or Gentile Christians. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, St. Paul spoke of himself as having persecuted "the church of God", not just the local church in Jerusalem but the same church that he addresses at the beginning of that letter as "the church of God that is in Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2). In the same letter, he tells Christians: "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27), and declares that, "just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

### **"Holy" as a mark of the Church**

The word *holy* means *set apart for a special purpose by and for God*. It does not imply that the members of the Church are free from sin, nor that the institution of the Church cannot sin. Christ's Church is holy because it *is* Christ's Church: "...upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus founded His Church to continue his redemptive and sanctifying work in the world. Christians understand the holiness of the universal Church to derive from Christ's holiness (Matthew 16:19). And the Church is holy because God is Holy and the Church shares in God's very own life and holiness (Ephesians 5:30-33).

### **"Catholic" as a mark of the Church**

"Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The word "catholic" is derived from the Greek adjective καθολικός (*katholikos*), meaning "general", "universal". It is associated with the Greek adverb καθόλου (*katholou*), meaning "according to the whole", "entirely", or "in general", a combination of the preposition κατά meaning "according to" and the adjective ὅλος meaning "whole."<sup>1</sup>

Applied to the church, the adjective "catholic" means that in the church the wholeness of the Christian faith, full and complete, all-embracing, and with nothing lacking, is proclaimed to all people without excluding any part of the faith or any class or group of people. The adjective can be applied not only to the church as spread throughout the world but also to each local manifestation of the church, in each of which nothing essential is lacking for it to be the genuine Church of Christ.

### **"Apostolic" as a mark of the Church**

This describes the Church's origin and beliefs as rooted and continuing in the living Tradition of the Apostles of Jesus. The Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodoxy (which includes Copts), and the Church of the East, each teach that they have preserved the original teaching of the apostles. They also teach that they have apostolic succession in that their bishops derive their authority through a direct line of laying on of hands from the apostles. Protestantism, on the other hand, holds that what preserves apostolic continuity is the written word of God, and thus Protestants do not teach or practice apostolic succession.

### **LESSON BODY:**

The church is the body through which Jesus is present and active in the world today. It was founded by Christ through His Apostles, and has maintained a living connection with the Apostles through the ordination of its clergy. The Nicene Creed indicates four basic characteristics of the Church, "We believe in One, Holy, Universal (Catholic) and Apostolic Church." These attributes are called essential, that is, those without which the Church would not be the Church. These characteristics are: 1) One Church, 2) Holy Church, 3) Catholic (Universal) Church, and 4) Apostolic Church.

## **1. One Church:**

The church is one body, from different members, visible and invisible, because God is one. About being one church, St. Paul says, "There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." (Ephesians 4:4-6). In the long soliloquy of the Lord Jesus with the Father, He prayed that the church may be "one" even as He and the Father are one. He said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one just as We are one" (John 17:20-22). The Lord Christ also said, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). This one shepherd in the parable is the Lord Christ who said, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11,14).

The church is one because she is one body and Christ is the head, as St. Paul says, "Christ is head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23), "He is the head of the church" (Colossians 1:18). So, the church is one, since the Lord Christ has one body; and we all are members of His body as the Apostle says, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

The church is one because she is the bride of Christ. St. John the Baptist said, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoice greatly..." (John 3:28, 29). The same meaning is stated in (Ephesians 5:31, 32, 25; 2 Corinthians 11:2). Being the only one, the bride of the Lord Christ is represented in the Song of Songs; and about her the Bridegroom says, "My dove, my perfect one, is the only one" (Song of Songs 6:9).

Since the church is one, what then does the word "churches" in the Holy Bible signify? It signifies the places where the churches were established (Acts 9:31). The book of Revelation mentioned seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:11); however, all of them are members of the One Holy Universal Apostolic Church.

## **2. Holy Church**

The church is holy because our Lord Christ made her so. St. Peter describes the church, saying, “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). As we know, the word “church” comes in the Bible to signify the believers (Acts 2:47; 8:1) as well as priesthood (Matthew 18:17; 18:18) besides the building (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17).

The Church is holy because the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). About Christ our Savior and His blood, the book of Revelation says, “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Revelation 1:5). In our baptism, the old man dies, who is corrupted; and a new man rises, who is holy in the image of God. On this regard, St. Paul says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), that is you have put on the righteousness, holiness and cleanliness of the Lord Christ. He also says, “Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her in Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Not only is the church holy, but also her objective is to make us holy, i.e. to live a holy life, to be different from the world, conformed to Christ’s will.

## **3. Catholic (Universal) Church**

The church is universal, gathering all believers together in the unity of faith. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16). Just as there are no distinction within the love of God, so the church stretches out her arms to the world “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11). This

universal church brought together the Jews and Gentiles, as well as all nationalities, peoples, and tongues in one faith.

Being universal, the church held Ecumenical Councils, like the that of the Apostles (Acts 15:1-35), formed of the leaders of the church to study and define a matter of faith, and decide certain issues regarding the church organization so that all churches might follow one doctrine.

The universal church brought together all the local churches in one church embracing all, in one Creed, under uniform church laws. This universal church brings all believers together in communion, in one faith, in the holy sacraments, and in partaking from one altar.

Nowadays, we see many differences in faith among the different churches, which shouldn't happen, that shattered the universal church. During the process of crucifixion of our Savior (John 19:23, 24), we notice:

a) Dividing His garments into 4 parts represent spreading of Christianity in the four corners of the world.

b) Seamless tunic, woven from the top in one piece is symbolic of the unity of the Church, which was born in Pentecost by the descension of the Holy Spirit from heaven.

c) The soldiers refused to divide it saying, "Let us not tear it," symbolic of one church shouldn't be divided.

Let us pray for the unity of the church to be a universal church, one flock for one Shepherd, the good Shepherd.

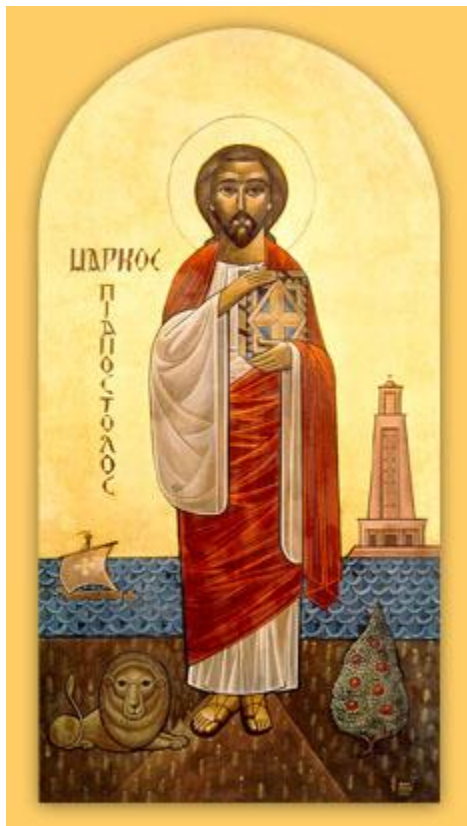
#### **4. Apostolic Church**

The church is apostolic because we can trace her existence historically directly back to the Apostles. The term "Apostolic" signifies that the church was founded by one the Apostles, and followed the teaching of the Apostles without any deviation till this day. The Apostle Paul refers to this fact by saying, "having been built on the



foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). The foundation of the church is the teaching of the Apostles, which they had received from the Lord Christ, as He ordered them saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20). It is the teaching of the Lord Christ delivered to the Apostles during the forty days following His resurrection. The Apostles, in turn, delivered these teachings to the churches they established (1 Corinthians 11:23).

St. Mark the apostle, for example, established our Coptic Orthodox Church in the first century of Christianity, delivering to us these teachings, not only orally, but also through His Gospel. Other Apostles recorded these teachings in their Gospels and epistles besides their laws and other written and unwritten teachings. This is known as the “Apostolic Tradition,” which the church received one generation after the other, as St. Paul said to his disciples Timothy, “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).



In addition, the life of the church during the apostolic era is delivered to us as an apostolic church. An example of this is the liturgies they prayed, and all the prayers of the sacraments they used like the methods of baptizing and ordaining priests. They practiced these prayers and continued in the life of the church throughout the ages.

Being an apostolic church, the Orthodox Church has two distinctive features:

- a) Her changelessness.
- b) Her Living continuity with the early church of the Apostles

One of the distinguishing features of the Orthodox Church is her changelessness. She had, and still, preserved the full and true faith of Christ without changes throughout all these centuries. The word “Orthodox” is applied to this church to designate that she has kept the faith “which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

The apostolic church is also characterized by the “Apostolic Succession.” The priest today has been ordained by laying the hands on and received the holy breath (John 20:22) from his bishop. And the bishop was ordained by the archbishop, the patriarch, or the pope, who was, in turn, ordained by his predecessor up to one of the Apostles who received this power from the Lord Christ.

**CONCLUSION:** The Church has four underlying characteristics which define it: one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. These are the four pillars which define the Orthodox Church and its teachings. These are the four pillars that help us hold fast to tradition and to not deviate from the teachings of the Apostles or the Bible. We see today in many churches, including the Catholic and Protestant Churches, many, many deviations from the early church, including the acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle in lay people and the clergy, divorce, women priests and bishops,

adultery, and much more. These deviations are a direct result of not following the four pillars of the church. We live in an age of deception. It is these four pillars that help us live a pure and truthful life, where the truth can only be found in Christ, the teachings of the Apostles, and the Bible.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

#### 4. UNITY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

#### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:1-2).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
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#### LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this lesson is to learn about Unity in the Kingdom of God on earth – There are many Bible verses that talk about the fundamental aspects of church unity. Specifically, we will focus on Ephesians 4:1-16, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and Philippians 2:1-4.

**INTRODUCTION:** The fundamental elements and definitions of church unity are contained in Ephesians 4:1-16, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and Philippians 2:1-4.

In **Ephesians 4:1-6**, we are told by St. Paul to **walk in unity**. We read,

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup> with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism”

St. Paul tells us here that the fundamental elements of church unity are **faith, peace, and love**. Faith is generally described as “*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism”

In **1 Corinthians 12: 1-31**, St. Paul talks about unity in **diversity of gifts and unity in that we are part of one body, the body of Christ**. He says

## Unity in Diversity

“Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: <sup>2</sup> You know that<sup>[a]</sup> you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: <sup>8</sup> for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same<sup>[b]</sup> Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

## Unity and Diversity in One Body

<sup>12</sup> For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into<sup>[c]</sup> one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For in fact the body is not one member but many.

<sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup> If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? <sup>18</sup> But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

<sup>20</sup> But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup> No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. <sup>23</sup> And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts*

have greater modesty,<sup>24</sup> but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it,<sup>25</sup> that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.<sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. <sup>29</sup> *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the best<sup>[d]</sup> gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

In **Philippians 2:1-4**, St. Paul talks about unity through **humility**. He says.

“Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

## LESSON BODY:

### 1. Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 4:1-5 is recited in the 1<sup>st</sup> hour of the Agpeya that we read every day. It is a crucial and fundamental reading that we need to start with every day of our life.

For the first three chapters of Ephesians, St. Paul has dealt with church doctrine in which he has described both:

- a. Our spiritual "possessions" in Christ (Chapter 1)
- b. Our spiritual "position" in Christ (Chapters 2 and 3)

In the remaining three chapters of this epistle, St. Paul focuses on "duty", i.e., responsibilities that are ours because of the blessings we enjoy as described in the previous chapters

Of the blessings described, one upon which St. Paul elaborated is the "unity" that we have in Christ by virtue of His work on the cross...

- a) He has reconciled both Jew and Gentile to God in "one body" - Ephesians 2:14-16.

- b) Now, Gentiles can be fellow heirs, of the "same body" - Ephesians 3:6

It should not be surprising, then, that the first duty that St. Paul exhorts us to fulfill is "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" - Ephesians 4:3

- a. Christ "attained" this unity by His work on the cross
- b. Our task is to "maintain" it

Beginning, then, with a charge to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1), St. Paul describes how to have a "worthy walk", as we explain below.

## **I. THE "ATTITUDES" FOR MAINTAINING UNITY (Ephesians 4:1-3)**

### **A. LOWLINESS**

1. This word means:

- a. The having a humble opinion of one's self

- b. A deep sense of one's (moral) littleness
  - c. Modesty, humility, lowliness of mind
- 2. This virtue is necessary in order in order to properly value others around you – (see Philippians 2:3-4).
- 3. Without this virtue, members in the body begin trying to be the "head" of the body, a role reserved only for Christ

## **B. GENTLENESS**

- 1. This word can be translated as gentleness, mildness, meekness
- 2. It is not a quality of weakness, but of power under control
  - a. Moses was a meek man (Numbers 12:3), but capable of great strength and boldness.
  - b. Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29), but we see where He drove the money changers out of the temple.
- 3. Thus it is being gentle, even when there is the potential for being harsh, but gentleness is more conducive for maintaining unity.

## **C. LONG-SUFFERING**

- 1. The idea here is one of patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs.
- 2. When the body consists of members who are not perfect, and often sin against each other, maintaining unity is not possible unless they are willing to endure each other's imperfections.



## **D. BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

1. Similar to longsuffering, "bearing" means to sustain, to bear, to endure.
2. What makes such "longsuffering" and "forbearance" possible is another virtue: "love".
3. As St. Paul wrote in his chapter on love: "love suffers long...is not provoked" – 1 Corinthians 13:4-5
4. Indeed, the virtue of love is the "tie" that binds all these virtues together – (Colossians 3:12-14)

## **E. ENDEAVOR**

1. Displaying these virtues does not come naturally nor easy, nor does maintaining unity.
2. Thus the need for much effort, as Paul uses a word which means "to exert one's self, endeavor, give diligence"

Only by giving diligence to display ALL these virtues, can we hope to "keep (maintain) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

But just as important as having the right "attitudes", is understanding and holding onto our faith and theology that defines unity.

## **II. THE "BASIS" OF UNITY (Ephesians 4:4-6)**

### **A. ONE BODY**

1. This refers to the body of Christ, the church - Ephesians 1:22-23

2. Of course, St. Paul speaks here of the church in the "universal" Sense

a) The "body" of saved believers throughout the world

b) Of which Christ is the "head", and "savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23)

3. While there may be many "local" churches (congregations), there is only ONE "universal" church, with ONE "head" - Jesus Christ!

## **B. ONE SPIRIT**

1. This is the Holy Spirit

2. The Holy Spirit already been described in this epistle as:

a) As "the Holy Spirit of promise" - Ephesians 1:13

b) As "the guarantee of our inheritance" – Ephesians 1:14

c) By Whom both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father - Ephesians 2:18

d) In Whom God inhabits those who are being built a "holy temple" – Ephesians 2:21-22

e) By Whom the "mystery of Christ" was revealed to the apostles and prophets – Ephesians 3:5

f) Through Whom God strengthens with might the inner man - Ephesians 3:16

g) As the One whose "unity" is to be maintained in the bond of peace - Ephesians 4:3

### **C. ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING**

1. For St. Paul, this pertains primarily to "the resurrection of the dead" – Acts 23:6; 24:15; Romans 8:23-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-23; Philippians 3:10-11,20-21
2. This also necessarily includes such concepts of "salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8) and "eternal life" (Titus 1:2; 3:7)

### **D. ONE LORD**

1. This refers to Jesus, of course – 1 Corinthians 8:5-6
2. Whom God has made "both Lord and Christ" – Acts 2:36

### **E. ONE FAITH**

1. This the body of truth, "the faith", which St. Jude says was "once for all delivered to the saints" – Jude 3
2. It is that "pattern of sound words" of that St. Paul taught St. Timothy (2 Timothy 1:13), and which he was to commit to faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2)
3. We find this "pattern of sound words" in the pages of the New Testament, which contains that which all Christians must believe.

### **F. ONE BAPTISM**

1. This is the baptism:
  - a) Commanded by Jesus – Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16
  - b) Preached and commanded by His apostles – Acts 2:38; 10:48

c) By which those who submit to are added to the Lord's body,  
the church - Acts 2:42,47

2. This is the baptism in which a penitent believer is immersed in  
water for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit  
(Acts 2:38; 10:47-48)

## **G. ONE GOD AND FATHER**

1. The Father, Who together with the Son and Holy Spirit, makes up  
the "Godhead"

2. Note that St. Paul emphasizes both:

a. His personality ("Father of all")

b. His transcendence and omnipresence ("who is above all, and  
through all, and in you all")

These "seven ones" constitute "the unity of the Spirit" that as Christians we must  
be so diligent to keep "in the bond of peace". Not one of these is "non essential"!  
For example, just as crucial as maintaining who the "One Lord" is, so we must be  
steadfast in holding to the "One Baptism"!

To assist us in our efforts to "keep the unity of the Spirit", Christ has given to His  
church certain "gifts". These gifts are discussed in Ephesians 4:7-16, 1 Corinthians  
12:1-27 as well as Romans 12:3-8.

## **2. Ephesians 4:7-16**

Ephesians 4:7-16 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 have great similarities in talking about  
unity in gifts.

### **III. "GIFTS" FOR UNITY (Ephesians 4:7-16)**

#### **A. THE SOURCE OF THESE GIFTS (Ephesians 7-10)**

1. They come from the bounty of Christ's grace (verse 7)
2. As prophesied, they were given after Christ ascended to heaven (verses 8-10)

#### **B. THE NATURE OF THESE GIFTS (Ephesians 4:11)**

1. Is St. Paul referring to "spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:11), or "functions"?
  - a. If "spiritual gifts", then we should read verse 11 to say "gave some to..."
  - b. If "functions", then verse 11 should read "gave some to be..."
  - c. The use of "doreas" and "domata" instead of "charismata" in verses 7-8 suggests St. Paul has in mind "functions", and not "spiritual gifts"
2. Understanding it as "functions", we see that Christ gave some to be:
  - a) **APOSTLES**
    - 1) Those who were to be eye-witnesses of the resurrection - Acts 1:15-22
    - 2) Their role in the church was foundational, necessary to the establishment of the church - Ephesians 2:20

3) As such, their work or function was temporary

**b) PROPHETS**

1) These were inspired men and women used in the process of revelation - Ephesians 3:5; Acts 2:17; 11:28; 21:9

2) As with the apostles, their role was foundational, necessary to the establishment of the church - Ephesians 2:20

3) Just as apostles were not replaced, so the prophets' role was temporary - 1 Corinthians 13:8

**c) EVANGELISTS**

1) Literally, "bearers of good news"

2) These are individuals like Philip (Acts 21:8), who proclaimed the gospel of Christ both publicly and privately - Acts 8:5-13,26-40

3) Timothy was charged to "do the work of an evangelist" - 2 Timothy 4:5.

4) Unlike apostles and prophets, their work does not involve "laying the foundation", but rather building upon that which is already laid, which they do every time they lead someone to Christ.

5) Therefore, their work or function continues to the Present

### **c) PASTORS (PRIESTS) AND TEACHERS**

- 1) It may be that St. Paul intended these terms to describe one function (because "some" is not repeated)
  - a) The role of "pastor" (shepherd) certainly requires "feeding" or teaching
  - b) While there is indication elsewhere that there was a special function of "teachers" in the local church - Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 2 Timothy 1:11; James 3:1
- 2) The term "pastor" is found only here in the Scriptures, but from Acts 20:17,28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2 it becomes clear that "pastors, shepherds, elders, presbyters, bishops, overseers" are simply different terms describing the spiritual leaders of local congregations
- 3) The nature of the work of "pastors and teachers" (i.e., overseeing and feeding the flock of God) naturally follows the work of the evangelists
- 4) And like the function of evangelist, continues to the Present

### **d) What about DEACONS?**

- 1) Clearly St. Paul does not intend this passage in Ephesians to be an exhaustive list of functions in the Lord's church, for he does not mention deacons –Philippians 1:1; 1Timothy 3:8
- 2) But the list is adequate to illustrate the point: Christ has given "gifts" to His church!

### **C) THE PURPOSE OF THESE GIFTS (Ephesians 4:12-16)**

1. To prepare members of the body for service ("equip the saints for work of ministry")
2. To build up the members of the body ("edify the body of Christ"), so they...
  - a) Can grow to maturity (Ephesians 4:13)
    - 1) Possessing the unity of the faith
    - 2) Having the knowledge of the Son of God
    - 3) Measuring up to the stature expected of those in Christ
  - b) Will not be children (Ephesians 4:13)
    - 1) Tossed to and fro by every doctrine that comes along
    - 2) Easily deceived by cunning and false teachers
  - c) But instead will be "growing upward" as the body of Christ (Ephesians 4: 15-16)
    - 1) Growing up in all things into the Head, Christ
    - 2) From which the whole body can grow, provided every part does it share
    - 3) Made possible also as we "speak the truth in love" and "edify itself in love"

### **3. 1 Corinthians 12:1-31**

The objectives of this chapter are 1) to be aware of the many different spiritual gifts enjoyed by the early church and 2) to appreciate the interdependence of the members of the Body of Christ.



In this chapter, St. Paul begins to address the issue of spiritual gifts. From what we read later in chapter fourteen, it appears the jealousy and envy that characterized their division mentioned earlier also expressed itself in their use (and abuse) of certain spiritual gifts. Expressing his concern that they be not ignorant about these matters, St. Paul first emphasizes that spiritual gifts, though diverse, come from the same Spirit and are to be used for the benefit of all (Verses 1-11). To demonstrate that every person (and spiritual gift) is important, he compares the church to a body with many different yet essential members (verses 12-27). The chapter closes with St. Paul pointing out that not all serve the same function and have the same gifts, encouraging them to earnestly desire the best gifts, and preparing to show them a more excellent way in the next chapter (Verses 28-31).

## **I. SPIRITUAL GIFTS: UNITY IN DIVERSITY (Verses 1-11)**

### **A. PROPER KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS (Verses 1-3)**

1. St. Paul does not want them to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (Verse 1)
2. For as Gentiles they had been misled by dumb idols (Verse 2)
3. Two general principles to bear in mind:
  - a. No one speaking by the Spirit of God will call Jesus accursed (Verse 3)
  - b. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (Verse 3)

### **B. THOUGH DIVERSE, THERE IS UNITY OF ORIGIN AND PURPOSE IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS (Verses 4-11)**

1. They all come from the same Spirit (Verse 4)
  - a. Just as there are different ministries, but the same Lord (Verse 5)
  - b. Just as diverse activities proceed from the same God (Verse 6)
2. Each "manifestation" (spiritual gift), though given to one, is to benefit all (Verse 7)

### 3. A summary of the different spiritual gifts (Verses 8-10)

- a. The word of wisdom
- b. The word of knowledge
- c. Faith
- d. Gifts of healing
- e. Working of miracles
- f. Prophecy
- g. Discerning of spirits
- h. Different kinds of tongues
- i. Interpretation of tongues

4. But it is the same Spirit who works all these things, distributing to each one as He wills (Verse 11)

## **II. THE NEED FOR DIVERSITY IN ONE BODY (Verses 12-31)**

### **A. ILLUSTRATED BY THE FIGURE OF A BODY AND ITS MEMBERS (Verses 12-26)**

1. Just like the human body, the body of Christ with its many members are yet one (Verse 12)

- a. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (Verse 13)
- b. And we have all been made to drink into one Spirit (Verse 13)

2. No member can say that they are not important (Verses 14-19)

- a. The body is not one member, but many (Verse 14)
- b. As illustrated with parts of the human body (Verses 15-19)

3. No member can say that others are not important (Verses 20-26)

- a. Though many members, yet one body (Verse 20)
- b. As illustrated with parts of the human body (Verses 21-24)

c. God has composed the body to be one, and its members to have mutual concern for each other (Verses 24-26)

## **B. SUMMARY APPLICATION OF THE ILLUSTRATION (Verses 27-31)**

1. You are the body of Christ, and individually are members of it (Verse 27)
2. God has appointed various functions in the church (Verse 28)
3. Rhetorical questions to illustrate that not everyone has the same function (Verses 29-30)
4. Certainly it was proper to desire the best gifts, yet St. Paul will show them a more excellent way (Verse 31)

## **4. Philippians 2:1-4: The Unity That Produces Joy**

At this point in his epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul is exhorting his brethren in regards to Christian living. In Chapter 1, we noticed that he encouraged them to manifest "Conduct Worthy of The Gospel" (1:27-30). In Philippians 2:1-4, St. Paul exhorts them to manifest "**The Unity That Produces Joy.**" In doing so, St. Paul describes three aspects of such unity:

- a. The MOTIVATION for having unity that produces joy (Verse 1)
- b. The NATURE of unity that produces joy (Verse 2)
- c. The ATTITUDES required for unity that produces joy (Verses 3-4)

## **I. THE "MOTIVATION" FOR HAVING UNITY THAT PRODUCES JOY (Verse 1)**

### **A. DO WE NOT HAVE ANY "CONSOLATION IN CHRIST"?**

1. When St. Paul says "if there is any consolation...", he is not doubting that there is

- a. This is a common use of the conditional "if...then" where given the reality of the "if" clause, "then" a point should naturally follow
  - b. For example, consider Galatians 3:29
    - 1) Where Paul wrote "If you are Christ's, then..."
    - 2) The "if" does not suggest doubt that they could be Christ's for in the previous verse he said that they were!
  - c. In such cases, the "if" means the same thing as "since"
2. Indeed, there is MUCH consolation (comfort) to be found in Christ!
- a. As expressed to the brethren at Thessalonica, there is consolation from Christ in "every good word and work" - 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
  - b. And as written to the Corinthians, such consolation abounds even in the midst of tribulation – 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

## **B. DO WE NOT HAVE ANY "COMFORT OF LOVE"?**

- 1. Do we not enjoy any comfort that comes from love?
- 2. Does not the love that comes from God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and even our brethren provide any comfort? - again, see 2 Corinthians 1:3-5
- 3. Indeed, it does to those who will receive it!

## **C. DO WE NOT HAVE ANY "FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT"?**

- 1. Indeed, all who have been baptized into Christ has received the

gift of the Holy Spirit - Acts 2:38-39; 5:32

2. As the church (the temple of God), the Spirit dwells in us  
- 1 Corinthians 3:16
3. Even our individual bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit  
- 1 Corinthians 6:19
4. Not only by the Spirit have we all been baptized into one body,  
but have all been made to drink of the one Spirit – 1 Corinthians 12:13  
and John 7:37-39
5. Indeed there is a true "communion of the Holy Spirit" available  
for Christians – 2 Corinthians 13:14

#### **D. DO WE NOT HAVE ANY "AFFECTION AND MERCY"?**

1. There is the "affection" that comes from Jesus and from other  
brethren - Philippians 1:8
2. There is the "mercy" that comes from our loving Father in  
heaven – Ephesians 2:4-7

Enjoying all these benefits, should they not serve to encourage us to have **"The Unity That Produces Joy"**? It certainly moved St. Paul to write and encourage the Philippians toward this "unity"!

But exactly what kind of unity is it that produces joy...?

## **II. THE "NATURE" OF THE UNITY THAT PRODUCES JOY (Verse 2)**

### **A. IT INVOLVES "BEING LIKE-MINDED"**

1. Which means to "think the same thing"

2. That this is a necessary quality of unity is evident from Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 1:10

## **B. IT INVOLVES "HAVING THE SAME LOVE"**

1. This is a natural consequence if we are first "like-minded"
2. Having the same love, we will love:
  - a. The same things, in matters pertaining to Christ and His church!
  - b. One another with the same kind of love
    - 1) Our love for one another will be of the same kind: sincere, fervent, and from a pure heart – 1 Peter 1:23
    - 2) Our love for one another will be mutual, not one-sided, as is often the case

## **C. IT INVOLVES "BEING OF ONE ACCORD"**

1. Literally, "of one soul; having your souls joined together"
2. It suggests acting together as if ONE soul is driving them
3. Therefore, working together in complete harmony, not as separate entities going our separate ways

## **D. IT INVOLVES BEING "OF ONE MIND"**

1. That is, we need to be intent on one purpose
2. Not only working together outwardly, but inwardly, having the

same purpose and intentions

When such conditions exist in a local congregation, then **"The Unity That Produces Joy"** will be fully experienced!

But what are the attitudes required for having such unity?

### **III. THE "ATTITUDES" REQUIRED FOR THE UNITY THAT PRODUCES JOY (Verses 3-4)**

#### **A. "LET NOTHING BE DONE THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION OR CONCEIT"**

1. First, it is necessary to point out those attitudes we should NOT have!
2. Possessing these attitudes will destroy unity
  - a. For both involve "self-centered" attitude
  - b. Rather than a "Christ-centered" attitude
3. Therefore, it is required that we rid ourselves of:
  - a. The DESIRE FOR EXALTING SELF ("selfish ambition")
  - b. The IMPROPER ESTIMATION OF SELF ("conceit")
4. In place of these, we should substitute:

#### **B. "LOWLINESS OF MIND"**

1. In other words, humility
2. This will effectively replace the problem of "conceit"

3. Humility should be easy to maintain if we remember our own faults

### **C. "LET EACH ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN HIMSELF"**

1. This should be easy for us to do:
  - a. For we are aware of our own defects, but we do not have the same clear view of the defects of others
  - b. We can only see their OUTWARD conduct; in our case, we can look WITHIN
  - c. We see our own hearts, with all its faults; we cannot so look into the hearts of others
2. In writing to the brethren at Rome, St. Paul exhorted them to outdo one another in this regard - "in honor giving preference to one another" - Romans 12:10

### **D. "LOOK OUT...FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS"**

1. This attitude eliminates the problem of "selfish ambition"
2. It is the attitude of maturity, and was the attitude of Christ!  
- Romans 15:1-3
3. So it should be the attitude of every Christian!



**CONCLUSION:** We see that Ephesians 4:1-6, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and Philippians 2:1-4 are very highly connected and focus on church unity. They all emphasize that If we can just a) Display the "attitudes" necessary for unity, b) Hold fast to the "basis" upon which our unity rests, and c) Utilize the "gifts" Christ has given to assure we all come to the unity of the faith, then Christ's work on the cross will not be in vain! (Ephesians 2:16). Not only that, but then we will also truly conduct ourselves in a manner "worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1). In particular, a) we were called to be "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19), b) we were called to be "a holy temple in the Lord", "a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22), and c) we were called to "make known the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

"The Unity That Produces Joy" that St. Paul talks about in Philippians 2:1-4 comes only when it is unity based upon the truths Jesus taught. Beliefs and attitudes without that truth will only produce a false sense of joy. However, with truth in our hands from the Bible and Jesus Christ, we must practice the attitudes that St. Paul talks about in Philippians 2:1-4 to give us the joy we seek! Therefore, let us "fulfill our joy" by making sure that we manifest these attitudes as we attempt to live according to the truth that is in Jesus!

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:3-4).

## 5. LITURGICAL THEOLOGY – PART I

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander
6. Strong’s Concordance
7. Catechesis of the Catholic Church
8. Catholic encyclopedia
9. Church Architecture and Priests Vestments © 2009 Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

#### LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this lesson are to learn about the theology of the Divine Liturgy and its theological connections with the church. In particular, we will learn the meanings of:

- a. Liturgy
- b. Priest

- c. Blessing
- d. Sanctification
- e. Sacraments
- f. Mystery
- g. Paschal Mystery
- h. Anamnesis
- i. Epiclesis

We will also study the three fold office of Christ.

To see how much we know in advance, let us consider the following questions:

### Pre- Lesson Questions

1. There is no epiclesis without \_\_\_\_\_
2. Liturgy is:
  - a. When I go to church watch the work of the priest and the deacons and then take communion at the end
  - b. When the People of God participate in "the work of God."
  - c. When a person performs public service
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a Latin word meaning 'the sign of something sacred and hidden.' Its Greek resemblance is \_\_\_\_\_ which is *not something unknowable*, but it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals* it.
  - a. Blessing
  - b. Mystery
  - c. Church
  - d. Sacrament
  - e. Ευχαριστία
4. What are the 3 offices of Christ?

- a. High Priest
  - b. Master
  - c. Pantocrator
  - d. Prophet
  - e. King
5. We celebrate which paschal mysteries in the liturgy?
- a. Christ's death
  - b. Christ's resurrection and Ascension
  - c. Christ's burial
  - d. All of the above
  - e. None of the above
6. Liturgy in the Bible is only seen/practiced in the New Testament. **True or False**

**INTRODUCTION:** The liturgy plays a crucial role in the theology of the Orthodoxy and the church. We need to know the Biblical and theological meanings of each part of the liturgy. The liturgy is entirely based on the Bible and the theology of Jesus Christ, and the Trinity as a whole. In order to proceed, we must first learn some definitions.

### **Definitions:**

#### **1. Liturgy**

Originally meant a "public work" or a "service in the name of/on behalf of the people."

## **2. Priest - leitourgós**

(a masculine noun derived from *leitós*, "belonging to the people" and */érgon*, "work") – properly, an official servant (minister) who works for the *good of the community*. In the NT (and LXX), this root (*leitourg-*) is especially used for *priestly-service given to God, impacting all who witness it*.<sup>1</sup>

It is the service or ministry of the priests relative to the prayers and sacrifices offered to God: *Luke 1:23; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:21,*

It means the participation of the People of God in "the work of God." <sup>i</sup> *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."*  
*John 17:4*

The work of God from the beginning is Blessing and Sanctification: *"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His works God began to make.*

## **3. Sacrament - Latin**

The word "sacrament" in its broadest sense, the sign of something sacred and hidden (the Greek word is "mystery"),

We can say that the whole world is a vast sacramental system, in that material things are unto men the signs of things spiritual and sacred, even of the Divinity. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands" (Psalm 18:2). The invisible things of him [i.e. God], from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity" (Romans 1:20).

## **4. Mystérion: Greek**

From a derivative of *muo* (to shut the mouth); a secret or "mystery" (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites) -- *mystery*.

In the Bible, a "mystery" is *not something unknowable*. Rather, it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals* it.

### **5. Blessing:**

Man to God- it is adoration and surrender of man to His creator in thanksgiving, (praise)

God to man- it is a divine and life giving action to man, also can mean dedication of man or things to God "took bread ..and blessed it"

### **6. Sanctity: Holy**

As applied to God: it denotes that absolute moral perfection which is His by nature.

In regard to men it signifies a close union with God, together with the moral perfection resulting from this union.

Hence holiness is said to belong to God by essence, and to creatures only by participation. Whatever sanctity they possess comes to them as a Divine gift.

In a liturgical celebration, the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one "*leitourgos*";<sup>ii</sup> "*a Minister "leitourgos" of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*" *Hebrews 8:2,6*

She shares in Christ's priesthood (Blessing and Sanctification), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of love):

The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a

sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

### **7. Paschal mystery:**

The death, burial, resurrection, ascension of Christ and His setting on the right side of His Father.

**Liturgical celebration-** it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church...leading to sanctification of man and glory of God.

Christ office is of three kinds:

- a) Christ as the High priest- work of the priest is Blessing and Sanctification
- b) Christ as the King- work of the king is service of love
- c) Christ as the Prophet- work of the Prophet is proclamation

Write three references of liturgical work from each of the following:

- a. Old Testament
- b. Heaven
- c. New Testament Church

## **LESSON BODY:**

### **1. The Liturgy in the Bible**

#### **a) In the Old Testament**

After the Ten Commandments were given, an instruction to build an altar was set forth, then the furnishings of the tabernacle, the keeping of the Sabbath, the feasts of the lord and the different sacrifices etc. "*Exodus , Leviticus*"

## **b) In heaven**

This is to be expected, since God instructed Moses to make the earthly place of worship as a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8: 5; see Exodus 25: 40). Heavenly worship is revealed in such passages as Isaiah 6: 1– 8, where we see the prophet caught up to heaven for the liturgy, and Revelation 4, which records the apostle John’s vision of heaven’s liturgy.

## **c) In the Church of the New Testament**

The work of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the new covenant. Christ is “a priest forever” (Hebrews 7: 17, 21). It is unthinkable that He would be a priest but not serve liturgically: “forever” suggests He serves continually, without ceasing, in the heavenly tabernacle. Further, He is called not only a priest but a liturgist: “a Minister [Gr. leitourgos, lit., “liturgist”) of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected” (Hebrews 8: 2).

Christian worship on earth, to be fully Christian, must mirror the worship of Christ. in heaven. In the New Testament, the Church proclaimed the Gospel and broke bread (liturgy of the Eucharist) regularly on Sunday. See Acts 13:2, 20:7, Romans 16:16 "We have an altar" Hebrews 13:10.

## **2. Liturgy as source of life**

What is the summit and the font of all services in the church?

What is the work of each person of the Holy Trinity in the Divine Liturgy?

The Liturgy makes the Church present and manifests her as the visible sign of the communion in Christ between God and men. It engages the faithful in the new life



of the community and involves the "conscious, active, and fruitful participation" of everyone.

"The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it also the font from which all her power flows."

### **3. The Liturgy is the work of The Holy Trinity**

**a) The Father-Source and Goal of the Liturgy** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us before him in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6.*

In the Church's liturgy the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated.

**The Father is acknowledged and adored as the source and the end of all the blessings of creation and salvation.**

In his Word who became incarnate, died, and rose for us, he fills us with his blessings. Through his Word, he pours into our hearts the Gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit.

The dual action of the Liturgy:

1. The Church, united with her Lord and "in the Holy Spirit," blesses the Father "for his inexpressible gift in her adoration, praise, and thanksgiving.
2. Until the consummation of God's plan, the Church never ceases to present to the Father the offering of his own gifts and to beg him to send the Holy Spirit upon that offering, upon herself, upon the faithful, so that through communion in the death and resurrection of Christ the Priest, and by the power of the Spirit, these divine blessings will bring forth the fruits of life.

## **b) Christ's Work in the Liturgy**

1. The Paschal Mystery: The Death of Christ, His Burial , Resurrection, Ascension and His setting on the right hand of His Father. In the liturgy of the Church, Christ makes present his own Paschal mystery.  
The Paschal mystery of Christ, cannot remain only in the past, because by His death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is - all that he did and suffered for all men - participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection abides and draws everything toward life.
2. Apostolic Succession: Just as Christ was sent by the Father so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan and from death and brought us into the Kingdom of his Father. But he also willed that the work of salvation which they preached should be set in sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves.

## **c) The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Liturgy**

1. He prepares the Church to encounter her Lord;
2. He recalls and makes Christ manifest to the faith of the assembly. By his transforming power, he makes the mystery of Christ present here and now.
3. He, The Spirit of communion unites the Church to the life and mission of Christ.

## **4. Anamnesis**

The liturgical celebration always refers to God's saving interventions in history. "The economy of Revelation is realized by **deeds and words** which are intrinsically bound up with each other:

- a. **The words** for their part proclaim the works and bring to light the mystery they contain." The celebration "makes a remembrance" of the marvelous works of God. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (doxology).
- b. The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ: Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but also makes them present.  
The **Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated**: It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.

## 5. Epiclesis\_("invocation upon")

**Is the intercession in which the priest begs the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier,** so that the offerings may become the body and blood of Christ and that the faithful by receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God.

Together with the anamnesis, the epiclesis is at the heart of each sacramental celebration, most especially of the Eucharist:

### **The Communion (fellowship- Kenonia) of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy**

In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body.

**CONCLUSION:** The liturgy plays a fundamental role in the theology of our Orthodox faith. We practice what we believe in the liturgy. The liturgy is based on the events and teachings in the Bible and is based on the theology of the Holy Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all play very major parts of the Divine Liturgy, and the roles of the Holy Trinity and

their actions and work are a major part of the liturgy. For example, when we recite the Orthodox Creed in the liturgy, we are reciting our entire theological belief in the Holy Trinity. When we take Communion, we are partaking of the Last Supper and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. The priest's prayers, deacon's responses, and congregation responses are based on verses and events in the Bible as well as church history, such as the ecumenical councils. The liturgy involves intercessions of the saints, in particular, St. Mary, commemoration of the saints, and a remembrance of the three ecumenical councils that led to the writing of the Nice Creed.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

## 6. LITURGICAL THEOLOGY – PART II

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border" (Isaiah 19:19).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander

6. Strong's Concordance
7. Catechesis of the Catholic Church
8. Catholic encyclopedia
9. Church Architecture and Priests Vestments © 2009 Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

## LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** In this lesson, we discuss the mysteries of the church and answer basic questions regarding

- a) Who celebrates the liturgy?
- b) How is the liturgy celebrated?
- c) When is the liturgy celebrated?
- d) Where is the liturgy celebrated?

## INTRODUCTION:

Understanding the theology of the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy is a fundamental element in our faith. We need to know the biblical and theological basis of things like Who celebrates the liturgy and where it is found in the Bible and writings of the church fathers? b) How is the liturgy celebrated? That is, what verbal and visual tools do we use to celebrate the liturgy? c) When is the liturgy celebrated? That is, what days of the week are important and what is the liturgical church calendar and how does the liturgy revolve around the Coptic calendar? d) Where is the liturgy celebrated? What do the buildings look like, how do we stand, what is the architecture and its biblical meaning and theology?

## **LESSON BODY:**

### **I. Who Celebrates the Liturgy?**

#### **a) The celebrants of the sacramental liturgy**

It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates. For this reason, "rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, should not be celebrated privately."

In the book of Revelation (Chapter 4) of St. John, reveals to us the celebrants of the Divine Liturgy. He says,

1. "A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne": "the Lord God.
2. It then shows the Lamb, "standing, as though it had been slain": Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one "who offers and is offered, who gives and is given."
3. Finally it presents "the river of the water of life . . . flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," one of most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit.
4. "Recapitulated in Christ," these are the ones who take part in the service of the praise of God and the fulfillment of his plan:
  - (i) The heavenly powers, all creation (the four living beings),
  - (ii) the servants of the Old and New Covenants (the twenty-four elders),
  - iii) The new People of God (the one hundred and forty-four thousand), especially the martyrs "slain for the word of God," and the all-holy Mother of God (the Woman), the Bride of the Lamb, and finally
  - iv) "a great multitude which no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and tongues."

It is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments.

## **b) Liturgical functions**

But "the members do not all have the same function." Certain members are called by God, in and through the Church, to a special service of the community. These servants are chosen and consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which the Holy Spirit enables them to act in the person of Christ the head, for the service of all the members of the Church.

The ordained minister is, as it were, an "icon" of Christ the priest. Since it is in the Eucharist that the sacrament of the Church is made fully visible, it is in his presiding at the Eucharist that the bishop's ministry is most evident, as well as, in communion with him, the ministry of priests and deacons.

For the purpose of assisting the work of the common priesthood of the faithful, other particular ministries also exist, not consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders; their functions are determined by the bishops, in accord with liturgical traditions and pastoral needs. "Servers, readers, commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function."

In the celebration of the sacraments it is thus the whole assembly that is *leitourgos*, each according to his function, but in the "unity of the Spirit" who acts in all. "In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy."

## **II. How is the Liturgy Celebrated?**

### **a) Signs and symbols**

A sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols.

1. **Signs of the human world:** God speaks to man through the visible creation as signs and symbols of His glory.
2. **Signs of the old covenant:** circumcision, anointing and consecration of kings and priests, laying on of hands, sacrifices, and above all the Passover. Signs taken up by Christ. He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover, for he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

### **b) Words and actions**

A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God's children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words.

The liturgy of the Word is an integral part of sacramental celebrations. To nourish the faith of believers, the signs which accompany the Word of God should be emphasized:

- 1) The book of the Word (a lectionary or a book of the Gospels), its veneration (procession, incense, candles),
- 2) The place of its proclamation (lectern or ambo), its audible and intelligible reading,
- 3) The minister's homily which extends its proclamation, and the responses of the assembly (acclamations, meditation psalms, litanies, and confession of faith (creed)).

### **c) Singing and music**

"The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art." "*He who sings prays twice.*" (St Augustine).

Song and music fulfill their function as signs when they are:



- 1) beauty expressive of prayer,
- 2) the unanimous participation of the assembly at the designated moments,
- 3) the solemn character of the celebration.

In this way they participate in the purpose of the liturgical words and actions: the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful:

The harmony of signs (song, music, words, and actions) is all the more expressive and fruitful when expressed in the cultural richness of the People of God who celebrate.

Hence "religious singing by the faithful is to be intelligently fostered.

The texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with the church doctrine. Indeed they should be drawn chiefly from the Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources."

#### **d) Holy images: Icons**

The sacred image, the liturgical icon, principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the incarnation of the Son of God has ushered in a new "economy" of images:

Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God . . . and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled.

Christian iconography expresses in images the same Gospel message that Scripture communicates by words. Image and word illuminate each other: That is why the icon is said to be written and not drawn.

All the signs in the liturgical celebrations are related to Christ: as are sacred images of the holy Mother of God and of the saints as well. They truly signify Christ, who is glorified in them. They make manifest the "cloud of witnesses" who continue to

participate in the salvation of the world and to whom we are united, above all in sacramental celebrations.

### III. When is the Liturgy Celebrated?

#### a) The Lord's Day

The Church believes that she should celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse in a sacred commemoration on certain days throughout the course of the year.

- 1) Once each week, on the day which she has called the Lord's Day, she keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection.
- 2) She also celebrates it once every year, together with the week of His Holy suffering, at the Holy Resurrection, that most solemn of all feasts. In the course of the year, moreover, she unfolds the whole mystery of Christ

When the Church celebrates the mystery of Christ, she celebrates it "**Today!**" This "**today**" of the living God which man is called to enter is "the hour" of Jesus' Passover, which reaches across and underlies all history:

"By a tradition handed down from the apostles which took its origin from the very day of Christ's Resurrection "**John chapter 20**," the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery on the "First day of the week", which day is appropriately called the Lord's Day or Sunday."

The day of Christ's Resurrection is both the first day of the week, the memorial of the first day of creation, and the "eighth day," on which Christ after his "rest" on the great Sabbath inaugurates the "day that the Lord has made," the "day that knows no evening." The Lord's Supper is its center, for there the whole community of the faithful encounters the risen Lord who invites them to his banquet:

## **b) The liturgical year**

### **1. The cycle of feasts surrounding the Holy Resurrection**

Beginning with the Resurrection as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a "The acceptable year of the Lord." .

Therefore The Holy Resurrection is not simply one feast among others, but the "Feast of feasts," the "Solemnity of solemnities," just as the Eucharist is the "Sacrament of sacraments" (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls Holy Resurrection "the Great Sunday" and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week "the Great Week.

At the Council of Nicaea in 325, all the Churches agreed that the feast of the Holy Resurrection, the Christian Passover, should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon (14 Nisan) after the vernal equinox (*On an equinox, day and night are of approximately equal duration all over the planet, it happens 20 March and 23 September*). the reform of the Western calendar, called "Gregorian" after Pope Gregory XIII (1582), caused a discrepancy of several days with the Eastern calendar. Today, the Western and Eastern Churches are seeking an agreement in order once again to celebrate the day of the Lord's Resurrection on a common date.

### **2. The cycle of feasts surrounds the Mystery of Incarnation**

This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery.

### **3. The feasts and fasts of the Holy Theotokos and the saints**

In celebrating this annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, Holy Church honors the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, with a special love.

When the Church keeps the memorials of martyrs and other saints during the annual cycle, she proclaims the Paschal mystery in those who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposes them to the faithful as examples who draw all men to the Father through Christ.

### **4. The Liturgy of the Hours**

The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist especially at the Sunday assembly, permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to "pray constantly," is "so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God." In this "public prayer of the Church," The faithful (clergy, religious, and lay people) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized.

The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. Priests should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and on the more solemn feasts.

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours demands not only harmonizing the voice with the praying heart, but also a deeper "understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially of the Psalms."

## **IV. Where is the Liturgy Celebrated?**

## **a) The Church Building and the Heavenly Life**

The Church building is associated with the community and is bound to reveal its heavenly character and to help the human soul to the Divine throne.

Moses, when he established the Tabernacle, explained only the shadow of the eternal dwelling place. But we, in the Church, have entered the heavenly place itself (Hebrews 9:23), and enjoyed the Temple that is not made with hands (Hebrews 9:11).

### **1. The Orientation of the Church**

Although our communication with God is distinguished by its intimate nature within the heart, it is not bound by time and place. However, there is the fact that our God likes discipline and hates disorder.

This explains the reason for orienting the worship toward a certain direction. Before Christianity, prayers were offered towards the Temple of Jerusalem, and the Church of the New Testament oriented its liturgical, as well as its private devotions towards the East.

According to the Apostolic Constitutions, “the Church must be oblong in form and pointing to the East.” Tertullian said, “Some assumed that the sun is the God of the Christians, because it is a well known fact that we pray towards the east, or perhaps, because we make Sunday a day of festivity.”

Such a tradition was mentioned in the writings of many early Fathers, as St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian. Such a tradition was clear in the early Church, in the Liturgy of Baptism, the candidate after the devil’s renouncement, is asked to face the East to profess his belief in the Holy Trinity.

### **2. The Theology of Orientation**

1. Christ is our East: Our Christ was called the “East,” and the Sun of Righteousness and Justice (Malachi 4:2). We ought to pray eastward in order to indicate that the

soul is oriented toward the Dawn of Light, the Sun of Salvation, Who shines upon the new world, the Church. Whenever we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we hear the Deacon exhorting us to look towards the East to see Emanuel Our God, present on the Altar.

2. Waiting for the “Parousia” (advent) of Christ The Lord declared that his last advent looks like the lightening that appears from the East, and shines upon the West (Matthew 24:27). On the Lord’s Ascension, the Angel informed the Disciples that the Son of Man will come gain from the East (Acts 1:11). The Didascalia Apostolic states, “For it is written, ‘give praise to God Who rides upon the heavens of heavens towards the East’.”

4. Looking Towards the Cross St. Athanasius raised a point that Christ was facing the West while hanging on the Cross. Thus, looking towards the East in our prayers, we meet the Crucified Lord, face to face.

5. The Orientation of the Graves In the old Christian graves, some remarked that the majority of cemeteries were built in such a way, that the dead bodies were oriented to face the East, as they were waiting for the call of Resurrection, coming form the East. It was also said that St. Mary, on her departure, turned to the East and prayed in a heavenly language, and she laid down still facing the East. In the book “Ancients of Egypt,” Butler remarks that in every case, the Orientation of the Altar towads the East is evident, beyond the shadow of a doubt. In Psalm 113:3, we read, “From the East to the West,” in Isaiah 24:15, “Glorify the Lord in the dawning light” in Zachariah 14:4, and in Ezekiel 43:1,2.

## **b) The Style of the Early Church Buildings**

In the Old Testament, the believers were in their spiritual childhood; God took upon Himself the responsibility of dictating all the relevant details of the “House of God.”

In the New Testament, God considered that it is sufficient to grant us His Holy Spirit to guide us in all the aspects of our life.

There are some factors that affect the style of Church buildings:

1. The Temple or Tabernacle A quick glance at the Church and Tabernacle clarifies such a correspondence. The Church's Sanctuary is analogous to the Holy of Holies; the Nave to the Holy; the Narthex to the courtyard. The Laver is fully realized in the Baptistry site, and the Altar of burnt offerings is fulfilled by the Altar of the New Testament.
2. The Roman Court Law: It might have affected the architecture of the Churches, especially in Western Europe, where it followed the "Basilica" style, or the "Imperial" style, as the building was dedicated to the King of Kings.
3. The Pagan Temple: Many of these unused temples were transformed into Churches, because of the great number of pagans converted to Christianity. Accordingly, whenever a temple was utilized as a Church, relevant changes were required.
4. Catacombs: This term is associated with subterranean early Christian burial places (Ravine in Greek). According to the Roman Law, they should be assaulted as they were used by Christians, as places of worship, especially during the times of persecution.

### **c) The Shape of the Church Building**

The church building is confirmed according to specific well defined shapes, in three designs:

- i) The Cruciform
- ii) The Circle
- iii) The shape of a ship

These forms reveal a substantial aspect of the nature of the Church, her character, and her message.

- i) **The Cruciform Shape:** This type gives an idea of the mystical nature of the Church, as being the crucified Body of Christ. It was very common in the Byzantine style, but rarely used in the Coptic Churches.

ii) **The Circular Shape:** This design refers to the eternal nature of the Church as being an endless line. This type is very common in the Coptic architecture.



iii) **The Shape of a Ship:** This is the most commonly used shape in the Coptic Orthodox Church. It held a special mystical significance, even before Christianity, in the Gentiles' thought: Egyptian, Greek, and Roman. Various shapes of ships were found inscribed on their tombs, rings and other jewelry. This explains their belief about immortality, regarding death as a journey to the other world. After Christianity, the symbol continued to express their new risen life in Christ.



### **The Ship's Symbolism in the Old Testament:**

Noah's Ark represents, in many aspects, a substantial element as a shadow of the Church of the New Testament.

### **The Ship of the New Testament:**

The ship, as a symbol of the Church, is a general tradition. Christians are sailing amidst frightful dangers, but within the Lord's ship, "The Church," they were filled with the hope of the reaching eternal rest.



## **d) The Main Divisions of the Church Building**

The church building is divided into three main divisions:

1. The Sanctuary containing the Altar
2. The Nave that is separated from the Sanctuary by the Iconostasis. It contains two divisions:
  - a. The place for the Deacons (The Chancel)
  - b. The place for the Believers, which is the main Nave.
  - c. The Narthex for the catechumens.

### **1. The Sanctuary:**

It is present in the very far East of the Church. It represents heaven itself, the place of God's residence. It is therefore called the "Holy of Holies," the "Great Dome," "Temple of His Holiness," the "Third Heaven." It contains the Altar that is related to it to such a degree that it can sometimes be called the "Altar." The Sanctuary is raised somewhat from the Nave. Inside the Sanctuary, and behind the Altar, lies the Tribune, also known as the "Synthronos", on which the Bishop's Throne is placed. On top of the Tribune lies the Niche that represent God's Bosom.

**The Sanctity of the Sanctuary:** We honor the Sanctuary because of its spiritual beauty and we follow these traditions:

1. Lay persons are forbidden to take part in the communion inside the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is for the clergymen only.
2. We can only step into the Sanctuary bare-footed, according to the Divine commandment to Moses, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place whereupon you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5), and usually, we step in with the right foot first.
3. No talking is allowed in the Sanctuary, except for necessity.
4. wearing service vestments

**The Altar:** It is derived from the Latin word "ALTARE" which means "the place upon which sacrifices are slain (same in Greek)... in Greek, (Trapeza), i.e. the "The Lord's Table" (1 Corinthians 10:21).

## **Do we still need the Altar although there is no animal sacrifice?**

Although there are no animal sacrifices, we still need the Altar for the unique Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. According to:

- a) Malachi 1:11- "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down...,in everyplace, incense shall be offered of My name."
- b) Isaiah 9:19- "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt." This prophecy is specific for the Christian Altar in Egypt. It is not for the pagans, because it is an "Altar to the Lord."
- c) Matthew 5:23- "...If you bring your gift to the altar..."
- d) 1 Corinthians 10:21- "You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of the devils."
- e) Hebrews 13:10- "We have an altar from which those who serve the Tabernacle have no right to eat."
- f) Hebrews 10- St. Paul mentioned the sacrifices in the Old Testament being symbols fulfilled on the Calvary or in the Eucharist.
- g) In the Didache (about 100 AD.), it is written that the Eucharist is a pure sacrifice. The early Church applied the Greek terms "Thysia" "" or "Sacrifice," and "Prosphora" "" or "Oblation," in conjunction with the word "Eucharist."

## **The Altar Materials**

1. Wooden Altars: During the first four centuries, Altars were generally made of wood.
2. Stone Altars: It is certain that from a very early date, stone Altars were in use, and there is a very close connection between them and the tombs of martyrs. As it is written in Revelation 6:9, "...I saw under the Altar the souls of them who were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held."
3. Metallic Altars: When Christianity was declared as the official religion of the Roman Empire, it became natural that more expensive materials be used for making Altars. There are Altars made of silver coated with gold or ornamented with jewels.

## **The Altar Clothing**

According to the Coptic Rite, the Altar is covered with three coverings:

1. The first cloth covers the Altar completely, from all side. It is decorated with four crosses, or one big cross in the center.
2. A white linen cover is put over the first, and it is about 15cm long on each side.
3. The third layer used during the celebration of the Eucharist is called "Prosphorine" "" (derived from the Greek word "Prospora" () meaning "Oblation." It also represents the stone that the Angel rolled away from the tomb of Christ. Little jingles are fixed on it, to give an audible sound when it is raised from the Altar (i.e. the earthquake).

## **The Tribune**

Behind the Altar and around the Eastern wall of the Sanctuary, lies the Tribune. This is often made of marble or stone, and consists of seven semi-circular steps. The steps represent the orders of Priesthood. Typical examples are present in the Church of St. Mina, in Mariut, and in the Churches of Babylon, in Old Cairo (the suspended Church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, St. Sergius, St. Mercurius, and St. Barbara).

On the Tribune, seats for the Presbyter are fitter, and in the center of the top step stands the seat of the Patriarch or the Bishop. From this seat, the Patriarch or the Bishop gives his sermon. This gives an idea that the clergy has no superiority over the congregation, except because they are the servants of the Altar. The Bishop's Throne is called the "Synthrones" ". The Church that is provided with such a seat is known as a Cathedral. The Bishop's Throne is a sign of the Bishop's authority. They are instated on their Thrones on the day of their consecration, or in a separate ceremony.

## **The Bishop's Throne at Present**

Due to the expansion in the sizes of the Church buildings, a Bishop's seat is added to the Chancel to enable the congregation to hear him with greater ease.

Unfortunately, not a single Synthronos is now left in the Tribune of the Coptic Orthodox Churches.

### **Iconostasis**

The Iconostasis, or Icon Stand, represents one of the most important architectural features of the Orthodox Churches.

It is a rigid screen of wood or marble, carrying the Icons of the Lord, His Angels, and His Saints. It lies between the Sanctuary and the Nave.

The original forms of Iconostasis were created very early in the Christian Churches, and they were mentioned in the writings of the early Church Fathers; however, the shape and height of these screens varied. On the side of the Sanctuary, a curtain was fitted, and it was opened and closed in accordance with the various stages of the services. This means that the Sanctuary is visible and inaccessible at the same time.

Its nomenclature as veil is however inaccurate, for the Christian Church never accepts a veil, similar in concept, to that of the Temple of Solomon. It has been knocked down forever through the Cross.

### **The Functions of the Iconostasis:**

1. The most valid motive for the introduction of the Iconostasis came as defense against Iconoclastic movement. The Church wished to confirm our relation with the Heavenly Creatures and the Saints in Jesus.
2. It is also a sign of reverence towards the mystery of the Altar of the mystery of Christ the Sacrifice. Although this does not mean that the people do not share in the prayers of the Eucharist

### **The Symbolism of the Iconostasis:**

1. It reveals the reality of the Church as an Icon of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the future transfiguration of Man. It gives a heavenly atmosphere for the worshippers.
2. The Iconostasis, with its various Icons declares the reconciliation between the heavenly world and the earthly one.

3. It acts in favor of the Church Doctrine that our Fathers, who departed in the Lord are never separated from the Church, and did not lose their love for the salvation of mankind. So we can consider the Iconostasis as a symbol for reserving the front portion of the Nave for the Saints, who are in fact, one with their militant brothers.

### **The Positions and Order of the Icons on the Iconostasis:**

These follow a certain tradition: - When facing the Iconostasis,

- A. on the right side of the Royal Door, we can see:
  1. The Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ holding a page from the Gospel, on which is written, " I am the Good Shepherd" because He is the unique Gate leading to the Heavenly Kingdom, and the Good Shepherd Who opened the gates of Heaven.
  2. The Icon of the Forerunner, St. John the Baptist
  3. The Icon of the Patron Saint of the Church o Selected Icons of Saints and Martyrs
- B. On the left side of the Royal Door, we can see:
  1. The Icon of the Holy Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, the Mother of God. She represents the whole Church, and the Queen who sits at the right hand side of King, Jesus Christ.
  2. The Icon of the Annunciation
  3. The Icon of Archangel Michael
  4. The Icon of St. Mark the Evangelist
  5. A selection of Icons of famous Apostles -
- C. Directly above the Royal Door, the Icon of the Last Supper is mounted. This signifies the office of Christ as a Priest *and defines the church*
- D. On both sides of the above Icon, we usually find the Icons of the twelve Disciples. This gives the apostolic feature of the Church.
- E. On the top of the Iconostasis, a Cross is mounted, as it was written, "...Before whose eyes, Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among us." (Galatians 3:1). - The Icon of the Virgin Mary stands on one side of the Cross  
- The Icon of St. John the Divine stands on the other side.

**The Ostrich Eggs:** The main feature that distinguishes ancient Coptic and Greek Churches is the Ostrich Eggs. They are suspended before the Iconostasis between

the Icons. Eggs generally held a symbolic meaning in the early Church, as a hope of resurrection, or the risen spiritual life in Christ. There is a traditional belief that the Ostrich, after laying her eggs, must keep looking at them, in order to speed up their hatching. So, when we go to the Church, we have to concentrate all our thought and attention to the Divine worship, leaving behind us all earthly worries.

## **The Nave**

The Nave: The term, “Nave” is derived from the Latin “navies” meaning a “ship”. The Sanctuary and the Nave are correlated; the former sanctifies the latter, and the latter completes the former. The Sanctuary represents God’s presence, and the Nave declares the people’s meeting with God.

The Nave of the Church is normally divided into two parts, or “Choruses.”

- A. The Chancel, or the Choir (Chorus) of Deacons. It is situated on the East end of the Nave, separated from the Sanctuary by the Iconostasis, and from the rest of the Nave by a screen or fence. The Chancel is one of three steps higher than the Nave. It contains seats for the Deacons, two candelabra, and two lecterns on which the Coptic and Arabic Books or readings (lectionaries) are placed.
- B. The Chorus of believers (The Nave), or the body of the Church

The Divisions of the Nave: The Nave was normally divided into two parts by a colonnade. The Southern aisle is reserved for the nuns, virgins, widows, women and their children. This aisle is now used without any division for all of the female believers. The northern aisle of the Nave is still reserved for the men. According to this order, children attend the liturgy with the whole congregation; with the women sitting at the right hand of the men, as the Queen is at the right side of the King.

**The Domes:** Some Coptic Churches have built a dome called “Cupola.” This refers to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, seated in the Heavens. For this reason, it is usually painted with Icons of the Lord, or in a bright blue color, decorated with Angels and stars. Some Churches have three Cupolas, that represent the Holy Trinity. Other Churches have five “Cupolas.” The principle one, which is large, in the

center represents the Lord; and the four small ones around it represent the four Evangelists.

### **The Narthex and the Baptistry**

The Narthex is the Western area near the entrance of the Church, where the Catechumens and repentant attend a special part of the Liturgy called “The Liturgy of the Catechumens,” or “The Liturgy of the Word.”

The Catechumens are those who are getting ready for baptism, and the repentant are Christians who have committed certain sins, and whose spiritual Fathers forbade them to receive the Holy Communion for a period of time.(this part is rarely seen in today’s church buildings)

### **The Baptistry Site:**

With great spiritual wisdom, the Didache identified the location where the Baptistry is to be built. It should be built in the North Western side of the Church, i.e., at the left hand side of the entrance.

Because the Baptistry is considered the womb of the Church, through which we get born again, nobody can cross the chorus of the believers and receive the Mystery of the Altar, without first entering the Baptistry to go through the Divine Birth. And also because our Lord commenced His public ministry by the Baptism, we consider that the first step to enter among the believers is through the Baptistry.

### **The Church Doors:**

There are three doors to the Church as mentioned in the Didache. “The Church must have three doors according to the Holy Trinity.” Nobody can enter to the Church except if baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Western door is considered the main door, through which we enter, in the direction of the East, to the Sanctuary.

The Church doors refer to the doors of the Heavenly Kingdom, which are: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God loved these doors, “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all of the dwellings of Jacob.” (Psalm 87:2). In the early times, they used to draw twelve Angels and write the name of the twelve tribes on the Church doors, as mentioned in Revelation 21:12.

**The church has an eschatological significance.** To enter into the house of God, we must cross a threshold, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called. the visible church is a symbol of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying

**The liturgical traditions or rites presently in use in the Apostolic Churches are:**

1. Alexandrian or Coptic,
2. Armenian,
3. The Byzantine,
4. Chaldean rites
5. Ethiopian
6. The Latin (principally the Roman rite),
7. Maronite and
8. Syriac,

**Liturgy and culture:**

The Liturgy is the response of the culture to the Gospel.

**CONCLUSION:** In this lesson, we learned about how and where the liturgy is celebrated, as well as learning about the sacrament of Baptism. The Coptic Orthodox Church is rich in theology and symbolism in the church. Everything has a deep meaning and is tied to the Bible and the early church in some way. It is up to us to discover the great treasures of the liturgy and the church.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27).



## 7. INTRODUCTION TO THE DIVINE LITURGY – PART I: THE OFFERTORY

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander
6. Strong’s Concordance
7. Catechesis of the Catholic Church
8. Catholic encyclopedia
9. Church Architecture and Priests Vestments © 2009 Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church has three main parts: 1) The Offertory, 2) The Liturgy of the Catechumens, and 3) The Liturgy of the faithful. In this lesson, we will learn about the Offertory. In particular, we will study all of the rituals, congregation responses, and deacon’s responses in this part of the liturgy, their deep

meanings, and their connections to the practices in the Bible and the early church.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The word "Liturgy" means the corporate service of worship of the assembled church, or in short, group public worship. The word "litany" means group praise. The Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church is very spiritually rich. It is very important to understand the liturgy so that we can benefit from it and explain it to others.

The Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church is the essence of prayer and group worship. The church, where the liturgy is performed, is the house of God, the door to heaven, the house of the angels and the saints. During the prayers of the Divine Liturgy, the angels, archangels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and all the heavenly host are present around the altar with great glory. During the sacred moment when the priest asks the Holy Spirit to descend, the Holy Spirit comes amid the joy of the angels and changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in an incomprehensible mystery. Thus, the time we spend in church during the Divine Liturgy is a moment of the heavenly life on earth.

The Liturgy of St. Basil has three major parts:

- i) The Offertory,
- ii) The Liturgy of the Catechumens
- iii) The Liturgy of the Faithful.

The outline of the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy is as follows:

### **Part I: The Offertory**

#### **1) The Preparation**

- a) Putting on the Vestments

- b) Preparing the Altar
- c) The Canonical Hours
- d) The Hand Washing
- e) The Orthodox Creed

## **2) Choosing the Lamb**

- a) The Bread
- b) The Wine
- c) The Rite of Choosing the Lamb
- d) Baptizing the Lamb
- e) The Procession of the Lamb

## **3) The Litany of Offerings**

# **Part II: The Liturgy of the Catechumens**

## **1) The Absolutions**

- a) Absolution to the Son
- b) Absolutions to the Ministers

## **2) The Readings**

- a) The Pauline Epistle
- b) The Catholic Epistle
- c) The Praxis: The Acts of the Apostles
- d) The Synaxarium
- e) The Psalm and the Gospel
- f) The Sermon

## **3) The Prayer of the Veil**

## **4) The Three Major Litanies**

- a) The Litany of Peace

- b) The Litany of the Fathers
- c) The Litany of the Congregations

### **Part III: The Liturgy of the Faithful**

#### **1) The Orthodox Creed**

#### **2) The Pre-Anaphora**

- a) Washing the Hands
- b) The Prayer of Reconciliation
- c) The Apostolic Kiss

#### **3) The Anaphora (Eucharistic prayers)**

- a) The Lord be with You
- b) Worthy and Just (Meet and right)
- c) The Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)

#### **4) The Consecration**

- a) The Institution Narrative
- b) The Anamnesis
- c) The Epiclesis: The Invocation of the Holy Spirit

#### **5) The Seven Minor Litanies**

- a) The Litany of Peace
- b) The Litany of the Fathers
- c) The Litany of the Ministers
- d) The Litany of Mercy
- e) The Litany of the Places
- f) The Litany of the Waters, Sowing, and Harvesting
- g) The Litany of the Oblations

#### **6. The Commemoration of the Saints**

- a) The Diptych
- b) The Fraction
  - i) Introduction to the Fraction
  - ii) Prayer of the Fraction
  - iii) The Lord's Prayer
  - iv) Inaudible Prayers

Note: There are different fraction prayers for the various occasions, including the Nativity and Christmas Eve, Theophany, The Great Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Great Saturday, Easter through Pentecost, The Lords feasts, The Apostles, The Holy Virgin and the Angels, and several others.

## **7. The Confession**

- a) Prayers before the Confession
- b) The Prayer of Confession

## **8. The Holy Communion**

- a) Distributing the Holy Body
- b) Distributing the Honored Blood
- c) Communion Praises
- d) Thanksgiving Prayer After Communion

## **9. The Dismissal**

- a) Dismissing the Angel of the Sacrifice
- b) Dismissing the Congregation
- c) The Code of Benediction
- d) Washing the Hands
- e) The Distribution of Eulogia: Morsel of Blessing

## **LESSON BODY:**

## **Part I: The Offertory**

We have to be well prepared for our journey from the earthly to the heavenly in the Orthodox Liturgy. To receive the Law, Moses was ordered that all the people should be sanctified for three days. The church commands the priests and the people to be prepared for receiving Holy Communion. Repentance, confession, and contrite hearts praising God is the key to preparation for the Liturgy.

### **1) The Preparation**

**a) Putting on the Vestments** - The priests and deacons wear clothes sanctified by the prayer of the Bishop and dedicated for the service of the Lord. The vestments of the priest are based on the way the high priests dressed in the Old Testament (Exodus 28:3-37). Their white garments resemble "honor and beauty" (Exodus 28:40). The priest recites Psalms 29 and 92 while putting on his vestments. Psalm 29 talks about the clothes as those of an eternal wedding and Psalm 92 declares God's kinship with the Church.

**b) Preparing the Altar** - Preparing the altar is symbolic of the preparation of the upper room where the Lord met with His disciples to eat the Passover meal. "Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us" (Mark 14:15). The priest prays a preparation prayer. He then opens the vessel pack which is wrapped in the Prosphering, and arranges the sacred vessels which are used in the service. These are

i) The Cup (Chalice) - which holds the wine that will become the Holy Blood of Christ

ii) The Paten - which is for the bread that will become the Holy Body of Christ

iii) The Spoon (Mastel) - which is for serving the communion at the end of the Liturgy

iv) The Dome - which is used to hold the veils above the paten

The priest blesses the sacred vessels then wipes the Cup, the Paten, and the Spoon.

Then the priest covers the altar with the veils and puts the vessels in their proper places.

### **c) The Canonical Hours**

These are Psalm readings from the Agpeya. The Psalms contain prophecies about the Lord's life and redemption. Therefore, the bread and wine should be present during the Agpeya prayers. The third and sixth hours are read during non-fasting days, and the ninth hour is added during fasting days. During the great lent, the third, sixth, ninth, eleventh, and twelfth hours are read. The priest says the first Psalm of the 3rd hour, Psalm 19, Psalm 29, 44, and 46. The priest says the first Psalm of the sixth hour, Psalm 84, Psalm 92. The third hour reminds us of three things: i) The Lord's trial, ii) the Ascension, and iii) the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of the 3rd hour is about the Holy Spirit.

The sixth hour reminds us of the crucifixion of Christ. Psalms 52, 56, 68, 92 refer to the crucifixion of Christ. The Gospel of the 6th hour refers to the blessings for those who participate in the sufferings of the cross. The litany is appropriate for the crucifixion also.

The ninth hour is the hour of the death of Christ.

### **d) The Hand Washing**

The priest washes his hands three times while saying two Psalms: Psalm 50 and Psalm 25. "You have sprinkled me with hyssop and I shall be made clean; you shall wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow" (Psalm 50). "I will wash my hands in innocence and I will go about Your altar, O Lord that I may hear the voice of Your praise and tell of all Your wondrous works" (Psalm 25). These Psalms refer to washing ourselves from sin. Then the priest wipes his hands with a white towel.

### **e) The Orthodox Creed**

The Nicene Creed is recited from the Agpeya. As we recite the creed, we should remember the Lord's plan for our salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

After the creed is recited, the deacons and the people sing Kyrie-leyson 41 times asking God fervently for His mercy. Forty one times refer to the 39 scourges with which the Lord Jesus was whipped, one for the crown of thorns, and one for His bleeding side from the spear.

## **2) Choosing the Lamb**

### **a) The Bread**

The bread is round, in the shape of a circle, having no beginning and no end to symbolize the eternity of our Lord. It is stamped in the center with a large cross representing Christ surrounded by twelve small crosses representing the twelve disciples. Around the crosses appears the stamp of the Trisagion: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal." The bread is pierced in five places around the central crosses in reference to the three nails that held Jesus on the cross, the crown of thorns, and his pierced side. The bread is made from pure wheat, leavened but unsalted, because Jesus is the salt of the earth. The leaven symbolizes our sins which Christ bore for us. The bread must be freshly baked.

### **b) The Wine**

The wine must be grape wine, pure and red in color. The priest must smell the wine to see that it has not soured. The wine is mixed with water, which symbolizes the mixture of blood and water that came out of the side of Jesus when he was pierced with a spear on the cross.

### **c) The Rite of Choosing the Lamb**

This rite speaks of the salvation events united together as if they were one event and beyond the limits of time. After the priest dries his hands on a clean white linen towel, he then takes a veil from the paten and puts it inside his sleeve on his left arm or on his head. He then holds the cross with his right hand and stands by the sanctuary door facing the West as the Lamb and the wine are presented to him. The holy bread, which is to become the Lamb, should be presented by the highest-



ranking deacon present as an Honor to the Lamb. The priest puts the decanter of wine on the nearest bread loaf and does the sign of the cross on the deacon carrying the holy bread, saying, "In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen." He then does the sign of the cross on the bread and wine three times saying, "Blessed be the Father, God Almighty, Amen. Blessed be His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Amen." He then does the sign of the cross on the bread with the decanter of wine saying, "Glory and honor, honor and glory to the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore Amen."

Next the priest examines the bread to choose the most suitable one for offering. Standing to the left of the priest is the deacon holding the pitcher of water, and on the right of the priest is the deacon holding the decanter of wine. In front of the priest is the deacon holding the basket of bread. Then the priest and the three deacons smell the wine to make sure that it is pure and not vinegary and is not distilled wine. If the wine is good, the deacon responds by saying "pure and precious." The priest then hands the decanter to the deacon. When choosing the most suitable bread which is to become the Lamb, the priest places his right hand on top of his left, placing his hands over the tray in the shape of a cross, as Jacob did when he blessed the sons of Joseph (Genesis 48:8). While Doing this the priest says, "May the Lord choose a Lamb without blemish." He holds each bread in his hands and examines them carefully to choose the best. If the one in his right hand is the best, he puts the one in his left hand back in the basket.

Then he takes another one in his left hand and compares it with the one in his right. If the one in his left is best, he takes it in his right hand and holds the other bread in his left hand. He must ensure that the best bread is always on top, putting the other bread back in the tray and picking another one to compare with the one in his right hand. He compares all of the bread in the basket until he finds the best one, being the best in appearance, with a perfect Spadikon, and the right number of pierced holes. Nothing should be sticking to it and it should not have cracks; it should be without blemish, just like the Passover lamb (Genesis 12:5). The priest then touches each of the other breads in the basket with the back of the chosen bread, which is still in his right hand, and places them back in the basket. He then wipes the chosen bread carefully with the small veil, taking care not to turn it upside down.

Holding the chosen bread in his left hand so that the three pierced holes are on the right side of the bread, he then dips his right thumb into the wine decanter which the deacon is holding and makes the sign of the cross, once on the face of the chosen bread in his left hand while saying, "Sacrifice of Glory", and then on the rest of the bread in the basket, saying, "Sacrifice of blessing...Sacrifice of Abraham...Sacrifice of Isaac...Sacrifice of Jacob." He again signs over the chosen bread, and says, "Sacrifice of Melchizedek." Then the priest bows, asking for absolution from those around him, before entering the sanctuary.

Touching the remaining breads with the chosen bread symbolizes that all the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to the Sacrifice of the Cross, and that the Sacrifice of the Cross was in turn the aim and the objective of all the Old Testament sacrifices. Holding the chosen sacrifice in his right hand, keeping it on top while touching the other breads, and making sure it is never upside down emphasizes the superior honor and glory that the sacrifice of the New Testament had over those of the Old Testament.

The final sign of the cross is done over the chosen bread with the intention of revealing that the sacrifice of the New Testament resembles, to a great extent, the sacrifice of Melchizedek which was a sacrifice of bread and wine and not a sacrifice of blood. The sign of the cross is done firstly and lastly on the chosen bread as it will be transformed into the real Body of the Son of God, who said about Himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Revelation 22:13). The bread is round in shape and around its circumference is imprinted in Greek "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal." It is as round as the sun to symbolize the True Lamb, the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2), Jesus Christ, having no beginning or end as Christ is without beginning or end; the Alpha and the Omega, the Eternal Son of God. The imprint on the bread has twelve small squares, a square for each of the twelve disciples, and within each square is a cross. Encircled by these twelve small squares is a large square with a large cross inside of it. This middle part is called the 'Spadikon', a Greek word meaning 'The Lord'; the large Center Square symbolizing Jesus Christ, Glory is to Him. Around the Spadikon are five holes, which have been pierced into the bread, representing the sufferings of our Lord: three nail wounds, the crown of thorns, and the piercing of His side. These holes should be placed so that three holes are on the right side of the Spadikon and two holes are on the left. Whenever the priest holds the Bread the three holes should be on the right side.

The number of holy breads in the basket from which the priest chooses the Lamb should always be an odd number (for example 3, 5, 7). The spiritual significance of this is that the number three signifies the Holy Trinity and choosing one of them reminds us that the Eternal Word was Incarnate to forgive the sins of the world. It also declares that the three Hypostasis - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - are all sharing in the salvation process. The number five signifies the five sacrifices of the Old Testament: the burnt offering, the sin offering, the iniquity offering, the peace offering, and the bread offering,

These sacrifices were performed using one of five pure living creatures; sheep, cows, goats, pigeons or turtle doves (Leviticus 10:14). The number seven represents the five types of sacrifice, as stated above, plus the two birds that were sacrificed to purify the leper (Leviticus 14:4). All of these sacrifices were archetypes of the sacrifice of the cross and therefore also of the sacrifice of the Holy Liturgy. Since our Master, Jesus Christ carried our sins within His Body on the cross as He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, so the bread offered in the Holy Liturgy should be made with yeast (leavened bread) to symbolize these sins that Christ bore. The Coptic Orthodox Church, led by the Holy Spirit, makes its holy bread with yeast, which should then be baked so that the yeast perishes just as sin perished in the Resurrected Body of Christ. The yeast is still present in the bread but is dead because of the fire. As the fire spoiled the effect of the yeast, so Christ had ended the effect of sin through offering His Body as a sacrifice; "God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

#### **d) Baptizing the Lamb**

After putting the veil on the altar, the priest then carries the Lamb and wets his right index finger and makes the sign of the cross on the bread from the top of the bread to the bottom, then around the bread from the left side to the right. This action symbolizes the baptism of Christ by St. John the Baptist in the River Jordan. While doing this, the priest prays "Let our sacrifice be accepted before You Lord for the forgiveness of my sins, and the ignorance of Your people."

The priest then kneels over the selected Lamb asking the Lord to accept this sacrifice as a sacrifice for his own sins in particular, and also for the ignorance of the congregation. He places all the burdens of his congregation, the Church and the whole world on this Lamb which carries the sins of the whole world. Then he prays silently a deep prayer called the Prayer of Commemoration. He places upon the Lamb that is about to be slain for us, all the hardships, tribulations and diseases of His people. The priest pleads for forgiveness for the sinners, the raising of the fallen, steadfastness for the righteous, healing for the sick, relief for the troubled, a safe return for the travelers and reposal for those who have slept. With these remembrances the priest mentions people by name, which have often been written on a piece of paper and placed on the Altar in front of him.

The priest then prays for all Christians in general and for the Orthodox Christians and his relatives in particular, saying, "Remember O Lord, Your servants, the Orthodox Christians, everyone in his name, remember, O Lord, my father, my mother, my brothers and my relatives in the flesh. My spiritual fathers, guard the living with Your angel of safety, and repose those who have slept." After giving priority to everyone else by praying for them first, he then mentions himself last, saying, "Remember, O Lord, my weakness, I, the poor, and forgive my many sins." The priest mentions himself last as an act of self-denial, as if he says with the Apostle Paul, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me. For I am the least of the Apostles, unfit to be called an apostle" (I Corinthians 15:8-9). The priest prays these remembrances and pleadings for his people, for if he succeeds in accomplishing his mission with the Lord as an advocate and intercessor, he can heal the sick, solve the problems, eliminate the hardships of the people, and can then rejoice with his congregation like a father does with his children, saying with the Apostle, "Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me" (Philippians 2:17-18).

The priest then briefly says the three Major Litanies; i) "Remember, O Lord, the peace of Your One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church....", ii) "Remember, O Lord, our Pontiff Pope Abba Tawadros II, and iii) "Remember O Lord our gatherings, bless them...."

### **e) The Procession of the Lamb**

The priest wraps the Lamb in the same veil he used during its selection. He puts the cross on top of the Lamb in a slanted fashion, as Christ bent while holding the Cross going to Golgotha. He holds the lamb in reverence against his head while standing at the door of the sanctuary saying, "Glory and honor, honor and glory...." The priest prays the prayer "Glory and honor..." while standing at the door of the sanctuary for three reasons. Firstly, everyone can hear the whole prayer instead of missing parts of it, which can sometimes happen if the priest is moving around the altar. Secondly, it then gives the priest more time when he does move around the Altar to pray the important inaudible prayer of "Remember O Lord all those who have asked us to remember them in our prayers, may the Lord remember them in His Heavenly Kingdom," in which he mentions all those whom he mentioned before, and maybe those who he forgot to mention. And thirdly, it gives the deacon a chance to respond, as he proceeds around the Altar saying, "Pray for these Holy and Honored oblations, and for our sacrifices, and for those who offered them."

When the priest carries the Lamb with both hands and holds it against his head, he re-enacts what Simeon the Elder did when he carried the child Jesus and proceeded around the altar of God (Luke 2:28). Just as Simeon blessed the salvation of the Lord which He prepared before all people, so the priest also goes around the Altar glorifying God, Who sent His Son for our salvation. The Procession of the Lamb goes around the Altar only once, to symbolize the Savior being taken to the temple by his parents to fulfill the requirements of the law. It also represents that Christ would offer Himself only once as a sacrifice for the whole world. At the end of the round, the priest stands at the left-hand side of the Altar, unwraps the oblation and lays it on his left palm. He moves the wine decanter near it and prays loudly while signing the cross three times over the bread and wine. He then puts the bread in the paten under the dome with its three holes to the right, completing the three signings, saying, "Glory and Honor...."

Next the priest uncovers the chalice and makes sure that it is clean by wiping it with the veil in his right hand. He takes the decanter from the deacon and after the response is said by the congregation he says, "Pray." He signs the congregation with the wine while saying, "Peace be to you all" and follows with the Thanksgiving Prayer. He pours the wine in the chalice. Then the deacon pours some water in the

decanter, which is carried by the priest (around 1/4 or 1/3 full, but not exceeding 1/3 and not less than 1/10). The priest then shakes the decanter and pours it into the chalice. He gives the deacon the decanter upside-down in order that it dry properly and quickly in preparation for the next liturgy. The priest completes these tasks while praying the Thanksgiving Prayer. The priest then holds the cross to do the necessary signings for the Thanksgiving Prayer and the Offertory.

It is preferable when pouring the wine and water in the chalice, to pour it in the sign of the cross to remind us that the cross became our strength and pride. Mixing the wine with water reminds the believers of the blood and water that gushed out when Christ our Redeemer was pierced in His side. As they offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, the believers should remember that their Christ is alive in His Divinity although He died in the flesh and gave up His humanly Spirit to the hands of His Father. The proof that He is alive in His Divinity, even after He bowed His Head, came when they pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water ran out of His side (John 19:34). It is medically impossible for a dead person to bleed liquid blood. It is a known fact that when someone dies, his blood clots. To ascertain the death of a person, the physician sticks a pin in his body. If there is no flow of blood, then the person is dead. Even if they stab the heart of a dead man with a dagger, only a few drops of yellowish fluid (known as plasma) come out of the wound. When they pierced Christ in the side after His death, blood and water, still distinguishable from each other, gushed out of His side. This is proof that although Jesus died in His Humanity, His Divinity never departed His Body, protecting it from decay or corruption. This is to say that Christ died with His Humanity but was always alive through His Divinity.

### **3) The Litany of Offerings**

After the Thanksgiving Prayer, the priest prays the Litany of Offerings inaudibly while holding the Cross. The priest then covers the paten and the chalice. Covering the paten and the chalice symbolizes the shrouding of our Lord Jesus Christ after His death on the cross. The priest takes hold of the top two corners of the 'Prosphering' (large altar veil) and the deacon on the opposite side of the altar takes hold of the bottom two corners of the Prosphering, and together they cover the Holy Mysteries. The 'Prosphering' represents the stone, which was rolled

against the entrance of the tomb. Having covered the Holy Mysteries, the priest places a small triangular shaped veil on the top of the 'Prosphering'. This small veil represents the seal on the tomb's door. The priest and the deacon who faces him, both in their white clothes, symbolize the two angels that Mary Magdalene saw in the tomb where the body of Jesus was laid, one standing at His head and one at His foot (John 20:11).

**CONCLUSION:** The offertory is the first major component of the Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox church. It has many components including the choosing and washing of the Lamb and Agpeya prayers. This part of the liturgy teaches us that we come to church to offer (give) ourselves to God. We come to church not to take, but to offer and give. We offer ourselves to Christ in the liturgy so that we can carry out His will on this earth. We offer gifts through bread and wine as Abraham did with Melchizedek. Thus, we must remember that when come to church, we are coming to offer, and not to take. This must become our way of life. A life of offering, giving, and thanksgiving to God.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9: 7).

## 8. INTRODUCTION TO THE DIVINE LITURGY – PART II: THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

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### VERSE & REFERENCES

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**Verse:** “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13).

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**References:**

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander
6. Strong’s Concordance
7. Catechesis of the Catholic Church
8. Catholic encyclopedia
9. Church Architecture and Priests Vestments © 2009 Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

## LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church has three main parts: 1) The Offertory, 2) The Liturgy of the Catechumens, and 3) The Liturgy of the faithful. In this lesson, we will learn about the second component of the Divine Liturgy, which is the Liturgy of the Catechumens. In particular, we will study all of the rituals, congregation responses, and deacon’s responses in this part of the liturgy, their deep meanings, and their connections to the practices in the Bible and the early church. This



component of the liturgy focuses on the readings, and was intended in the Early Church to be the part of the Liturgy who were not yet baptized in the faith.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The liturgy of the Catechumens is commonly called today The Liturgy of the Word, primarily because it consists mostly of the readings of the Church. Thus, the Liturgy of the Word mainly focuses on the readings from the Bible and the Synaxarium, and was intended in the Early Church to be the part of the Liturgy who were not yet baptized in the faith. Thus, those who were not yet baptized in the faith were invited to attend and hear the readings from the Bible and hear about the history of the church through the Synaxarium. The Liturgy of the Catechumens begins with absolutions and then moves into the readings.

### **1. The Absolutions**

#### **a) Absolution to the Son**

During this time, before coming out of the altar, the priest silently prays the Absolution for the Son saying, "O Master and Lord Jesus Christ the Only Begotten Son." This is also the third absolution that is said at the end of the Vespers or Morning Incense. He then kisses the altar, kneels before it, stands up and kisses it again. On the right of the altar he offers a metania (prostration) to the priests and to the altar deacons. They do the same, and together they exchange a holy kiss with each other before leaving the Sanctuary in preparation for the absolution.

#### **b) Absolution to the Ministers**

The priest faces East standing behind the deacons who are kneeling on the floor in front of the sanctuary's door. With five signings of the cross the priest says the

Absolution of the Ministers (Servants), given as follows: "May your servants, the ministers of this day..." First he signs to the East, crossing the priests serving with him. If a hegemony (protopriest) is present, he would say, "...the hegemony..." and if a priest is attending he would say "...the priest...". He then crosses the deacons saying, "... and the deacons..." If only one deacon is present he says, "and the deacon..." He then turns to the left and does the third sign of the cross towards the rest of the servants saying, "...and the clergy..." He turns to the West and crosses the congregation saying, "and all the congregation..." Finally he turns towards the East and crosses himself saying, "and my weak self..." The Absolution continues with the saying, "...Be absolved from the mouth of the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and from the mouth of the one, holy, universal and Apostolic church." Then they all rise. The priest includes the congregation in the Ministers Absolution as they are considered to be serving and partaking in the Holy Liturgy with the deacons and priest, and are not considered mere spectators. The congregation has their own role with the responses and hymns throughout the whole Liturgy. It is the participation of the whole - the congregation, the priests and the deacons - that gives strength as the whole church becomes one heart and soul worshiping and praying in spirit and in truth.

## **2. The Readings**

### **a) The Pauline Epistle**

The Pauline Epistle reading is a reading from one of the 14 epistles of St. Paul. These 14 epistles consist of the Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews. After the Absolution, the priest enters the Sanctuary, takes the box of incense and bows before his brethren asking them to bless the box with him. In love and humility they bow in return saying, "You bless." Then he puts five spoonfuls of incense into the censer. The incense is placed in the censer, which is carried by the deacon who stands towards the right of the altar. The priest then does the sign of the cross on the congregation saying, "Let us pray", then after the response of the deacon the priest says, "Stand up for prayer."

The priest then says, "Peace be with you all", signifying the introduction to the

Pauline Readings. The priest then takes the censer from the deacon and prays some silent prayers. The priest then proceeds around the altar three times while praying silently the Three Major Litanies of Peace, the Fathers, and the Congregations. He then comes out of the sanctuary with his left foot first without putting his back to the altar. The Round of the Pauline Incense is similar to that of the Vespers and Morning Incense, the only difference being that the priest in the Pauline Round says, "The blessings of Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ be with us all, Amen," instead of "The blessings of the Vespers/Morning Incense be with us all, Amen." In the Pauline Round of Incense, the priest proceeds around the whole church in remembrance of St. Paul who exerted himself exceedingly in his travels to preach the message of the Lord, which he did more than any other Apostle. About this the Apostle Paul says, "But by the Grace of God I am what I am and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

In the Pauline Round, the priest offers incense from the left side of the church and proceeding to the right indicating that through the faith preached by St. Paul, we were taken from darkness to God's great light.

## **b) The Catholic Epistle**

There is no round of incense during the readings of the Catholic Epistle, during which time the priest remains in the Sanctuary according to the Lord's command to His disciples that they should not depart Jerusalem before the coming of the Holy Spirit. The word 'Catholic' is a Greek word, which means 'Universal'. The seven epistles following St. Paul's epistles are called the Catholic Epistles. These are the Epistle of St. James, the two Epistles of St. Peter, the three Epistles of St. John, and the Epistle of St. Jude. They were called the 'universal' epistles because they were written to all the nations and not to a particular person or a certain group of people, as were the Pauline Epistles. The Gospel of Christ, as taught by the Apostles, is the doctrine of heaven. If we follow it, it will lead us to a happy eternal life.

## **c) The Praxis: The Acts of the Apostles**

This is a reading from the book of Acts. The priest proceeds around the altar three times while praying the Three Minor Litanies then comes out of the sanctuary and offers incense. He then proceeds to offer incense to the icons on the Southern side

of the sanctuary's door, then proceeds towards the Northern side of the sanctuary. He walks among the congregation down the center aisle saying, "Let your people through blessing be thousands upon thousands...", and he blesses the congregation while saying, "The blessings of my masters, the Apostles Peter and Paul...". He does not proceed as far as the Western end of the church but returns to the door of the sanctuary while saying the Mystery of the Confession. In coming out of the sanctuary to offer incense, the priest symbolizes the Apostles when they left Jerusalem to preach Christianity throughout the whole world.

The priest does not go around the whole church as in the round of the Pauline, which signifies the fact that the Apostles limited their preaching to Judea and the cities of Judah, whereas St. Paul preached Christianity to the whole world, and therefore encountered more tribulations during his travels than his fellow apostles did. The priest offers the incense from right to left to indicate that the Apostles returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem after the Ascension of the Lord. Another reason being that, as the priest started the Round of the Pauline from left to right, he starts the Round of the Praxis from right to left, indicating that both are equal. After finishing the Round of the Praxis, the priest does not enter the sanctuary. This is for two reasons. One is due to that fact that the Apostles did not return to Jerusalem but were martyred in the country where they last preached; and the other is that by the end of the three rounds after reading the Praxis, the priest has completed seven rounds, these being the three rounds after the First Mystery of the Pauline, one round after the Mystery of the Congregations Confession, and the three rounds after the Praxis. These rounds are a representation of the children of Israel and the Ark of Covenant who circled Jericho seven times before the walls tumbled down. As the priest proceeds around the altar offering incense and raising prayers and pleadings to the Lord, the walls of evil and sin tumble down.

#### **d) The Synaxarium**

After the Praxis, the priest reads from the Synaxarium, which is the book containing the daily commemoration of saints. 'Synaxarium' is a Greek word meaning, 'The News'; the chronicles of the fathers, prophets, patriarchs, bishops, saints and martyrs. It narrates their lives and spiritual struggles and how the Lord put an end to their toils by rewarding them with the crown of glory and eternal life in the Heavenly Kingdom; a place where Christ wipes away every tear from their

eyes. The objective of reading the Synaxarium is to savor the personal account of such champions and to learn the history of the church. It also tells of the sufferings those men and women have endured for the church; the types of pain and hardships endured for the sake of keeping the faith. The striving, the fasting, and asceticism of the saints was all with the aim of venerating the Kingdom of Heaven, about which the Lord said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

It is customary that the priest himself reads the Synaxarium, to give the message an educational and spiritual strength. After reading the story of the saint of the day, the priest may refer to the saint's life story in the sermon, offering contemplation so that the congregation may benefit and learn from the saint's example. The priest may also use the Synaxarium as a means of proving the authenticity of the Holy Bible and the promises of the Lord, which are fulfilled in the lives of His faithful saints who accepted the Bible in truth. They applied the teachings of the Bible to their lives, becoming themselves a living Bible. The author of the Book of Acts, St. Luke, wrote about the deeds of only two apostles, namely Peter and Paul. St. Luke did not conclude the Book of Acts with "Amen" like the other books of the New Testament, but left it without ending, the reason being that the service and ministry of the Church which began with the Apostles has no ending but is a continuous ministry for as long as the church exists on earth. These apostles were to be succeeded by such apostolic successors as the patriarchs, the bishops, the martyrs and the saints. In fact, all those who strive within the church and shape its history will be annexed to the Book of Acts. This history is recorded in the Synaxarium and that is why the Synaxarium is read straight after the Praxis.

The Synaxarium is read all year round, but as a tradition, it is not read during the Eastertide (the Holy 50 days after the Resurrection) so as not to mix the joys of the Resurrection with the grievances of the martyrs sufferings. The festivities of the Resurrection are also superior to the feasts of martyrs and saints and subsequently ought to be foremost in the hearts and minds of the believers. The procession of the icon of the Holy Resurrection, sung in its festive tunes, replaces the readings of the Synaxarium during this time.

#### **e) The Psalm and the Gospel**

The Church highly honors and respects the Gospel, as it is the sayings and deeds of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God. This is why there are many prefaces and notices before reading the Gospel. During the reading of the Gospel, the priest prays a deep prayer called the Mystery of the Gospel, praying that the Word of God may work in the hearts of the listeners. After reading the Gospel, a sermon is given. The sermon is usually based on the Gospel of the day, as it is the focus of the day's readings.

All the readings before the Gospel - the Pauline Epistle, the Catholic Epistle, the Praxis, the Synaxarium and the Psalms - are related to the Gospel and based upon its reading.

#### **f) The Litany of the Gospel**

After saying the Trisagion, the priest puts one spoonful of incense in the censer, and stands by the door of the sanctuary praying the Litany of the Gospel, saying, "O Master and Lord Jesus Christ Our God...." The priest addresses the Lord Jesus saying, "O Master...who said to His saintly and honored disciples and pure apostles, many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see and have not seen them and to hear the things which you hear and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear." (Matthew 13:16-17). This quote states that certain facts of the Gospel were revealed to a few of the righteous men of the Old Testament who earnestly desired to see and behold the Word of God but could not. They died with their faith, believing in the coming of the Redeemer, as it says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Those privileges which the Lord has given to us should incite us to give thanks, urge us to apply ourselves and invite us to contemplate the means of Grace, which we enjoy, and the revelations of the New Testament. We should realize that the benefits given to us ought be in accordance with the privileges we receive, otherwise they become our debts; "To whom much has been committed, of whom they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). That is why the priest continues the litany saying, "May we be worthy to hear and to act according to Your Holy Gospels

through the prayers of Your saints," as he asks for the assistance and grace of God to help us to listen to the words of the Gospel and act upon them so that every believer might become a fifth Gospel. While reading the Litany of the Gospel, a deacon stands behind the priest holding the "Gospel Container", which is the four Gospels in a book covered with silver or velvet. He puts the cross on it and raises them in honor to the top of his head. At the end of the first part of the litany the deacon responds saying, "Pray for the Holy Gospel", asking that the Holy Gospel be spread throughout the world and that all should listen and act according to it in the aim of winning eternal life.

The congregation responds by saying, "Lord have mercy." Then the priest continues, "Remember also, O Our Master...". At the end of the litany he offers incense to God before the sanctuary saying, "And to You we send up the glory, honor..." Remaining there, the priest then offers incense to the Gospel saying, "Bow to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through the prayers of the chanter David the Prophet. O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins." The priest asks David the prophet to intercede for us as we read one of his Psalms. Psalms are prophecies about our Lord Jesus Christ, which is why the reading of the Psalm is before the Gospel. The Psalms are an annunciation of the perfect light, "The light of the Gospel".

The priest and the deacon enter the sanctuary and the priest puts a handful of incense in the censer while saying, "Glory and honor...." The priest then holds the Gospel Container with the cross on it while the deacon faces him, holding onto them also. Together they go around the altar, the deacon walking backwards, while the priest says, "Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all people. A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

During this procession, the priest offers incense to the Gospel Container. Going around the altar holding the Gospels and the cross represents the spreading of Christianity to the whole creation and announcing that our salvation was completed through the Cross. At the end of the procession, the priest puts the Gospel Container on his head in honor and stands to the left side of the sanctuary facing West. The deacon raises the Cross on his head and stands by the right side of the sanctuary's door also facing the West, and when the deacon's response of

the Psalm finishes he says, "Stand up in the fear of God and let us listen to the Holy Gospel", drawing the congregation's attention and asking them stand up in awe and piety to listen to the Holy Gospel, the Word of God and the Constitution of Heaven. Then the priest, facing the East, comes out of the sanctuary without putting his back to the altar, stepping out with his left foot while saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. A chapter from the Holy Gospel according to St. (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John).

The verse "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" was said to Christ when He entered Jerusalem in a great procession. The deacon reads the Gospel saying, "Stand up in the fear of God and listen to the Holy Gospel, a chapter from the Holy Gospel according to St. (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) the Evangelist may his blessings be with us all." During the reading of the Gospel, two deacons holding lit candles stand on both sides of the lectern; this symbolizes that the Gospel Enlightens our path in life, the Gospel being the life and words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of Life" (John 8:12).

An abundance of light also represents joy and happiness and the Gospel is the Lord's joyous tidings. The Priest takes the censer and, while standing in awe before the Gospel, he incenses and prays the Mystery of the Gospel. He implores the Lord to make him, the deacons, and the congregation worthy to hear the Holy Bible, which many prophets and righteous people desired to see but they could not and to hear but they could not hear it. He also pleads that they become not just listeners, deluding themselves, but hearers and doers of its commandments and admonitions for the sake of their salvation. During this time the congregation stands up in awe and devotion listening to the Holy Bible, the word of life. They learn this devotion and respect for the Holy Gospel from their priest whom they see standing before the Bible in reverence and adoration while he offers incense and prays the Mystery of the Gospel with dedication.

### **g) The Sermon**

After the Gospel is read, the congregation sits down, and then the sermon is given by the priest. The sermon is usually based on the Liturgy's Gospel and on the other readings which are thematically similar. During the sermon, much care must be taken as to the interpretation of all verses of the Liturgy's Gospel and the spiritual,



religious and ritual connotations therein. The sermon should clarify the object and the message the Church wishes to give to her children, through all the readings of the day of which the Gospel is the most important. The sermon also may refer to the saints of the day, as read in the Synaxarium, saving the preacher from using unrelated or remote stories. The sermon should **not** concentrate on just one verse of the Bible, using it as the only frame of reference. The sermon should contain many references, linking one verse to another, and explaining the main purpose of the day's readings. This was the most important objective the church had in mind when arranging the readings throughout the year.

### **3) The Prayer of the Veil**

This is a silent prayer prayed by the priest asking the Lord to make him worthy of touching the Holy Sacraments. When Moses read the law to the people of Israel, they bowed their heads in order to avoid seeing the light that shone from his face, as he used to unveil his face when he read the law. After the sermon, while chanting the Gospel response, the priest stands in front of the Sanctuary before the veil. He bows his head towards the East and, in submission and humility, prays the Mystery of the Veil. This deep, strong and important prayer has the following Biblical references: John 4:9-10, Isaiah 52:9, 1 Peter 2:25, 1 Corinthians 4:4, Isaiah 64:6, and Luke 17:10. Here the priest asks the Lord to make him worthy of touching the Holy Sacraments without falling in condemnation and without committing the sin of daring to approach the Holies with no merit; a sin which subjects the person to the Divine wrath, and hence, retribution where man can be cast out and thrown into darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing the teeth. Man is never sinless, no matter how hard he may try to purify himself. Hence, the priest relies on the great mercies of God and approaches the Sacraments in fear and awe, saying with the Prophet Daniel, "O my God, incline Your ear and hear. O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, listen and act" (Daniel 9:18-19).

The priest must carefully consider those who approach the Holy Communion, especially those personally unknown to him. He must ask such questions as, "Do you have a father of confession, "When was your last confession?" and "Are you spiritually prepared for the Holy Communion?" If someone receives the Sacraments without repentance and readiness, he will fall in condemnation and the priest would be responsible as he gave him the Body and Blood of the Lord without considering his spiritual state. Abba Gregarious has an interesting view about this

matter. He likens the priest to a bank cashier (teller), who becomes fully responsible before the bank if he cashes a check without properly identifying the check bearer. For this reason, the church admonishes new priests during ordination to be extra careful when giving the Sacraments.

#### **4) The Three Major Litanies**

The priest prostrates before the Sanctuary, before the other attending priests, and finally to the congregation. He asks the other attending priests for absolution and exchanges a holy kiss with them, requesting their prayers. Then he asks the congregation for forgiveness, in accordance with the Savior's command, "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). The priest then proceeds towards the altar, kisses it and then, with a submissive heart, begins praying the Major Litanies of Peace, the Fathers and The Congregations. He offers incense, as detailed in the Liturgy Book, and at the end of each litany he says, "Through the Grace and Compassion...". He lifts the front of the Prosphering to offer incense to the covered Mysteries, in remembrance of the time when the three Mary's came to Christ's tomb at the dawn of Sunday, as seen in the quote, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they and certain other women came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared" (Luke 24:1).

At this point, the Liturgy of the Catechumens ends. In the early Church, those who were not yet baptized in the faith were asked at this point to leave the liturgy. They were not able to attend the Liturgy of the Faithful. The Church no longer practices this as anyone who is not yet baptized is allowed to attend the entire liturgy but they are not allowed to partake of Holy Communion.

**CONCLUSION:** The liturgy of the Catechumens mainly focuses on the readings of the Church for that day as well as the sermon. The readings for the day provide us with a basis of Biblical meditation for that day as well as Bible study. The readings give us knowledge, depth, spiritual insight, and words to live by. The readings

change according to the Coptic Church year and calendar. For example, readings during Lent focus on Repentance, and readings during the Holy Fifty days focus on joy and the Divinity of Christ. The readings are a crucial part of the liturgy, and the Gospel reading is one of the most crucial and important parts of the entire liturgy. The gospel reading demands us to be in total attention and focus to the Word of God, and this is why the deacon says, "In wisdom let us attend to the Holy Gospel."

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** "O my God, incline Your ear and hear. O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, listen and act" (Daniel 9:18-19).

## 9. INTRODUCTION TO THE DIVINE LITURGY – PART III: THE LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:5-8).

#### References:

1. The Orthodox Study Bible
2. How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy, by Bishop Mettaous
3. The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Mass, by Bishop Mettaous
4. St. Basil Liturgy Reference Book, by Father Abraam Sleman
5. Understanding the Liturgy, by Father Athanasius Iskander

6. Strong's Concordance
7. Catechesis of the Catholic Church
8. Catholic encyclopedia
9. Church Architecture and Priests Vestments © 2009 Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

## LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church has three main parts: 1) The Offertory, 2) The Liturgy of the Catechumens (Word), and 3) The Liturgy of the faithful. In this lesson, we will learn about the third component of the Divine Liturgy, which is the Liturgy of the Faithful. In particular, we will study all of the rituals, congregation responses, and deacon's responses in this part of the liturgy, their deep meanings, and their connections to the practices in the Bible and the early church. This component of the liturgy focuses on what the theology of our faith in Christ and our basis of faith as found in the Bible. This part of the liturgy was intended in the Early Church to be the part of the Liturgy of the believers, that is, those who were already baptized in the faith.

## INTRODUCTION:

The Divine Liturgy of the Faithful in the Coptic Orthodox Church begins with the Orthodox Creed, which summarizes our entire faith and theology of the Holy Trinity. The Creed was the product of the first three Ecumenical Councils (The Council of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus). The Liturgy of the Faithful in

general summarizes our faith in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with the climax of the liturgy being the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which all believers are expected to partake. Indeed, the whole point in attending the liturgy is to not only to pray, but to partake in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ that was shed in the Cross.

The Liturgy of the Faithful has several parts including the Creed, the Prayer of Reconciliation, the Anaphora, the Anamnesis, the Epiclesis, the Commemoration of the Saints, the Fraction, the Confession, Holy Communion, the Dismissal, as well as other major and minor parts. We shall discuss all these in detail in this lesson.

## **1. The Orthodox Creed**

In the early church, the catechumen would attend up until the end of the third litany, and leave the church at the reading of the Creed. This was because their faith was weak and they lacked knowledge of the Christian faith. For this reason the deacon calls out before the Creed, "Attend to God with wisdom. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, in truth". The deacon here calls upon the people to maintain reverence while saying the Creed.

Then the congregation recites the creed out loud, saying, "Truly we believe in one God...". The Creed must be said audibly and in harmony and unity. In the rites of the liturgy, reciting the Creed is of great importance as there are two essential conditions that have to be met before offering the bloodless oblations and receiving the Holy Communion. These are:

i) **Faith:** without faith, we cannot please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is the goal, and He will reward those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). We declare this strong faith in our Lord by reciting the Creed. We declare it from our hearts so that it may be acceptable and pleasing to the Lord

ii) **Love:** we show our love for each other before God when we exchange holy kisses with one another during the Reconciliation Prayer, as the deacon calls out

"Exchange a holy kiss with one another...." And so, by reciting the Creed we declare our Orthodox faith in the one God with three Hypostasis. We announce our hope and anticipation in the Resurrection from the dead when Christ will come again to judge the world. We also hope for the eternal life of the world to come with all the happiness and joy for those who are righteous, and declare misery and sorrow for the unrighteous. By exchanging holy kisses we show love towards each other and subsequently to God, according to the blessed Apostle's words, "If someone says 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21). Hence, by saying the Creed and exchanging holy kisses we have obtained the three great Christian virtues: faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

## **2. The Pre-Anaphora**

### **a) Washing the hands**

While the Creed is being read the priest washes his hands three times, as he did before choosing the Lamb. He stands by the Sanctuary's door, facing West, and shakes his hands before the people. This action cautions and warns people to be prepared before receiving the Holy Communion. He repudiates the guilt of him, who dares to receive Communion undeservedly, as if he is reminding them of St. Paul's fearful words, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord's Body" (1 Corinthians 1:27-30). By shaking his hands the priest is signifying, "I am innocent of the blood of whoever undeservedly partakes of the Holy Sacraments, without letting me know," after which he dries them on a white clean towel.

The priest washes his hands before the Prayer of Reconciliation in preparation to touching and fragmenting the Holy Body with his undefiled hands, just as the Savior purified His disciples before the Lord's Supper by washing their feet and drying them.

## **b) The Prayer of Reconciliation**

The first part of the Reconciliation Prayer is contemplation on the Lord's creation of the uncorrupted man who then fell into sin through the envy of Satan, resulting in the death of man. God saved us by the life-giving manifestation of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ when He reconciled us with the Father through His shedding of blood on the cross. "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed us to the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This is why the Liturgy of the faithful (believers) begins with the Prayer of Reconciliation, as it symbolizes the reconciliation between us as sinners and God. This reconciliation is important before approaching the Holy Sacraments. The Reconciliation Prayer is not prayed on Maundy (Holy) Thursday as an indication that the true reconciliation will not be accomplished until the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday. In the second part of the Reconciliation, the priest prays to God to fill the hearts of the people and himself with His heavenly peace. This wonderful and precious peace which Christ has given us is to be enjoyed by all believers until it is perfected in heaven. When He gave His peace to the disciples, and to the church after them, He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The Reconciliation Prayer in all of the three Liturgies (St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Cyril) prayed in the Coptic Orthodox Church emphasizes this peace. In the liturgy of St. Basil, the priest prays, "With Your Goodness, O God, fill our hearts with Your peace." In St. Gregory's liturgy he prays, "You have become our mediator with the Father, and have brought down the dividing wall of hostility, and reconciled the earthly with the Heavenly making the two of them one." In St. Cyril's liturgy he prays, "Make us worthy of the heavenly peace, which befits Your Divinity, and make us worthy to exchange a holy kiss with one another." As the priest entreats the Lord in the Reconciliation Prayer to fill his heart and the hearts of His people with the Heavenly peace, he also prays that He may cleanse them from defilement, evil doings, quarrels and feuds so that they may be able to exchange a holy kiss each other in love, and thus become worthy of partaking of the Divine and Life-giving

Mysteries. On Maundy Thursday, the Reconciliation Prayer is not prayed and exchanging the holy kiss is not done, to remind us of Judas Iscariot's fraudulent kiss. Here the church urges her children not to emulate his dishonesty, treachery and love of money.

While praying the second part of the Reconciliation Prayer, the priest holds up the triangular veil, which is on top of the Prospherine, which symbolizes the seal on the Savior's sepulcher. The lifting up of this cloth symbolizes the breaking of the seals on the tomb's door. When lifting this veil, the priest holds its corners and raises it before his face in the same triangular shape, as it had been when on the top of the Prospherine, and it remains in this triangular shape until the end of the Reconciliation Prayer when the priest places it on the left side of the Altar, ready to take it in his left hand after lifting the Prospherine. When the deacon says "Prospherine, Prospherine!" (meaning "Come forth!") at the end of the Reconciliation, the priest, with the help of the deacon, raises the Prospherine while creating a vibration. Raising the Prospherine signifies the rolling away of the stone from the sepulcher's entrance, and also the return of the Savior's soul to His Body at His rising from the dead. The vibration symbolizes the quake that happened when the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb's entrance. However, the Savior had risen in absolute quietness and left the sepulcher while the stone was still blocking its entrance with the seals still intact and the armed soldiers still guarding the tomb. Jesus coming out of the tomb while it was left intact is symbolic of how He was born of the Virgin Mary while her virginity was still untouched, and also of when He entered the Upper Room where His disciples were while the doors remained locked.

Throughout the Reconciliation Prayer and until the end of the Fraction, the priest bows his head before the Altar. At the end of each sentence he kneels down folding his arms on his chest. When alternating service between praying priests, the priest standing before the altar must not leave it before the other priest takes his position before the altar. It is forbidden to leave the altar unattended by a priest for even a moment while the Sacred Sacrifice is present. After the praying of the Reconciliation and before the lifting of the Prospherine is when the ordination of readers, subdeacons, deacons, archdeacons, priests, and protopriest takes place in the presence of the Pope or a bishop. It is done during this time to represent that reconciliation has lifted the barrier that was placed before the Holy of Holies in the



Old Testament (now the Sanctuary), from which all were forbidden to enter except to the high priest who was allowed to enter only once a year (Leviticus 16:34).

These days anyone with a priestly rank, whether high or small, can enter it once he has been ordained, as we are now in the days of grace and intimacy with God. Another reason for the ordination to take place at this particular moment is so that the newly ordained priests and deacons can participate in the mass from the beginning.

### **c) The Apostolic Kiss**

At the end of the Reconciliation Prayer, the deacon calls out, "Exchange a holy kiss with one another," and the people do so with an action of their hands, showing love and forgiveness. The whole Church becomes one heart and one thought, and are prepared to attend to the Holy Liturgy which begins with the priest saying, "The love of God the Father and the grace of His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, and the gift and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, to be with you all," meaning that if we have love for one another, then the love of God will abide within us also.

## **3. The Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayers)**

### **a) The Lord be with you**

The priest, with the help of the deacon facing him, lifts up the Prosphering and the deacon folds and places it behind the throne of the chalice until the end of the Liturgy. The priest then holds the small triangular veil that he placed on the left side of the altar in his left hand and the small veil that is placed on the paten he takes in his right hand in order to bless the people with the sign of the cross saying, "The Lord be with you all," which is taken from St. Paul the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. The congregation responds, saying, "And also with your spirit." Here the priest and the congregation mutually pray for each other, heeding the words of St. Paul who said, "You also helping in prayer for us" (2 Corinthians 1:11). The priest prays for the people and blesses them, and the people pray for the priest, requesting that the Lord bless his fatherly and compassionate spirit. Truly this is a blessed and joyful action; it will soften the Lord's heart towards us. The priest then does the sign of the cross towards those serving with him in the altar while he says,

"Lift up your hearts." The priest and all the people must actually lift up their hearts and forget the earthly concerns and worldly worries. About this topic the Apostle Paul says, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of the Father. Set your minds in things above, not on things on earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). The congregation responds, saying, "They are with the Lord." Before responding, we must ensure that our hearts are truly uplifted. We must put our minds and hearts in the words and the meaning of the response because if we utter it and our hearts are not uplifted and our minds are not focused on praying then we are lying to the priest and at the same time being dishonest to God. We should ask the Lord at the beginning of every Liturgy to give us this Grace and let our hearts be with Him and be focused on Him, alone, throughout the Liturgy. The priest then crosses himself saying, "Let us give thanks to the Lord." He kisses the cross and then puts it on the altar. Let us give thanks to the Lord who made us worthy to enter His House, and to stand in His Presence, and participate in serving Him and lifting our hearts towards the Throne of Grace. The priest here emulates the twenty four heavenly priests, about whom the Revelation says, "And the twenty four priests who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One Who is and Who was and Who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned'" (Revelation 11:16-17).

### **b) Worthy and Just (Meet and Right)**

The people respond with, "It is worthy and just." This response is a confirmation of the thanksgiving offered by the priest to God, who is worthy of every thanks and every praise, for He is full of goodness and His mercy remains forever. The response also carries out the priest's instruction of "Let us give thanks to the Lord." The priest then raises his covered hands signifying the Seraphim who stands before God with his eyes and feet covered by his wings because of the imperceptible and unspoken majestic glory of God (Isaiah 6:2).

Then the priest prays the following three passages: "Worthy and Just...", "Before Whom stand...", and "Around You stand..."

### **c) The Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)**

The priest places the small veil, which is in his right hand on the left side of the altar, and with his right hand he lifts the veil, which is placed over the chalice and replaces it with the one in his left hand. With his left hand, he then picks up the veil which he put on the left side of the altar. He holds the cross within the small veil held in his right hand and does the sign of the cross three times saying, "Holy (Agios)." The first sign of the cross he does on himself; the second sign of the cross is on those who are serving with him, and the third sign of the cross is on the congregation. The word 'Holy' alone is a most powerful and deep prayer, for it is the greatest defense against Satan who is the enemy of holiness. It carries all implications with which we wish to honor God; He is Holy for He is merciful, loving, almighty, most high and without sin. We should note that the word 'Holy' refers only to God. For those who are righteous we use the word 'saintly' because their piety comes from the Lord, Who is the origin and the source of every holiness.

As we praise the Lord with the word 'Holy' we join the Cherubim and Seraphim as they cry to one another saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The angels praise centers around the word 'Holy' as it glorifies God, Who is the source of every holiness. As we join the heavenly in glorifying God we must be saintly like Him Who is Holy. In this sense, it is the minimum requirement for being in the presence of the Lord, to see Him and enjoy Him. Without holiness, we do not deserve to partake of the Liturgy's Holy Sacrifice; as the Liturgy gathers together the assembly of the devout, and the Holies are for the holy.

### **Further Remarks**

Uncovering the paten by lifting the small veil from it saying, "The Lord be with you," while the chalice remains covered represents Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene while His identity was concealed to her. Uncovering the chalice when saying, "Agios," indicates that He revealed Himself afterwards to Mary Magdalene and she then recognized Him. Covering the chalice again after it was uncovered symbolizes Jesus showing Himself to the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus, then disappearing from them. When the priest first does the sign of the cross with the veil that was on the paten saying, "The Lord be with you all," and then when he does the second sign of the cross with the veil that was on the chalice saying, "Agios," indicates the equality between the Body and the Blood, and the need to get the blessings of them both. These actions also honor both the Body and

Blood. The veils, or wrapping cloths, represent the shrouds that wrapped the Savior's body at His burial. The direction of the shifting of the veils is performed in the same order in which the Lord Jesus unwrapped Himself and took them off His body during His glorified resurrection. The veils are also placed on the altar in a similar order to the way the shrouds were placed in the tomb when found by Peter and John as they entered the sepulcher (John 20:4-7). This proves that the Savior's body was not stolen from the tomb as the Jews alleged, since a robber, in his rush and confusion while committing his crime, would leave everything in disarray, and not in the perfectly organized manner in which Christ left the shroud.

The action of the priest moving the veils around on the altar represents the movement of the Cherubim's wings. Taking the veil from the top of the Chalice Throne and replacing it with another represents that this mystery has been instituted for the rise and the fall of many (Luke 2:34). It also means that we have been exalted to take the place of the fallen angels. After this, the priest says the following passages:

"Holy, Holy, Holy, truly You are Holy O Lord our God...", followed by "He was incarnate and became Man and taught us the way of Salvation...". While saying, "He was incarnate and became Man" the priest adds a spoonful of incense to the censer so that the fragrance of the incense, as it is diffused, reminds us of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who is the Golden Censer. The burning embers symbolize the fire of Divinity. At the end of the passage the priest says, "He descended into Hades through the cross." The priest then bows in reverence, placing his hands on his chest in the shape of the cross, then kisses the altar. He then says, "He rose from the dead on the third day." At the end of this passage when the priest says, "He will appear to judge the world in equity and reward each one according to his deeds," he beats his chest three times in awe and remorse for his sins, recalling the horrifying day of reckoning when the people will gather and the angels will open the books which reveal the deeds and examine the minds of all; the righteous proceeding to eternal life, while the wicked to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

#### **4. The Consecration**

##### **a) The Institution Narrative**

The priest points to the bread and the wine with his hands, which are covered with the veils, and says, "He instituted this great mystery of godliness for us...". He puts the veils on both sides of the throne then incenses his hands over the censer in preparation to touch, consecrate, fragment and distribute the Holy Sacraments. He then moves his hands away from the censer and says, "... Since He was determined to surrender Himself to death for the life of the world." Some priests transfer a handful of incense smoke and put it on the bread and others transfer it to both the bread and the chalice. Some do this action only once, and others three times. They transfer the incense smoke on the Sacrament as a symbol of the spices which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus put on the Savior's body at His burial, but the old liturgy books limited its explanation by saying, "incensing the hands is done in preparation for touching what is before him and holding it within his hands." When this is done the priest takes the oblation with his right hand and places it in his left hand, then takes the veil which was in the paten, kisses it and puts it on the altar saying, "...He took the bread upon His pure, spotless, undefiled, blessed and life-giving hands...". It is desirable at this moment, that every priest compares the pure, spotless, undefiled and life giving Hands of the Lord with his own sinful hands. If he does this he will be filled with contrition, humility and shame towards the great mercies of the Lord, Who has chosen him to officiate and consecrate the Sacraments, just as the Lord also consecrated the Sacraments before him.

From the moment the priest handles the bread, the deacons around the altar hold lit candles to illuminate the area around the bread and the chalice. The candles are lit until the priest says the phrase, "He tasted and gave it...,." The lighting of candles signifies the awesome moment of transformation when the deacon calls out, "Attend to the Lord in awe and reverence" after which the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to transform the bread into the Body of Christ and the wine into His Blood. The priest puts his right index finger on the bread which sits on his left palm and, looking up, he says, "He looked up towards heaven, to You, O God, His Father and Master of all..." Then, doing the sign of the cross on the bread three times he says, "He gave thanks. He blessed it. He sanctified it." This is according to the Bible, where at the Last Supper, Jesus "Took bread, gave thanks and broke it" (Luke 22:19), and "Took bread, blessed it and broke it" (Mark 14:22). He sanctified it because, with His power and words of sanctification, He consecrated the bread, thus transforming it into His Holy Body. After each sentence and signing of the cross, the congregations together with the deacons respond saying "Amen."

The priest then breaks the bread into three parts, from the top to the bottom, without separation. He places one third of it on his right hand and the two thirds of it on his left, saying, "He broke it..." He opens the bread slightly and breathes the Holy Spirit onto it, then continues saying, "...and gave it to His holy disciples and pure apostles saying..." as he breaks the top and the lower part of the bread, still without separating them. The broken parts are the parts above and below the Spadikon; breaking it this way, the bread is divided into four sections making the shape of the cross. During this time the priest continues saying, "Take, eat of it all of you, for this is My Body..." The priest then puts the bread in the paten and clears his hands from any particles of the bread that might be on his fingers. He then puts his hand on the rim of the chalice and says, "Likewise, after supper He took the chalice, mixed it with wine and water. He Gave Thanks. He blessed it. He sanctified it." The deacons and congregation respond with "Amen" after each sentence and signing, as they did with the Bread. He then touches the rim of the chalice and says, "He tasted it..." The priest then breathes over the chalice as he did with the bread and continues, saying, "...and gave it to His holy disciples and pure apostles saying..."

The priest lifts the chalice slightly and moves it in the sign of the cross; he first tilts it Westward, then Eastward, to the North (left), then to the South (right), whilst saying, "Take, drink of it all of you, for this is My Blood..." Moving the chalice from West to East symbolizes that we, who were once alienated from God and living in darkness (the west symbolizing alienation from God), have been transformed to the light and to the grace of God through the bloodshed and death of Christ on the cross, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the Blood of Christ " (Ephesians 2:13). Moving it from the left to the right signifies that we were once rejected and separated from God but through the precious blood of Christ shed on the cross we have been moved to the right hand of the Father to be with our beloved Savior and Good Shepherd Jesus Christ. Moving the chalice in the shape of the cross indicates that Christ shed His blood on the cross for the salvation of all mankind; "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

## **b) The Anamnesis**

The priest then points to the bread and the chalice saying, "For every time you eat of this bread and drink of this cup you preach my death, confess My resurrection

and remember Me till I come back." These are the very same words that Jesus said when instituting the Eucharist (Matthew 26:26-28), and Apostle Paul also said, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Therefore, every time we perform the Mystery of Thanksgiving and partake of the Holy Sacrifice, we preach the Lord's death in our own inner Jerusalem, inviting our souls to die with Christ so that we may also rise with Him; "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:5-8). We die to the world and to the lusts of the world, as in the quote, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Here, remembrance means the living memory rather than just remembering. The word 'Anamnesis' is a Greek word, meaning 'recalling' and 're-enacting'. We 'remember' Christ, Who died for us and rose from the dead, not merely as a historical event, but as an existing, true sacrifice. In other words, it is an effective memory because what we offer on the altar is the same sacrifice that was offered up for us on the cross. This type of remembrance can be likened to the manna, which Moses put in a golden container and kept in the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies in remembrance of the Manna the Israelites ate in the desert of Sinai. Remembrance can also consist of something that the mind can conceive but the senses cannot perceive. God exists everywhere, but we still say that the devout will always remember Him, as the Psalmist says, "His remembrance is to the age of ages." It is therefore absolutely correct to say that this mystery is in remembrance of Christ's death, because He is present in it in a mysterious, invisible and imperceptible manner.

The priest then says, "As we too commemorate His Holy passion, His resurrection from the dead..." When we commemorate His Holy passion, our emotions ascend to Him who was sent as a lamb to the slaughter. We contemplate on Him who endured the iniquity of the wicked, was scourged, had His face slapped and did not turn His face away from those who spat on Him (from the Liturgy of St. Gregory). We contemplate on Him Who "Gives His cheek to the one who strikes Him and be full of reproach" (Lamentations 3:30). "He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drink wormwood" (Lamentations 3:15). When we remember His life-giving sufferings on the cross, we remember also His descent into hades to redeem Adam and all his children who died in the hope of the Redeemer. Today, in

partaking of the Holy Communion, the Slain One descends from the Altar into our hearts, into our bodies and into our souls, to set us free, and to save us from the captivity of the world and Satan.

### **c) The Epiclesis: The Invocation of the Holy Spirit**

The priest now prays the litany of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, saying, "As we too commemorate ...". This litany ends with "...Your oblations from What is Yours, for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition." After this is said, the priest comes to the crucial moment of intercession. This very moment manifests his office as a priest and an intercessor on behalf of the whole of creation, as he offers the oblations and the bloodless sacrifice on behalf of everything and everyone in the world. While the priest is kneeling down before the altar to pray the Invocation of the Holy Spirit inaudibly, the deacon then says, "Attend to the Lord in awe and reverence." The deacon then also kneels down beside the altar but keeps an eye on the Oblation, lest anything happens to it, for he too is responsible for the Sacrifice, as he is the servant with the priest. When the deacon alerts the congregation to kneel before the Lord in awe and reverence, he has to set an example of that fear and reverence. His kneeling down beside the altar must show the utmost piety and respect for this precious moment, which is the most awesome moment of the whole mass, the moment when the Holy Spirit comes down on the Bread and the Wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Upon hearing the deacon call out, "Attend to the Lord in awe and reverence," the congregation kneels in awe and respect. This is a formidable moment when the Holy Spirit comes down on the mysteries to consecrate and transform them. The whole church kneels down and says, "We praise You, we bless You, we serve You O Lord, and we worship You." These are fearful moments when everyone in the church should be worshiping in awe, awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Mysteries to sanctify and transform them into the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The priest kneels down with his hands on the altar and silently prays the Litany of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit with an air of contrition, saying, "We the sinners and unworthy servants, ask You, O Lord our God as we kneel down before You, through the pleasure of Your goodness, that Your Holy Spirit may come down upon us (pointing to himself), and on these oblations (pointing to the bread and the wine), to sanctify them, transform them and manifest them holy to Your



saints." The deacon then says, "Let us attend. Amen," calling for absolute silence and utter stillness during the moments of the descent of the Holy Spirit. The priest rises and quickly does the sign of the cross three times and says in a loud voice, "And this bread, He makes into His Holy Body." He then kneels again and in reverence praying silently, "Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, this Holy Body given for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to those who receive it." This phrase explains the previously spoken phrase, "And this bread He makes into His Holy Body," in telling us that the Body of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, is given for the forgiveness of sins, and an eternal life to those who partake of it.

The priest then says aloud, "And this chalice too, He makes into His Honored Blood of the New Testament." The priest kneels down again and prays silently, "Our God, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this Holy Blood given for the forgiveness of sins." This sentence also explains the nature of the sacrament like the previous statement. Then he says out loud, "An eternal life to those who partake of it." The congregation rises and responds saying, "Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy."

The bread has now become the Body of Christ and the wine has become the Blood of Christ, and remains so for the rest of the Liturgy. The Liturgy book states that the priest does the sign of the cross three times quickly on the bread and likewise on the chalice. The reason for the swiftness is that, as he utters the words "He makes it into His Holy Body," it immediately becomes the Body of the Lord which He took from the Virgin Mary, and which He gave to His pure disciples; the Body which received the life-giving sufferings and was shrouded and buried; the Body which rose from the dead, in which He ascended to heaven, and in which He will come again to judge the living and the dead. Similarly, as he says, "His Honored Blood of the New Testament" the wine transforms into the Lord's Blood, which was shed on the cross for the salvation of Adam and his offspring. After the transformation, the blessings can come only from the Sacraments, therefore the priest can no longer do the sign of the cross on the Sacraments. Swiftness is therefore necessary, as the action of doing the sign of the cross on the sacraments must be completed before the priest finishes the sentences, "He makes it into His Holy Body... and His honored Blood of the New Testament." In other words, the signings of the cross must be confined to the words "...this bread..." in the first instance, and, "...this chalice too..." in the second instance. The priest may need to say the words slowly in order that the signs are completed before the transformation takes place.

## **5. The Seven Minor Litanies**

After the Prayers of Consecration are completed, the priest picks up the two veils which he left on the altar when he began doing the signs of the cross, and, taking one in each hand, he prays, "Make us all worthy, O Our Master, to partake of Your Holies for the purification of our souls, bodies and spirits, that we become one body and one spirit, and may share the inheritance with all the saints who have pleased You since the beginning." He pleads for himself and the believers who intend to approach the Holy Sacraments, that the Lord prepares them for the partaking of His holy, pure and heavenly mysteries for the salvation and sanctification to their souls, bodies and spirits in order to become one with Him, abide in Him, and share an inheritance with all the saints who perfected the faith. The priest then prays the Seven Minor Litanies.

### **a) The Litany of Peace**

This litany asks for the peace of the universal and the Apostolic Church, and for its protection from the schemes of Satan and his forces.

### **b) The Litany of the Fathers**

This litany asks the Lord to grant the Pope and all the Orthodox Bishops strength, grace and wisdom in their service, and that they maintain the right faith, which has been delivered by the saints.

### **c) The Litany of the Ministers**

In this litany, we pray for the priests who assist the bishops in rightfully disclosing the word of truth, in shepherding, attending to, and caring for the people and the salvation of their souls.

### **d) The Litany of Mercy**

This litany asks that the Lord may have mercy upon him and upon all the people, according to His great mercies and abundant compassion. "For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption" (Psalm 130:7).

#### **e) The Litany of the Places**

In this litany, we pray for the safety and security of the cities and monasteries where our church is located, and for all the places, cities and monasteries in the whole world, because, if the place where the church dwells is in peace, then the children of the church will find their own peace, as in the saying, "And seek the peace of the city.... For in its peace you will have peace" (Jeremiah 29:7), "That we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2).

The Psalmist prays for his city saying, "Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your places. For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will say 'Peace is within you.' "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good." (Psalm 122:7-9). In saying, "...And for those who are dwelling in it, in God's faith...", the priest refers to the believers who dwell in the places and monasteries, referring particularly to the monks who live in the wilderness because of their strong faith in God and His care. If it was not for these monk's great faith and love for Jesus Christ they would have not been able to survive such desolate wilderness and endure life in remote monasteries, mountains, and caves, and in places no one knows about. Although impoverished, distressed and humiliated with asceticism and strife, in their vigilance and solitude, all this they endure with joy because of their great love for our Lord. If the priest wants to say the part "Your people and Your church..." (Je Nai-Nan), it should be said after the Litany of the Places.

#### **f) The Litany of the Waters, Sowing, and Harvesting**

This litany refers to the season of the Nile's flooding when the flood waters cover the cultivated lands and deposit abundant silt to enhance its fertility, which occurs from the 12th of Baouna to the 9th of Baba. Prayer for the plants, from the 10th of Baba to the 10th of Tuba, is the season for sowing the main crops in Egypt after the floodwaters subside. Prayer for the winds, from the 11th of Tuba to the 11th of Baouna, is the period of moderate winds which is suitable for the growth, fruiting and ripening of crops, "That both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice

together" (John 4:36). After each one of these litanies, the priest says "Bring them up to their measure according to Your Grace."

### **g) The Litany of the Oblations**

This litany refers to offerings in general, including whatever the believers bring to church to the needs of the church and its people; from flour for the bread, to grape juice for filling the chalice; candles, curtains, books, and the Altar's utensils. When praying this litany, the priest points to the Sacraments as they are the crown and symbol of all what the believers offer.

## **6. The Commemoration of the Saints**

The commemoration (communion) of the saints represent the 'cloud of witnesses' which surrounds the believers and to which the Apostle Paul referred to in saying, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnare us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself; lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:1-4).

As we mention the names in the Commemoration of the Saints, we remember their life stories and recall their virtues and love towards our beloved Lord. They sacrificed themselves for the Lord, and had no regard for the comfort of their bodies, "And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity of return" (Hebrews 11:15). They endured everything for their great love of Christ the King. Each of them offered himself as an oblation, in one form or another, to God. It was as though the heart of the Virgin Mary had been pierced with a sword when she shared the sacrifice of her Son on the cross. John the forerunner was beheaded because he preached the coming of Christ and told the people to repent.

St. Mark served and preached the name of Christ to the people until he was dragged along the streets of Alexandria and was martyred. St. Severus, St. Dioscorus and St. Athanasius all defended the faith even to death. St. Peter, the Seal of Martyrs, was slain for his people, like He who had been slain for the world. St. John Chrysostom was slain for his impartiality. The three hundred and eighteen fathers assembled at Nicea, the one hundred and fifty fathers assembled at Constantinople, and the two hundred fathers assembled at Ephesus were all a testimony to the Lord in defending the Apostolic Faith. Abba Anthony and Abba Paula left the world and followed Jesus, enduring many spiritual hardships until the end. They were dead to this world, living in the mountains and the wilderness because of their great love for Jesus Christ. Abba Macarius tolerated iniquity and humiliation until death, like Jesus who endured disgrace. The powerful Abba Moses the Black offered true repentance and wrestled with sin until death, "Having provided something for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11:40). "And a white robe was given to each of them, and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they had been, was completed" (Revelation 6:11).

## **7. The Diptych**

After the Commemoration of the Saints, the following passage is said by the priest, "Remember, O Lord, all those who passed over to You; all the clergy and all the laity, repose their souls in the bosoms of our saintly father Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the paradise of joy, in the place from which grief, sorrow and sighing have fled, in the light of Your saints." He then adds a spoonful of incense to the censer and mentions the names of those whose souls are reposed, saying, "Those, O Lord, who have passed over to You in the Paradise of Delight..." This is the St. Basil Diptych which is prayed even if the St. Cyril diptych was prayed. In Holy Thursday's Liturgy, neither the Commemoration nor the Diptych are prayed as the church is totally preoccupied in contemplating the Lord's sufferings and death.

The above-mentioned diptych, however, is not sung using the Mourning Tune on Sundays, feast days, or the Eastertide. After St. Basil's Diptych, the priest says, "Guide us into Your Kingdom ...," and ending with, "Peace be with you all." All of this he says without doing the sign of the cross on the congregation because, as mentioned previously, after the Holy Spirit has descended upon the Sacraments

and as we are in the presence of Christ, so it is not permitted to do the sign of the cross on the people or to look Westward giving his back to the Sacrifice.

## **8. The Fraction**

### **a) Introduction to the Fraction**

The phrase, "Also let us give thanks to the Almighty God ...", begins the Introduction to the Fraction. If there is more than one priest attending, the serving priest should recite the Fraction. When it is finished, the priest puts the two veils down on the altar and does not take them into his hands again. He takes the pure Body with his right hand and places it on the palm of his left hand. He puts his right index finger on the Body on the right side of the Spadikon where the Body is broken and says, "The Holy Body." The congregation then kneels and says, "We worship Your Holy Body." He then lifts his index finger from the Body and dips the tip of his finger in the Honored Blood. He lifts his index finger slightly and makes the sign of the cross once inside the chalice saying, "And the Honored Blood." The congregation respond with, "And Your Honored Blood."

The priest gently shakes his index finger inside the chalice to free it from the Blood, taking the utmost care to ensure it does not drip after he takes his finger out of the chalice. He brings the Body, which is on his left hand, closer to the chalice and puts his index finger with the Blood on it on the Spadikon. Then he lowers his hands over the paten and does the sign of the cross on the pure Body with the Honored Blood. With his index finger on the Spadikon, he moves his finger upwards and then over the back of the Body, proceeding towards the bottom and then up the front of the Body until reaching the Spadikon. He then moves his index around the Body from left to right until he comes back to the Spadikon, thus forming a sign of the cross. While doing this he says, "Those belonging to His Christ, the Almighty Lord, Our God." The deacon then responds, "Amen, Amen. Let us pray." The congregation responds saying, "Lord have mercy." The priest then says to the people, "Peace be with you all", to which the people reply, "And also with your spirit." The three sentences, "...the Holy Body...", "...the Honored Blood...", and, "...belonging to His Christ the Almighty Lord, our God...", are a continuation of the Introduction to the Fraction.

The whole passage states, "We ask Him to make us worthy to share and offer His Divine and Immortal Mysteries, which are the Holy Body and the Honored Blood belonging to His Christ, the Almighty Lord, our God." Performing the sign of the cross on the Body with the Blood represents Christ's Body covered with His Blood which spilled from the nails in His body, the crown of thorns on His head, and from where He was pierced with a sword.

During this time the people cry, "Lord have mercy", because this moment portrays the crucifixion of Christ and the shedding of His pure Blood which He endured because of His mercy and love for those in the world, and for the salvation of our souls. The priest offers peace to the congregation at this moment; the moment when the world was in great turmoil; the sun was darkened and the earth shook, the rocks cracked and all the people were horrified. When the priest begins to handle the Sacraments, the deacons light candles to illuminate the area around the Holy Body and Honored Blood, keeping them lit until the end of the Fraction.

There are two reasons for keeping the candles lit during this time. One is to honor the Holy Sacraments, the other being that the burning candle sheds light upon others so that they may believe in Him, as Jesus, whose Incarnate Body is being fractionated by the priest, gave Himself up so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. The droplets of wax that fall from the burning candle remind us of the sweat that dripped from the Savior's Body like drops of blood as He prayed in Gethsemane, "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). They also remind us of the tears, which He shed during intense prayer. They also remind us of the drops of blood covering His pure body when He was hanging on the cross for our salvation. A lit candle represents to us the salvation which the Lord Jesus made on the cross for those who slept in hope. From the cross, His soul descended to hades to give light to those who were living in darkness and in the shadow of death and to bring them back to paradise where there is light and joy.

## **b) Prayer of the Fraction**

The Fraction is a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His inexpressible gift, as He gave us His Holy Body and Honored Blood as an eternal life to those who worthily partake of them. It is also a supplication that He may give purity to our hearts, souls

and bodies so that we dare, in the intimacy of His Divine love, partake of them. The prayers of the Fraction are numerous. Some Fractions are prayed all year round and some are for major or minor Lord's feasts, the Virgin Mary's feasts, the angels or saint's feasts, for periods of fasting, and so on. The fractionation of the Holy Body signifies the sufferings, which were inflicted upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two methods of dividing the Holy Body: i) the direct and brief fraction, and ii) the comprehensive fraction. The direct and brief fraction is **not** commonly used, where the priest divides the Body without separating it from the jewels. The Body is divided but is still intact. The priest divides the portion at his right (about one third) to four pieces corresponding to the four crosses on the right. This he does without completely separating them. The priest then divides the left portion (about one third), into four parts around the four crosses on it, again without separation.

He then separates the Spadikon completely, lifting it out; he kisses it, then puts it back in its place. Then he puts the Holy Body in the paten and cleans his hands, especially the finger he used in dividing it, to remove any particles of the jewel that may have adhered to it. The comprehensive fraction is more commonly used. In this method, the priest divides the right portion (about one third) without separation. He then lifts it and places it perpendicular to the remainder (in the shape of a cross). He then takes a jewel from the top part of the portion that contains the Spadikon and puts it in the eastern part of the paten, which is known as the head. He then takes another gem from the lower part of the portion containing the Spadikon and puts it in the western side of the paten. This is known as the limbs. He takes a piece from the right side of the right portion (which is placed on top of the two thirds) and puts it in the paten towards the right. He puts the rest of that portion in the paten to the left. Having done this, he has formed the shape of the cross. He then detaches the two remaining portions, proceeding from the top to the bottom. He then takes the center portion that contains the Spadikon and places it in the center of the paten.

He then starts dividing the portion, which is still in his hand, and is on the left side of the oblation. He divides it into four parts, without separation, so that each part contains one of the four crosses. The priest then removes the pieces he had previously placed on the left side of the paten (which is most of the right third of the oblation), and puts the left third that is in his hand in its place. The portion that



he has taken from the paten he then divides into three parts without separation, each part containing a cross. When he finishes he puts it in the right side of the paten beside the piece that was placed to the right at the beginning of the Fraction. This way, the right third is divided into four parts like the left third. He then takes the center third, which he has previously placed in the middle of the paten, and detaches the Spadikon (from below the crust with the soft part in it so that it does not crumble during the following movements). The rest of the center portion remains joined together. The priest puts the Spadikon back in its place in the middle of the center part, taking great care not to let it crumble, then he puts it in the middle of the paten as it was before. The priest then gathers all the divided jewels and puts them back in their place; the oblation now looking intact with all divisions in place as if the fraction never happened.

The great majority of priests do not remember the Fraction prayers by heart so they must read from the liturgy book during the fraction. It is desirable that when the priest finishes each sentence that he then starts dividing the Body, as in this case both his eyes and his mind will be focused on the Body, rather than the book. When he stops chanting the congregation responds with ``Lord have mercy," and this is an opportune time to look intently and concentrate on dividing the Body. Otherwise he may start spilling portions of the Holy Body outside the Paten.

The Fraction Prayer concludes with the Lord's prayer: "Our Father, Who art in heaven ..."

### **c) Inaudible Prayers**

After the congregation says, ``Our Father Who art in heaven ...," the silent prayers of absolution and submission are said by the priest. The priest prays, "Yes, we ask You, Holy Father, Who loves goodness, to lead us not into temptation..." as Christ taught us in the Lord's Prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). "...We pray that sin will not dominate us..." quoting the Psalmist's words, "And let not iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133). "...But deliver us from sinful deeds; its thoughts, its actions and its feelings..." Here the priest pleads to the Lord to save him and the congregation from sinful deeds and wicked thoughts and actions, and to protect their senses from every evil. "...Abolish Satan, dismiss him, rebuke also his deeds planted in us..."

The priest says, pleading to the Lord, to abolish Satan's snares and influence that we can fall under, such as killing, adultery, stealing and other sins.

The deacon then says, "Bow your heads before the Lord." This is a call for a collective repentance before approaching the Holy Sacraments. The people bow their heads before the Lord in a moment of penitence and confession so as to be worthy to receive the absolution from the priest's mouth. What is required here is just bowing the head in accordance with the deacon's call and not kneeling to the ground like many people do. Full kneeling to the ground befits worshiping and honoring the Lord, while bowing the head suits confessing sins in contrition and humility, like the tax collector who, "Stood afar off would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner'" (Luke 18:13).

The priest then prays the inaudible prayer of Submission to the Father. The priest says, "The grace of the only begotten Son, Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, has now been accomplished. We have professed His redeeming sufferings, preached His death and proclaimed His resurrection." Throughout the Liturgy, the reality of remembering the sufferings, the death and the resurrection of the Lord, becomes evident in the priest's prayers and the people's responses. "The mystery is accomplished," this happened through the transformation of the bread and the wine into the life giving Body and the honored Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. "We thank you O Lord, the almighty God..."

The priest now prays in the same manner as the twenty four spiritual elders who, in their eternal praise, prostrate before the throne of God, saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord, God Almighty, the One Who is and Who was and Who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned" (Revelation 11:16-17). While the people are bowing their heads, confessing their sins and offering collective penitence, the deacon calls out, "Attend to God in reverence," so that the people prepare themselves to receive the absolution from the priest. The priest then says, "Peace be with you all." Before saying the absolution for the remission of sins, the priest gives the congregation peace as a pledge and introduction to the joy they are about to receive. The congregation then responds with, "And also with your spirit." The priest then prays the Absolution to the Father, which states, "O Master, God Almighty, healer of our souls, bodies and spirits, You are He Who said to the Apostle Peter, through the mouth of Your only begotten Son, our Lord, God

and Savior Jesus Christ ...." The priest then audibly prays the Litany of the Gatherings while uncovering the chalice, saying, ``Remember, O Lord, our gatherings, bless them" (without doing the sign of the cross). The deacon raises the cross while responding, "Saved Amen. And with Your Spirit. In the fear of God, let us attend." The deacon hears the priest's repentance, "Remember O Lord, my weaknesses and forgive me my many sins...", and sees his contrition, his humility as he pours himself over the sacrificed Lamb of God, who carries the sins of the whole world. Hearing and seeing this, the deacon testifies immediately to his penitence and reassures him saying, "Saved Amen...".

Each repentant bowing during this prayer of repentance benefits from this penitence as he is preparing himself to accept the absolution. This response of the deacon reminds us of what prophet Nathan said to King David after David had confessed his sin; "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). The people then implore the Lord for His tender mercies in order to accept their repentance and make them worthy of partaking of the Holies, saying, ``Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy."

## **9. The Confession**

### **a) Prayers Before the Confession**

The priest holds the Spadikon in his right hand, and while bowing his head, he makes the sign of the cross over the chalice with the Spadikon saying, "The Holies are for the Holy." Then he slightly dips the Spadikon in the Blood and raises it again without letting any drops fall off it. When bringing the Spadikon back to the paten, he opens his left palm underneath it in case any jewel might fall from it or in case the Blood drips. The priest then signs the Body with the Spadikon that has been dipped in the Lord's Blood and applies it to the wounds he made in the Body during the fraction by putting the Spadikon on each wound all around the Body while it lies in the paten. He does this while praying, "Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and hallowed is the Holy Spirit. Amen."

When the priest says, "The Holies are for the Holy," he is warning and cautioning those who intend to approach the Sacraments that the Holies, which are the life-

giving Body and the Honored Blood, are for the holy people only, that is, the repentant who regret their sins and who have confessed them before the priest and who are honest in keeping and obeying the commandments. As the Apostle Paul says, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). Dipping the Body in the Blood teaches us that this Body is for the Blood, and this Blood is for this Body. Likewise, signing the Body with the Spadikon absorbed in Blood indicates the unity of the Body and the Blood with the Divinity, which has not parted from His humanity even for a single instant or a twinkle of an eye. Dipping the jewel in the Blood then removing it refers to the baptism of Christ; this baptism also commemorates the Lord's death and resurrection.

After signing the Body with the Spadikon absorbed in the Blood, the priest goes around the Body touching all the wounds he made on the Body during the fraction, in what is called 'the anointing of the wounds', as if he is trying to soothe the wounds the Lord endured because of our sins. However, the priest and the congregation should realize that nothing dresses the wounds of the Lord and heals them except if we return to Him in repentance and submit our lives to Him, working hard to please Him and obeying His commandments. This reminds us of the church's interpretation of the Lord's words on the cross, when He said, "I thirst." He did not thirst for water as much as He thirsted for the salvation of our souls and our return to Him. The congregation responds with, "One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit. Amen." This is a response to the priest's call, "The Holies are for the Holy." Here, the interpretation of the congregation's response is that they are affirming that we are far from holy, and that they are no saints, but rather unworthy sinners. Only God is Holy with His three Hypostasis. We can say that the true holiness and true worthiness of partaking of the feared mysteries of Emmanuel, our Lord, is to rid ourselves of the burden of sin and its bitterness, confessing it and striving not to return to it, then approaching the Holy Communion in reverence, with tears of repentance.

When the priest perceives the submissiveness and humility of the people in daring to approach the Holiness of the Lord and His awesome mysteries, he gives them peace and reassurance saying, "Peace be with you all," and so the congregation responds with, "And also with your spirit." For the second time, the priest anoints the wounds of the Body with the Spadikon saying, "The Holy Body, and the true Honored Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of our God, Amen." And the congregation

in true faith responds with, "Amen." For the third time, the priest anoints the wounds of the Body with the Spadikon saying, "Holy and Honored are the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of our Lord, Amen," and again the congregation responds with, "Amen." The priest then turns the Spadikon upside down, holds it between his fingers, raises it to the chalice making the sign of the cross over the Blood with it, then puts it upside down in the Blood and says, "Truly this is the Body and Blood of Emmanuel our God, Amen." The congregation says, "Amen, we believe," confirming and affirming the priest's saying and confession.

Signing the Body three times with the blood-soaked Spadikon before raising it and placing it back in the chalice refers to the three days that Jesus remained in the tomb before His resurrection on the third day. Turning the Spadikon and placing it upside down in the chalice to be immersed in the Blood symbolizes the act of crucifying Christ, the Lamb of God, who carries the sins of the whole world, when they laid Him on His back to nail Him on the cross. As they began to place the nails in His hands and feet, the blood gushed out and covered His pure Body. His perpetrators were acting like a butcher when he slays a sheep, turning it on its back and slitting its throat.

## **b) The Prayer of Confession**

The priest then raises the paten carefully and recites the confession, saying, "Amen, Amen, Amen, I believe, I believe, I believe and profess unto my last breath, that this is the life-giving Body which Your only begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, took of our Lady and Queen of us all, the Mother of God, the pure St. Mary...", This is in accordance with what the Holy Bible teaches us regarding His incarnation and His birth of the Virgin Mary. The Apostle Paul says, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). "He made it One with His Divinity without mingling nor interchanging nor alteration and declared the proper confession before Pontius Pilate..."

This also being in accordance with what the Holy Bible tells us in the narration of the trial of the Lord of Glory before Pontius Pilate, the governor of Jerusalem at that time. The Apostle Paul says, "...Jesus Christ who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate" (1 Timothy 6:13)," "And gave it up willingly on the Holy Cross on our behalf. I believe that His Divinity never departed His Humanity, not even a single instant or a twinkle of an eye. Given for the salvation, remission of sins and

an eternal life to those who partake of them..." For Jesus, Himself, said, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is food indeed and My Blood is drink indeed" (John 6:54-55). "I believe, I believe, I believe that this is true. Amen."

The priest then puts the paten back on the Altar and covers the chalice with a veil. He then kneels down before the altar and silently prays, until the deacon finishes his confession (see below), saying, "Every honor, every glory and every worship are due at all times to the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore..." And secondly, "Absolve and forgive us our sins which we have committed our Father..." And finally, "Make us all worthy, O Lord, to partake of Your Holy Body and Honored Blood for the purification of our souls, bodies and spirits and for the forgiveness of our sins that we become one body and one spirit with You. Glory be to you..." These prayers are to give glory to God who, in His modesty, consented to give us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. The priest does this with humility, contrition and declaration of unworthiness, and then he beseeches absolution and forgiveness before partaking of the awesome Mysteries.

At the end of the priest's confession, the deacon takes the cross in his right hand, a lit candle in his left hand, and a veil between the two of them. He holds this before his eyes while saying the deacon's confession, "Amen, Amen, Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe that this is true, Amen. Pray for us and for all the Christians who wished us to remember them in the house of the Lord. The peace and love of Jesus Christ be with you all. Sing praises, Alleluia. Pray for the merit of partaking of these Holy, Pure and Heavenly Mysteries. Lord have mercy."

In the deacon's confession, the deacon affirms and confirms, on behalf of the people, all that was mentioned in the priest's confession. He then asks the people to pray for those approaching the Holy Sacraments, that they may partake of them worthily, with a repentant heart, lest they be condemned, for every person approaching the Holy Sacraments should examine himself, as the Apostle said. The words, "Pray for the merit of partaking of these Holy, Pure and Heavenly Mysteries," emphasize the importance of examining one's self before approaching the Mysteries; is he really ready to receive these Holy Sacraments? Is he complying with these words?

As we hear the deacon's call, "Pray for the merit of partaking of these Holy, Pure and Heavenly Mysteries", we ought to lift our hearts to the Lord and beseech His blessings and His mercies on all those partaking, so that their communion fulfills the Lord's promise, which stated, "He who eats My Body and drinks My Blood, abides in Me and I in him" (John 6:56). We should also pray that those who approach the Sacraments may be worthy and not be condemned.

The reason why the deacon holds the cross in his right hand, a lit candle in his left and a veil between them, is because as a deacon cannot gaze at the splendor of the Lord's glory so he covers his eyes like the Seraphim who covers his face with two of his wings from the brilliance of His majestic glory. As for the priest, he does not hide his face because he has been merited, through the sacrament of priesthood, to fraction and hold in his hands the Body of Christ. The cross and the candle refer to Christ Who endured the sufferings of the cross and sacrificed Himself to give eternal life to the world like a candle which burns itself to give light to the people. Likewise, Christ had fractionated His Body and shed His Blood on the cross to give light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to bring them out into the brightness of His Kingdom.

After the deacon's confession, the congregation responds with, "Glory be to You O Lord, Glory be to you." We give glory to God who bestowed His Holy Sacraments for the healing of the soul, body and spirit, for the forgiveness of sins and for abiding in Him.

## **10. The Holy Communion**

### **a) Distributing the Holy Body**

The priest rises from kneeling before the Altar and receives absolution from the other serving priests, by bowing and saying, "I have sinned, absolve me." He also receives forgiveness from the deacons and from the congregation by saying while bowing, "I have sinned, forgive me." Then he starts giving out the Holy Communion. He begins with the Holy Body, so that he communes himself with the front jewel of the Body (known as the head). He does this in his capacity as the serving priest, and the head of the gathering. If an associate priest is present, the serving priest takes

the masteer (spoon) from the top of the throne of the chalice and puts the back jewel of the Body (known as the limbs) in it. The associate priest approaches, bows before the Altar and the Mysteries which are on it, kisses the Altar then takes the masteer with his hand which is covered with a veil. He brings his mouth close to the paten and communes the jewel which is in the masteer. He then communes the altar deacons in the order of their ranks, from the right third of the Body, after fractionating its four portions into small parts according to the number of those who are partaking. When giving the Holy Body, the priest takes a small gem from the Body between the fingers of his right hand and puts the palm of his left hand beneath it until the jewel is put carefully in the partaker's mouth. During this he says, "The Body of Emmanuel, Our God, this is true. Amen." The partaker then replies, "Amen." After he receives the gem in his mouth, the partaker covers his mouth with a small cloth while he is chewing. This is because he has attained a precious jewel and so is keen to hide and conceal it. It is also to avoid accidentally dropping any part of it while chewing.

The priest places the dome in the paten and covers it with a large veil, making sure the edges do not get inside the paten, and that no particle of the jewel sticks to it when it is covered. The priest covers the paten because it is not befitting that those who are not partaking should behold the sacraments. The priest carries the paten with great care, and from the left-hand side he turns to the West and blesses the congregation in the partaker's area, while saying, "The Holies are for the holy. Blessed is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Holy is the Holy Spirit. Amen." The people bow and cry out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The priest then puts the paten back on the Altar. The priest carries the paten again, and from the right-hand side he turns West, blesses the people and says, "Holy Body and true Honorable Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of Our God. Amen." The congregation cries out while bowing, saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

From the right side of the altar, the priest, carrying the paten in his hands, goes to the men seeking the Holy Communion in the Northern part of the Sanctuary. The deacon precedes him, walking backwards with a lit candle in his hand, crying out, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." If another priest is attending, he takes the chalice to give the Blood to the partakers who have already received the Body. If necessary, a deacon with the rank of Deacon, which is a full deacon, is allowed to hold the chalice and give the Blood to the partakers.



If no one other than the priest is available to give the Blood, the priest leaves the chalice in the Throne on the Altar until he finishes giving the last tiny gem of the Body left in the paten, then he gives the Blood. When the priest is not attending to the altar while giving out the Body, he assigns a deacon to stand before the altar holding a lit candle. After the priest finishes giving the Sacraments to the men, he goes to the women's side. Having given the Sacraments to the ladies, he goes back to the Altar and gives whatever remains of the gems to himself, to associate priests and to the deacons in order of their ranks. When he finishes partaking of the Body, he puts the paten on the left side of the altar, removes the veil that had been underneath it, shakes it carefully inside the paten, and then he picks up the small molecules of the gems which had adhered to the paten. He asks the associate priest or the deacon to join him in looking closely inside the paten for any molecules he may have missed. If the deacon sees anything, he points at it with his finger without touching the paten and the priest picks it up and eats it. The two of them look carefully until they are both sure that the paten is absolutely free of gems. The deacon then says, "Hail to the Cross." The priest makes the sign of the cross inside the paten with his finger and says, "Hail to the cross of Jesus Christ."

Precision in the distribution of the sacraments and in consuming all minute gems that remain in the paten is a very important matter, which the church greatly stresses to the new priest. During an ordination, the Bishop advises the new priest, saying, "Let your distribution be in array, in order, in quietness and calmness, and in caution and carefulness. Look closely at the sacred utensils and ask one with sharp sight to look twice and thrice until you are sure." It is of great importance that every partaker should approach the Sacraments in preparedness, repentance and confession, so that he does not take condemnation to himself (1 Corinthians 11:27). He has to clear his conscience beforehand by avoiding errors, having confessed his sins, having been reconciled with everybody and, moreover, abstaining from eating and drinking for a required period of time; nine hours for adults, six hours for children and three hours for suckling babies.

For the late Liturgies, like those of the Great Lent, the abstinence starts at midnight. The nine hours abstinence signifies the Lord's nine hours of sufferings on the day of His crucifixion, from the beginning of the trial at 9 a.m. until His burial at 6 p.m. The congregation bows during Communion to emulate Mary Magdalene and the other Mary's who bowed before the Lord when He showed Himself to them after the resurrection; "Jesus met them and said 'Rejoice' and they came and held Him

by the feet and worshiped Him" (Matthew 28:9). It also signifies the disciples who worshiped Him, as they saw Him ascending to Heaven (Luke 24:52). The bowing and lowering of the heads of the congregation symbolizes the Seraphim who covered their faces with their wings when they saw the Lord sitting on His throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filling the temple (Isaiah 6:2). The congregation's cry, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," indicates that what is in the priest's hands is the same Body which Christ took of the Virgin Mary and the same Body with which He entered Jerusalem where the crowds welcomed Him with the same outcry, saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9). It also signifies that Christ, who was incarnate for our salvation, rose from the dead and ascended in great glory to the Heavens, and will come again in His Glory to judge the living and the dead.

## **b) Distributing the Honored Blood**

After giving out the Holy Body and consuming all the remaining jewels in the paten as mentioned before, the priest starts giving out the Honored Blood. He uncovers the chalice, takes the veil that has been placed on top of it, and places it in his left hand, taking the masteer from the top of the throne and putting it inside the chalice. He then raises the chalice from the throne with his right hand, taking the utmost care while doing so. The deacon helps by holding the doors of the throne open. When the chalice comes out of the throne, everyone bows in glorification to the Honored Blood which has been shed for our salvation. When the chalice has been taken out of the throne, the priest holds it in his left hand, which is covered with the veil. He then communes the Spadikon which is immersed in the Blood, after draining it from the precious Blood inside the chalice. He then partakes of the Blood.

If there is an associate priest he gives him the chalice and the masteer inside it. The associate priest partakes of the Blood, once or three times (his hand must be covered with the veil when holding the masteer). After this, the priest gives the blood to the deacons with the Masteer, once or three times while saying, "The Blood of Emmanuel our Lord. This is true. Amen." The partaker responds with, "Amen." Then he gives the Holy Blood to the congregation; first the men, then the women. He then returns to the Altar and drinks what is left from the Blood straight from the chalice without using the masteer. In doing this, he has to apply great care

so that none of the Blood rolls over the handle of the master (which is inside the chalice) when he tilts the chalice to drink from it. If too much Blood remains after giving it to the congregation, the priest should take care not to drink it quickly, but gradually, lest he chokes and the Blood splashes out of his mouth. When the partaker brings his mouth close to the chalice, he should imagine that he is approaching the stab wound in the side of the Divine from which blood and water flowed on the cross. He should offer thanks to God for His inexpressible gift.

The Church gives the two substances of the Thanksgiving Mystery separately, first the Body then the Blood, for two reasons: The Lord Christ Himself gave it to His disciples in the same way when He instituted the Mystery of the Eucharist, "Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body'" (Matthew 26:27-28). The Church wants us to never forget Christ's Blood, which gushed out of His Divine side on the cross and was shed on the ground for our salvation. The Church collects it in a chalice, separate from the Body, because the Blood, which flowed from His side, streamed, and still streams, for our salvation. In its flow it saves all those who come to the Father through it because it is alive and it intercedes on our behalf with its redemption and saving merits. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The serving priest receives the Holy Communion before all partakers, even if there is an older or higher rank priest among them, (e.g., if a priest is serving and there is a protopriest among the communicants), as the serving priest is the Sacrament's minister. In accordance with what our glorified Savior did during the Last Supper, He first consecrated His Body, He broke it and ate first, then gave His disciples. Likewise, He sanctified the cup, tasted it first, and then gave it to His disciples. No one shares the Spadikon with the serving priest, who alone eats it whole without division or fraction, because the word Spadikon means the 'Lordly Part' and it is impossible to divide or faction Christ. The whole Sacraments must be communed. Nothing is to remain for later or the next day. The command of the Old Testament's law regarding the Passover lamb says, "You shall let none of it remain until morning" (Exodus 12:10). This does not apply to the part of the Sacraments, which the priest keeps in the gem's box to take immediately after the Liturgy to a sick person. In this case, the priest, without drinking water after the Holy Communion, goes to the sick person when the Liturgy is over to give them the Holy Sacrament.

He then washes the gem's box thoroughly and gives some of the water to the sick person to drink, before drinking the rest of it himself.

We should not prostrate or bow after partaking of the Divine Sacraments because we are in a joyous situation, carrying the Lord Jesus inside ourselves. The church's rules prohibit kneeling to the ground after receiving the Divine Sacraments. When the Lord ascended to heaven, the disciples looked steadfastly towards heaven, even after He was out of their sight, for a cloud received Him. They remained staring towards the heavens until two men in white clothes (angels) stood by them and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:4-12). We should do likewise after the Holy Communion. We should have our hearts drawn to heaven, looking forward to His second coming, to take us with Him on the cloud.

Every partaker should pray a thanksgiving prayer after he has received the Sacraments to offer thanks to God for the grace he has attained, and to plead that his partaking of the pure Body and Honored Blood be a blessing, a strength and purity to secure a favorable acceptance before the feared throne on the day of judgment, and not be for retribution or condemnation. In this regard, one of the fathers said, "After we receive this Holy Sacrament, we should not be hasty to leave the church and we should not speak with other people. Instead, we should stay for a few moments on our own and in silence after the Liturgy, offering a thanksgiving prayer to God, appreciate the everlasting value which these moments bring to us as we become able to worship our Lord, sense the presence of the Divinity of Christ inside us, and pour our hearts into His Divine heart. Thus, we become a new person, a person who has undergone an alteration, then we can leave the church and mix with the people. The people will realize that an unutterable mystery has been fulfilled within us. It is the mystery of love which will be manifested through our increasing love to others."

In the prayer book of the Hours (the Agpeya), there are prayers to be said before and after partaking of the Holy Communion. After giving out the Honored Blood, the priest starts washing the utensils. He washes the masteer inside the chalice and drinks the water. Then the deacon pours more water in the cup. The serving priest gives it to the associate priest who drinks it. Again, the priest thoroughly washes the inside of the

chalice with his hand, and pours the water in the paten. He then washes the outside of the chalice, especially the spots that he touched with his hands; this washing is done above the paten. Next, he washes the masteer, the whole of it, then the whole of the dome (or star) which sits upon the paten, paying particular care to the ends which touch the paten. He then pours the water that he used to wash the chalice, masteer and star into the paten, washes the paten thoroughly with his hand, and then drinks the water. The deacon pours water in the paten, which is in the hands of the priest, which the deacons then drink to finish any of the remaining Holy Communion. The priest washes his hands up to the wrist and his lips, then with that water, he washes the paten and drinks the water.

If the associate priest has held the chalice and has given the Blood to the people, he also washes his hands in the paten and drinks the water. A deacon then dries the utensils with a clean towel used specifically for drying the altar utensils. He then binds them together with the veils and the Prospherine, making sure the wrapping is not too tight, otherwise the utensils might get damaged. When tying the utensils, the deacon makes five knots: two knots in the preliminary (lower) tie, and three knots on the upper one. This is done so that when the priest unwraps the bundle to dress the altar before the Liturgy, he unties the top three knots with the familiar three signings of the cross, and the lower two with the continuation of the signings, saying "Honor and Glory, Glory and Honor..."

### **c) Communion Praises**

While the priest is administering the Holy Communion (and during the washing of the utensils), Psalm 150 is sung by the deacons. After Psalm 150 is sung, other Communion hymns, according to the appropriate time of the Coptic year, are sung. Common hymns include Pi-Oik, Rashi (Virgin Mary's fast and feast), Very Early Sunday Morning (resurrection), Night of the Last Supper, My Coptic Church (Nayrouz), and many others appropriate for the Great Lent, Apostles fast and feast, the Feast of the Cross, and other occasions. There are several appropriate Communion hymns for the entire Coptic calendar. The church does the correct thing in chanting the joyous hymns during the distribution of the Sacraments, as the people of the church stand in awe during such blessed moments, meditating on the sacrifice of the cross and the slain Lamb for the sins of the world. They listen and participate in the hymns of the distribution. This has been the church's custom

since the Apostolic era and this is evident in the Apostolic instructions, "Let all believers sing praise until all the oblation has been communion." Taking an example from what happened when Jesus set the Lord's Supper in the upper room in Zion, the Holy Bible says, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30).

It is not right to give a sermon during the distribution, for the songs of praise and jubilation will be silenced and the people will be distracted from the Sacrifice and the significance of the Communion. They will sit during moments when sitting is strictly forbidden; at the time of distributing Jesus's broken Body and shed Blood for our sins. Also, during such a sermon, the speaker would be giving his back to the Sacrifice and teaching in the presence of the greatest teacher of all: Christ! Those who give a sermon at the time of the distribution of Holy Communion violate the original rite that had been prevailing in the days of the Apostles, according to the teaching of the Holy Bible, "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). From this verse, we can see that the original arrangements of the ceremony of the Thanksgiving Mystery was firstly, i) teaching (nowadays this corresponds with the readings of the Pauline, the Catholic Epistles, the Acts, the Synaxarium and the Gospel, and then the sermon), then secondly ii) the fellowship in partaking of the Lord's Body and Blood, and thirdly iii) the accompanying prayers and praises.

It is important to note that he who attends the Liturgy and leaves the church before the end of the distribution of the Sacraments and the dismissal prayers receives the same share as Judas Iscariot. Likewise, he who does not attend the reading of the Gospel and the consecration of the offerings and then approaches the Sacraments gets the same punishment. He is partaking of the Holy Communion with an unclean soul. The reading of the Holy Books and praying the Liturgy were set to be read before Communion to sanctify the partaker's soul and body; then he becomes worthy of the offerings. As the Lord sits on the throne at the right hand of the Father in heaven, He also sits on the throne of our hearts when we unite with Him in faith during the Holy Communion. Thus our hearts become thrones, our bodies become a heaven, and our thoughts and all our lives become spiritual and heavenly.

#### **d) Thanksgiving Prayer After Communion**

After the priest has finished washing the utensils, he bows his head before the Lord and prays the following Thanksgiving Prayer: "Our mouth is full of exaltation, and our tongue with praise, because of our partaking of Your Immortal Sacraments, O Lord..." This is similar to what David the Psalmist says, "When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nation, The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126:1-3). Here the Lord has brought back the captivity of inner Zion, our souls, and freed us from the captivity of Satan, who had trapped us within his will. The Lord has brought us back to Himself, through repentance, and bestowed upon us the greatness of His favors by giving us His Holy Body and Blood.

### **11. The Dismissal**

#### **a) Dismissing the Angel of the Sacrifice**

After the Thanksgiving Prayer, the deacon pours some water in the priest's hand and the priest breathes on it three times while saying the three signings of the cross. If other priests are present they too blow on the water and repeat the second signing. The priest stands before the Altar and dismisses the angel of the Sacrifice by sprinkling some of the water on the Altar and sprinkling the rest upwards saying, "O angel of this offering who ascends to the highest with this praise, remember us before the Lord that He may forgive us our sins." It is not befitting that any priest or deacon takes off the vestments of the service before the angel of the Sacrifice is dismissed or before the congregation has been dismissed.

#### **b) Dismissing the Congregation**

After sprinkling the water and dismissing the angel of the Sacrifice, the priest starts to dismiss the congregation. First he places his hand, wet with water, on the throne of the chalice, then on his own beard, then on other priest's beards. He then places

his hand on all of the deacons heads as a blessing before dismissing them. Dismissing the congregation can be done in two ways: If only a few people are in attendance, the priest places his hand on each person's head. If there are many people, he dismisses them by sprinkling water on them in an organized manner to avoid any noise. During the sprinkling of water, the people should not leave their places. The priest dismisses the other serving priests by placing his hand on their beards and not on their heads. The Liturgy book says that he wipes their faces with his hand because placing the hand on the head indicates giving a blessing and blessings are only given by the senior to the junior, like the Apostle Paul says, "Now beyond all contradiction, the lesser is blessed by the better" (Hebrews 7:7).

As all the priests are brothers and none is less than the other, the priest does not give them the dismissal by placing his hand on their heads but by wiping their beards with his hand. Moreover, the beard is a sign of their pledge and devotion to God, so it is a sacred and respected thing. The priest has to make sure that the sprinkled dismissal water has reached each and every single person in the church. The Coptic Orthodox Christian is under the conviction that even if he attends from the beginning of the Liturgy, partakes of the Holy Communion and attains many blessings but has not received his share of the dismissal water with which he wipes his face, or has missed out on the Eulogia (blessing), he considers the benediction to be incomplete and leaves the church unsatisfied and not filled with happiness. Dismissal by placing the hand on every person's head was the original way of dismissal carried out in our church. It has many meanings and benefits. It means that the priest attends to the congregation and knows who has come to church and who has not, hence he should ask about them.

After the Liturgy, he can then go to visit his people as if they are his own children, or as endeared sheep of the holy flock, which deserve the care and attention of the shepherd. If the Patriarch or one of the Bishops is present, but not serving during the Liturgy, the serving priest does not sprinkle the water but instead puts the water that has been poured in his hands into the Patriarch's or the Bishop's hands. The Patriarch breathes on the water and sprinkles it upwards to dismiss the angel saying, "O Angel of this offering..." He then prays the dismissal of the clergy and the congregation and says the blessing.



### **c) The Code of Benediction**

At the conclusion of all of the collective prayers, the congregation chants, "Amen Alleluia, Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." In the presence of the Patriarch or a Bishop they add, "May you be bestowed the blessing of Moses." After that, the priest stands by the door of the Sanctuary facing West and says the usual benediction, which is the same as what is said at the end of raising the incense. After the Lord's prayer, the priest gives the dismissal saying, "And now, the love of God the Father, and the grace of the only begotten Son, our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and the gift of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Go in peace. The peace of the Lord is with you." The people respond with, "And also with you." The priest then kisses the altar and goes around it once while saying Psalm 46, which says, "O clap your hands, all you peoples..."

### **d) Washing the Hands**

After reciting Psalm 46 and kissing the corners of the altar, the priest washes his hands after giving the dismissal in preparation for giving the congregation the Eulogia.

### **e) The Distribution of Eulogia: Morsel of Blessing**

Eulogia is a Greek word, which means 'blessing'. In our church, the word Eulogia is given to the 'morsel of blessing' which is distributed to the worshipers at the end of the Liturgy. The Eulogia comes from the bread, which remains after choosing the Lamb. This bread was a potential offering and could have become the Divine Body. For this reason they have much honor and the priests and congregation share them. It has been the custom in Coptic churches that the priest distributes the Eulogia first to the believers in front of the Sanctuary. He starts with his brothers, the priests, who shake hands with him and break a morsel of the Eulogia. If the Patriarch or a Bishop is present, he distributes the Eulogia. The priests go first to break a piece from the bread in his hand, then the people follow. The Patriarch, the Bishop or the priest gives each member of the congregation a morsel of the blessing, which each person kisses, eats and then goes home. In doing this, every believer will come out of the church thankful to the Lord, comforted and asking for the continuation of this grace for him and for all believers.

The priest breaks the Eulogia over the Lamb's plate, which the deacon holds for him so those fragments of the bread don't fall on the floor. At the end of the distribution, the priest or the deacon collects the fragments, which have fallen in the plate, and eats them. The Eulogia must be kissed before eating it because it is a morsel of blessing and has attended the Liturgy, and we know that everything becomes sacred with the word of God and with prayers. If the morsel is too big and one cannot take it in one mouthful, he then breaks it with his hands and not with his teeth, making sure he does not drop any fraction on the ground. In the non-fasting days, the Eulogia must be eaten before leaving the church.

In fasting days when the Liturgy finishes earlier than the time of breaking the fast, the Eulogia can be kept until eating time and be taken before the meal. The priest then takes off the vestments of service and puts on his black clothes before leaving the Sanctuary, as he does with his left foot, while facing East. He then draws the curtain of the Sanctuary saying, "Draw Your shield over us, and let the door of Your church be opened in our faces, throughout the ages and till the end of all times." He kisses the curtain and goes in peace.

**CONCLUSION:** The liturgy of the faithful has 11 major parts. These parts are the Creed, the pre-Anaphora which includes the Prayer of Reconciliation, the Anaphora, which includes Eucharistic prayers, the Consecration which includes the Institution Narrative, the Anamnesis, and the Epiclesis. Then there are the Seven Minor Litanies, the Commemoration of the Saints the Diptych, the Fraction, the Confession, Holy Communion, and the Dismissal. Each of these parts of the liturgy have deep theological meaning as well as a biblical basis.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord's Body" (I Corinthians 1:27-30).

## 10. THE DIVINE LITURGY AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### SERVANT PREPARATION:

#### VERSE & REFERENCES

**Verse:** “After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1).

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### LESSON PREPARATION

**OBJECTIVES:** The Divine Liturgy has major connections with the Bible, and in particular, Chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation. In this study, we will

study the deep connections between the Divine Liturgy and the Bible, especially Chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation. It is in this connection that we will see how the liturgy is celebrated in heaven and how all of heaven participates in the Divine Liturgy here on Earth. Thus, we will i) understand the deep biblical foundations for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, ii) to see how the Book of Revelation describes the liturgy of heaven, and iii) to understand how the Mass we celebrate on earth is a participation in the liturgy of heaven.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **The Book of Revelation:**

The "last things" are presented somewhat differently by St. John in the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament. St. John writes differently because he received the truth differently. He is not just writing a book based on certain sources. He writes what he has seen in visions or received through special inspiration. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice When I saw him I fell at his feet I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! and lo a throne stood in heaven" (Revelation 1:10-17; 4:1-3). Every vision stands for itself and has its own message. Through all of these images Christ speaks about the mysteries of God's will for the Church and the world (Revelation 1:1; 2:2-7; 5:1-5).

Exiled for the sake of the word of God to the island of Patmos, St. John, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, had visions in symbolic scenes which indicate, interpret and clarify things which are happening, or which are going to happen in the life of the Church (Revelation 1:1-11). In familiar images from the Old Testament, and from the current life situation in the Church, St. John saw and depicted for us the struggles of the Church of Christ against the manifold evils and the battles between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Behind the images of the beast and the prostitute woman, for example, are the persecutions by political and religious opponents of the Church, particularly the Roman Empire.

Always hidden behind these opponents is the ancient serpent, the dragon, the devil, Satan himself, who deceives the nations and turns them against the Church.

The fundamental idea of the Book of Revelation is the belief that Christ is the Lamb, sacrificed for us. He who opens the seals of the book is the ruling king revered and worshipped by the Church in heaven and on earth (Revelation, chapters. 4, 5, 6, 12, 19). The Lord Christ, the sacrificed Lamb, leads the struggle with His armies, the Saints of the Church. Their weapon is their faith in the word of God to the point of self-sacrifice. The blood of the Lamb, the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and His Resurrection strengthen them; the victory over the enemy is certain (Revelation 6:2; 12:11; 19:17-18). The Christology in the Book of Revelation, which emphasizes Christ as the sacrificial Lamb, is the most powerful witness for the power of the Cross in the salvation of the world, as the Church experienced it. The Cross, the Resurrection, the Parousia, all indicate clearly the absolute sovereignty of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26).

In chapter 1, St. John speaks about the origin of his revelation. The source of the revelation is God Himself, but it is Christ who, through an angel, reveals to St. John things which must shortly take place. Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is always the mediator between God and the world. The Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit creates and saves everything. In chapters 2-3, St. John has visions on the contemporary spiritual condition of the Church in Asia. Christ exhorts the leaders of the churches to be steadfast in their faith and promises rewards for the victorious ones. These promises are mentioned throughout the whole book and especially in chapters 21-22. In chapters 4-5, St. John is in heaven in spirit and sees heavenly visions. We have similar visions in the Old Testament (cf. Isaiah. 6:1; Ezekiel. 1:1, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

He sees the throne of God in all of its glory. Around the throne are twenty-four presbyters and four living creatures who represent the Church of the Old and the New Testament and the world, and they praise God the Creator. Between them and the throne stands Christ as the Lamb sacrificed, slain, for our salvation. The picture signifies the mystery of our salvation in Christ. At the right hand of God there is a book that is sealed with seven seals. No one can open, understand, or

even look upon the book. Only Christ the Victor can open it; only the mystery of Christ can shed light on the mystery of the world. The book must symbolize the eternal will of God for the destiny of the world, and what is to happen to it, as St. John sees it in the Spirit in chapters 6-20. Christ who opens the seals of the book is the center and the ruler of history and the world. He lives and continues the work of salvation to the end.

The vision in chapters 4-5 is truly magnificent. God the creator and ruler of the universe is there in the brightness of the throne. Christ, through whom all things are created and through whom the plan of salvation is realized, is there as the Lamb slain for the salvation of the world. The entire Church and the whole world, in heaven and on earth, glorify God and the Lamb who was sacrificed for the sins of the world. God and Christ are inseparable and the Church glorifies them together (Revelation 4:9; 5:8-14). St. John has seen this vision on the "Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10), and chapters 4 and 5 have been considered as a prototype for the Divine Liturgy where the one Church of God lives the blessedness of salvation. In our worship, earth and heaven, time and eternity become one eternal present in the presence of God.

The magnificent vision which St. John saw in chapters 4-5 will be the main consolation for him and for the struggling Church and an assurance for the final victory. God and Christ are in control of history, and truth and love will prevail, while evil will finally disappear from the world (Revelation 20:10), and a new life will come to the world created and saved by God in Christ (Revelation. chapters 21-22).

In chapter 6, Christ opens the first seal. St. John sees Christ as a magnificent victor. In the Book of Revelation, only Christ is the victor (Revelation 19:11; John. 16:33). Here the first rider must represent Christ, the Church with the Gospel ready to face the other coming catastrophic riders, who represent worldly powers. This is the theme of the whole Book of Revelation: the struggle of the Church and its victory over evil by the power of the blood of Christ. St. John sees three other demonic powers, in opposition to Christ, that bring grief to the world and to the Church. He dramatically envisions the struggle between the Church and its enemies in the form

of wars. Natural catastrophes are depicted as punishment from God for the enemies of the Church. The same theme, the persecution of the Church and the punishment of the persecutors, is repeated in chapters 8-19, with different images.

In chapters 6 to 18, Christ opens the seven seals of the book. In various symbolic scenes we see the fate of the Church in the course of the centuries. The history of the Church is a spiritual struggle for the cause of Christ, the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, the victory of good over evil on earth, of Christ over the Antichrist, the devil.

The army of Christ is made up of the saints of the Church, the believers. Their power is the faith in the blood of Christ; their armor is the word of God. The army of Antichrist is made up of the worldly powers, mainly the Roman Empire, symbolized by the two beasts and the harlot woman (Revelation 11:7; 13:1-17; Daniel 7:11-12).

In spite of the harshness of the images, the entire Book of Revelation is written to provide consolation and encouragement to the faithful who are struggling to keep the faith in Christ alive, notwithstanding the great sorrow they are experiencing. After each persecution, the book presents an image of consolation for the faithful (Revelation 7:9-17; 10:1-11; 18:20). These images are a confirmation of the victory of the Church. They comfort the struggling Christians and help them to be "faithful unto death" and to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10-11).

All of the events prepare and direct us toward the end, the *Parousia* of Christ. The *Parousia* is coming as judgment for the enemies of the divine plan and as a consolation and a reward for the struggling believers. The coming judgment is presented in the form of wars and punishment for the enemies, executed by God or Christ that leads to the final victory over Satan himself. There, we will have the end of the present plan of salvation, the end of the cosmic drama of history, and the beginning of eternal blessedness in the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

The final confrontation with evil is presented in chapters 19 and 20. The image is very powerful. Christ appears in His magnificence as King of kings, Lord of lords, and Judge of all. The war is waged by the beast and the false prophet. Both of these

are organs of Satan, representing the political and religious authority of Rome (Revelation 13:1-18). The outcome of the battle is prejudged. "And the beast was captured and with it the false prophet..." (Revelation 19:17-20). Thus the enemies of Christ and the Church were completely destroyed.

At this point the cosmic drama has come to its end; the hostile powers have been thrown into the lake of fire, and one would have expected the end, the Parousia. St. John, however, presents three additional scenes which end with still another direct confrontation with Satan and his final condemnation (Revelation 20:1-10).

In the first scene we see an angel binding Satan. In 9:1-2, we saw Satan falling like a star upon earth. The abysmal well opened up and various kinds of evil appeared. The abyss is considered to be the dwelling place of Satan (cf. Lk. 8:31). The angel binds Satan without resistance. This silent act itself speaks about the mysterious power of Christ over Satan (Matthew 19:28-29; John. 12:31). In chapter 12:4-9, we see the first downfall of Satan. Satan lost, we might say, his battle on the heavenly plain by not succeeding in destroying the male-child that had ascended to heaven. (In the image perhaps we can see the birth of Christ and the persecution of mother and child by Herod in Matthew 2:7-18). This child is Christ who conquered Satan through the Cross and who was resurrected and ascended to heaven, to God and to His throne. This power of the Cross binds and restricts Satan. And with faith in Christ and in the power of His blood, the Saints are victorious in their struggle against evil (Revelation 12:11). For the faithful, the devil is indeed bound up. The grace of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross forgives and sanctifies the Saints, unites them with Christ and makes them invincible warriors of Christ against Satan (Revelation 12:11; Romans 8:31-39).

The power of Satan is limited for one thousand years, that is, for a considerable period of time. Numbers in the Book of Revelation are always symbolic. Only God knows the actual length of this period.

In another vision related to the previous one, St. John sees the faithful in their blessedness (Revelation 20:4). The vision contains thrones, and people are sitting upon them with the authority to judge. Who exactly are the people sitting, St. John



does not tell us. In Revelation 4:4 the twenty-four presbyters, representing the Church, sat on thrones. Something like this had been promised by Christ to the Apostles and to the bishops (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 3:21; 1 Corinthians 6:2). More probably it refers to all the faithful who have been liberated from the power of Satan and who rejoice in blessedness.

*"Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands" (Revelation 20:4).*

With a simple conjunction "also," St. John notes that in this vision he also saw the souls of the martyrs. (He does not say that those who sat on the thrones to judge were the martyrs, but that they were included there with the others). This indicates to us that the Church is really one of the living and of the dead, heavenly and earthly, triumphant and militant, one Church, all the believers united in a fulfilled and complete body, with a definite number of 144,000 sealed (Revelation 7:3-9; 14:3-5).

"And judgment was given to them." The vision does not say whom they judge and how they judge. It only presents Christ as an image of the Church. Judgment belongs only to God. The Christian does not judge anyone (Matthew 7:1; Romans 14:4-5). Judgment rather will be according to our deeds. Christians can judge the world only by their good deeds (Matthew 5:14-16). The blessedness of the saints is judging and teaching the world, especially the enemies of the Church.

"They lives and reigned with Christ a thousand years," as long as Satan remained bound. Where they lived and where they reigned we are not told. What we can understand is that St. John saw the saints, the heroes of the faith, to be living and enjoying the blessedness of the kingdom of God; and for St. John all the faithful were martyrs-witnesses, as he himself was. We will see the blessedness in its perfection in Chapters 21-22.

"The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). In this third scene, the other dead, that is, the souls of the

unbelievers, in contrast to the souls of the saints, did not live during this period of time. They were not worthy to partake of the blessedness, a life in the presence of Christ. The unbelievers, even when they are alive are really spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1; 19:21; Luke 16:23-26).

St. John calls this phenomenon "the first resurrection," a kind of resurrection before the general resurrection of all (Revelation 20:5-12). The text, however, does not indicate a resurrection; it only says that the souls of the saints were present and were taking part in the blessedness of the kingdom of God.

"Blessed and holy" are they who have a part in the first resurrection. They are not afraid of the second death the punishment in the lake of fire which is the final separation from God and which will take place at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:14-15). They have already passed the judgment (John. 3:18; 5:24-29; 11:26). Those who live with Christ in the present life are not afraid of being separated from Christ in the Parousia (Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:23). "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they will rule with him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6; 1:6; 22:5). This is the certainty of faith, that the now suffering Christians will for certain share with Christ the blessings of the kingdom of God for "a thousand years," that is, forever and ever.

## **Lesson Body:**

### **1. The Divine Liturgy and the Bible: The Bible in Action**

#### **a) Lift up Your Hearts**

"Lift up your hearts!" We hear these words at the high point of the Liturgy, at the start of the Eucharistic prayers. In Scripture, the exhortation to "lift up" is often associated with offering one's self to God through prayer (see Psalm 25:1-2; Psalm 134:2). In the one place where the specific expression, "lift up your hearts," is used, it is part of a cry for God's mercy and presence, and a vow to return to Him and serve Him (see Lamentations 3:41; Lamentations 2:19).

And the exhortation to "lift up your hearts" may well have been a part of the original celebration of the Eucharist.

But when we lift up our hearts in the Eucharist, there is a certain "realism" about it. It's not just a figure of speech. Our hearts are really going somewhere. We are lifting our hearts to heaven, joining our prayers of thanks and praise to those of the angels in heaven.

Our feet may still be planted on the ground in an ordinary parish church. But in the Mass, we enter heaven itself. We take our place in the ceaseless worship of the angels and the saints in heaven. Our liturgy on earth is part of the eternal heavenly liturgy. The Divine Liturgy, in other words, is heaven on earth.

But before we go to heaven, we should review how the Liturgy has led us to this point.

## **b) The Bible is Realized in the Divine Liturgy**

Thus far in our study, we've seen how the Bible and the Liturgy were made for each other. The "destination" that all of Scripture points to is the Liturgy. And the Liturgy is the Bible in action - right before our eyes the Scripture's saving truths are "actualized," made actual or real.

As we've seen, much of the prayer and worship of the Liturgy is taken directly from Scripture or is meant to evoke for us the events of salvation history recorded in Scripture.

Of course, in the Liturgy of the Word, we actually hear the Word of God in Scripture. In fact, as we have seen, the Liturgy is the native environment of Scripture. The official "canon" of Scripture is first and foremost the list of books deemed by early Church authorities, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be suitable for public reading in the liturgy.

When the Scriptures are read in church, God himself speaks to us and Christ is present. And He tells us, through the Sunday readings, how God's plan for our salvation has played out in history, leading us to the Eucharistic table.

Following the Word of God, we profess our faith "with one voice" in the words of the Creed.

Again, there is a biblical "precedent" for this practice of the Liturgy. In the Old Testament, the reading of Scripture is often followed by a profession of faith. Indeed, when God speaks, His Word requires an answer. The answer God desires is our vow of faith and obedience. When Moses gave the Law to the Israelites, it was expected that they would answer. And they responded, "We will do everything that the Lord has told us" (see Exodus 24:3).

When priests rediscovered the book of the Law in the reign of Josiah, the king had it read in the presence of the people. Again we see that the reading of the Scriptures was understood to be a call to the people - a call that requires their response. That's why, after hearing the Word, the king made a covenant with God on behalf of the people, committing them to "keep His commandments, decrees, and statutes, with his whole heart and soul" (see 2 Chronicles 34:29-32; Nehemiah 9).

### **c) What We Believe**

We do the same thing in the Liturgy. We hear the Word of God – spoken to us in our midst by Christ – and we respond to the story of salvation we hear in the readings from the Old and New Testaments. And that response takes the form of reciting of the Creed.

It is not just a rote recitation of articles of faith. When we say, "We believe . . ." we're saying what the Israelites said, and what King Josiah said – that we're ready to keep God's commands, to live in a way that's worthy of the words we've heard in the Scripture readings of the Liturgy.

Something else, too, about the Creed: Notice that it's an outline of the biblical story. In the Creed we repeat the history of our salvation - from the creation of heaven and earth through the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Ascension, right to the Last Judgment at the end of time.

And almost every word of the Creed we profess is drawn from Scripture - we profess our faith in the God revealed in Scripture, using the very words of Scripture.

To take just a few examples:

- We believe in "one God, the father" (see 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6); and in His "only Son" (see John 3:16); through whom all things were made (see Colossians 1:16).
- "For our sake" He was crucified (see 2 Corinthians 5:21); and He will one day come again to "judge the living and the dead" (see Acts 10:42), and His kingdom will have "no end" (see Luke 1:33).
- We believe in "one baptism" (see Ephesians 4:5) and the life of the world to come (see John 6:51).

After our profession of faith, we pray for one another and for those in need, another practice of the Liturgy that follows the example of the New Testament (see James 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; Colossians 1:9).

## **2. The Liturgy in Heaven**

### **a) Caught Up in the Spirit**

The biblical story – told to us in the Scripture readings for the Liturgy and summarized in the Creed – reaches its "goal" in the Liturgy.

All the history recorded in Scripture, all that it reveals about the "one God" and His only Son, was intended to lead us to the moment of communion with God, through "the breaking of the bread" (see Luke 24:35). In the Liturgy of the Faithful, we see the culmination of biblical history right in front of us on the altar.

We "lift up our hearts" to heaven and are, in a real sense, "caught up in spirit" and taken into a liturgy that's always going on in heaven (see Revelation 4:2).

That's what was revealed to the Apostle John in the Bible's last book. In fact, it's the Divine Liturgy that makes sense of the puzzling, and often frightening visions and symbols of Revelation.

What's revealed to John is that the Liturgy we celebrate on earth is a participation in the liturgy of heaven.

St. John's vision begins on "the Lord's day," Sunday (see Revelation 1:10) - the name the first Christians gave to the first day of the week, upon which they celebrated "the breaking of the bread" (see Acts 20:7).

St. John is "caught up in spirit on the Lord's Day." In other words, possibly while celebrating the Eucharist himself, John is taken to heaven. And St. John sees the same things we see when we come to the Liturgy. He sees an altar (see Revelation 8:3); candles (1:12); incense (5:8); priests dressed in robes (4:4). And he sees bread or manna (2:17), and bowls or chalices of blood (see Revelation 16).

He sees heavenly worshippers – angels and saints – crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (4:8), singing a hymn to the glory of God, the heavenly king (15:3-4) and shouting "alleluia" (19:1, 3, 6) and making the sign of the cross on their foreheads (14:1).

There are readings from Scripture (Revelation 2-3), and, finally, the "wedding feast of the Lamb"(19:9).

## **b) The Liturgy Revealed in Revelation**

In fact, there are many more similarities between the Book of Revelation and the Divine Liturgy.

Notice that the book itself is written with the intention that it will be read during the liturgy (see Revelation 1:3). And the book is divided into two parts that roughly correspond to the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful.

The first eleven chapters are concerned with the reading of letters, to be written on a scroll by St. John who "gives witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw" at the dictation of "one like a son of man" (see Revelation 1: 2,11-13).

The "one like a son of man" is Jesus Christ, who often referred to himself as "Son of Man" (see, Matthew 25:31, Mark 8:31, Luke 12:8, John 3:13). That image, in turn, takes us back to the vision of Daniel, in which "One like a son of man" comes

in glory on the clouds and receives "an everlasting dominion" from God (see Daniel 7:13-14).

But Revelation also identifies Jesus by name: "the name by which He is called is the Word of God" (see Revelation 19:13).

St. John is the human author of this Scripture. But the Scripture has a divine author, too, the Word of God.

Significantly, the first three chapters of Revelation begin the book as the Liturgy begins, with a sort of Penitential Rite. Jesus uses the word "repent" eight times during his seven letters (see Revelation 2:16).

And when the Word of God has been proclaimed, the Son declares: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with Me" (see Revelation 3:20).

With this invitation to dine with Christ himself, the heavenly Liturgy of the Word gives way to the feast of the heavenly Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Word in Revelation prepares us to receive the Lamb of God. All who have "ears to hear" are told that Jesus himself will give them "hidden manna."

This is a reference to the "heavenly bread" that God gave Israel to eat on their Exodus journey (see Psalm 78:23-25). But this heavenly bread was a sign of the bread that Christ came to give – His own body, given for the life of the world (see John 6:32-33; 49-51).

This is the daily bread that He taught His disciples to pray for - in a prayer that we pray in every Mass and which we will consider in depth in our next lesson.

Revelation's second half begins in Chapter 11, with the opening of God's temple in heaven, and culminates in the pouring of the seven chalices and the marriage supper of the Lamb – a striking image of the Liturgy of the Faithful.

### **3. Worship in the New Jerusalem**

#### **a) With the Angels and Saints**

St. John is invited to "come up here" (see Revelation 4:1). And we are invited to come up to heaven, as well – to lift up our hearts - at the beginning of our Liturgy of the Faithful.

When we lift up our hearts, we are asked to sing with the angels and saints. This is not simply a fine expression of sentiment. As with everything else in the Liturgy, there is a "sacramental realism" at work here. At this point in the Liturgy, we are in a mysterious way joining our song to the song that John – and the prophet Isaiah before him – heard in heaven: "Holy, holy, holy . . ." (see Revelation 4:8; Isaiah 6:3).

The second part of our song ("Blessed is he . . .") is taken from the Psalm that pilgrims to Jerusalem would sing at Passover. It was also the psalm that was sung upon Christ's triumphal entry to Jerusalem (see Mark 11:10; Psalm 118:26).

The biblical words give us clues to what's going on in the Liturgy. We have gathered around the altar – not only an earthly altar, but a heavenly altar as well. We have made our way to Mount Zion, the new and heavenly Jerusalem.

This is what John saw – "the Lamb standing on Mount Zion "(see Revelation 14:1).

St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (see Hebrews 12:22-24) likewise speaks of the Eucharistic celebration on earth as entrance into and participation in the heavenly liturgy in the new Jerusalem.

In the Liturgy, says St. Paul, we approach "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." There, we join "countless angels" and "the assembly of the firstborn" and Jesus, "mediator of the new covenant and the sprinkled blood" in a "festal gathering" or feast.

These lines are filled with biblical allusions and references. It is interesting to note that the word translated "assembly" is the Greek word *ekklesia* – the word for "church."



And notice the similarities between St. Paul's description of the Liturgy and St. John's Revelation. Both see a new Jerusalem, a new Zion, the dwelling place of the Lord (see Psalm 132:13-14). Both see angels and Jesus, the Lamb whose blood takes away the sin of the world. And both see a "feast" and a gathering of "firstborn" or "firstfruits" of those who believe in Jesus (see Revelation 14:4). And both see this feast in the temple of heaven, a sign of the new covenant wrought in the blood of Jesus (see Revelation 11:19)

What these Scriptures show us is that the Liturgy is the summit of salvation history told in Scripture. And this is the same thing that the prayers of the Divine Liturgy tell us.

### **b) Praying Salvation History**

The prayers of the Liturgy of the Faithful are prayers of thanksgiving in which the gifts we offer at the altar - bread and wine, and all the works of our hands and minds - are sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As with everything else in the Liturgy, these are biblical prayers, employing language found in the Scriptures, and also "summarizing" the biblical story (to read them).

But they are much more than that. The prayers in the Divine Liturgy retell salvation history, but they also make us a part of that history, through the sacramental change of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood.

The various prefaces to the prayers recall for us the entire biblical story, showing us always how the whole plan of salvation recorded in the Bible reached its summit in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we commemorate in the Liturgy.

#### 4. Details of Chapter 4 in the Book of Revelation:

In verse 4:1, “After these things” does not refer to a chronological order within the text of chapters 1–4, but instead connects this next sequence with the initial vision, a vision that beholds past, present, and future as one whole. St. John writes, as it were, from inside the eye of an apocalyptic tornado, recording glimpses of the eschatological events that whirl by. The single open door through the vaulted firmament (see Genesis 1: 7, 8) allows vision into the depths of all mysteries, the celestial throne. Since earthly events have their origin in heaven, true insight into history can be attained only from that vantage point (see Genesis 28: 17; Ezekiel 1: 1; Mark 1: 10; Acts 7: 56).

**Come up**, reminiscent of Moses’ invitation from God to ascend Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19: 24), is a command with liturgical overtones: to enter God’s sanctuary, His “high place.”

In verses 4: 2, 3 God is seen in biblical visions as sitting on a throne, a symbol of His sovereign lordship (3 Kingdoms 22: 19; Psalm 46: 9; Isaiah 6: 1; Ezekiel 1: 25– 27; Daniel 7: 9; Matthew 5: 34; 23: 22). The image of this throne occurs over 40 times in Revelation and is further described as “a great white throne” (20: 11), a throne of judgment. But here His throne is surrounded by a rainbow (verse 3), the sign of God’s everlasting covenant according to which He will not judge man again as He did at the Flood (Genesis 9: 12– 17). Mercy triumphs over judgment (Matthew 9: 13). Thus, in the Orthodox Church, the altar table is sometimes called “the throne.”

In verse 4: 4, the twenty-four elders are usually interpreted to be elders of the old and new covenants: the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles, the fullness of both covenants. They are the foundation of the people of God in both covenants (7: 4; Matthew 19: 28). These elders continually fall down before God in worship (5: 14; 11: 16; 19: 4), in adoration and praise (4: 11; 5: 9, 10; 11: 17, 18; 19: 4).

In verses 4: 6, 7 The sea of glass (Ezekiel 1: 22– 26) surrounds God’s throne, for God is approached by fallen men only through waters of death that produce life. As Israel journeyed through the Red Sea as if on hard ground, so Christians pass

through the waters of baptism, entering into Christ's death and Resurrection. If the sea is not of glass, there is death, not new life. Also, God is vast and overpowering, as a sea of light would be. The hosts of angels surround Him (Daniel 7: 10) as a sea of purity. The four living creatures are angelic beings adapted from Ezekiel 1: 4– 20 and Isaiah 6: 2. Their number is that of the whole world, the cosmos, and thus they portray creation, beasts, men, and angels as the Kingdom of God. Traditional iconography depicts them as symbols for the four evangelists. Their worship of God is unceasing, an ideal inspiring the round-the-clock services of Orthodox monastic communities.

In verse 4: 8, the six wings (Is 6: 2; Ezekiel 1: 6) may symbolize the swiftness with which God's will is enacted in His world. Full of eyes around and within (see the wheels of Ezekiel 1: 18) indicates the absolute vigilance of these creatures. They do not rest day or night suggests the essence of their ceaseless activity: to praise God (the very liturgy which the whole cosmos is called to serve) and to pray without ceasing (Psalms 102: 20– 22; 148; 150; 1Th 5: 17). Their hymn, "Holy, holy, holy," like that of Isaiah's seraphim (Isaiah 6: 3), praises God, who is Lord of history and fills heaven and earth with His glory. Isaiah's doxology was part of synagogue worship and was incorporated into the worship of the Church (1Clem 34: 6). Another form of this hymn, the Trisagion ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!") reverberates throughout the services of the Orthodox Church. Ambrose wrote a similar hymn, the "Te Deum." The Eucharistic prayer of the Divine Liturgies of Saints John Chrysostom, Basil, and James refers to the perpetual thrice-holy hymn of the "cherubim and the seraphim," thus blending the visions of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and St. John, and underscoring that the Divine Liturgy on earth is one with the heavenly liturgy of the angels and glorified saints.

In verse 4: 10, the elders participate in the heavenly worship by the physical acts of prostration (see 3 Kingdoms 18: 42) and casting their crowns. Prostration, a significant feature of historic Christian worship, is based in Scripture and signifies humility before God. The casting of crowns shows that the honor and glory of the saints derives from and belongs to God.

Verse 4: 11 gives a doxology (glorification of God) is typical of many in the Apocalypse. It is offered to the Father and to Christ. Doxologies are a prominent aspect of Orthodox liturgy, ascribing glory, honor, and power to God.

## **5. Liturgy in the New Testament Church**

Virtually all students of the Bible realize there was liturgical worship in Israel. Immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1– 17), instructions for building the altar were set forth (Exodus 20: 24– 26). Then comes instruction concerning keeping the Sabbath (Exodus 23: 10– 13), the annual feasts (Exodus 23: 14– 19), and the various offerings and furnishings in the sanctuary (Exodus 25: 1– 40). Following this, chapters 26– 30 deal with such matters as the design of the tabernacle, the altar, and the outer court, the priests' vestments and their consecration, and instructions for daily offerings. Liturgical worship is also found in heaven, which is to be expected, since God instructed Moses to make the earthly place of worship as a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8: 5; see Exodus 25: 40). Heavenly worship is revealed in such passages as Isaiah 6: 1– 8, where we see the prophet caught up to heaven for the liturgy, and Revelation 4, which records the apostle John's vision of heaven's liturgy.

The key to comprehending liturgy in the New Testament is to understand the work of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the new covenant. Christ is "a priest forever" (Hebrews 7: 17, 21). It is unthinkable that He would be a priest but not serve liturgically: "forever" suggests He serves continually, without ceasing, in the heavenly tabernacle. Further, He is called not only a priest but a liturgist: "a Minister [Gr. leitourgos, lit., "liturgist"] of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected" (Hebrews 8: 2). Christian worship on earth, to be fully Christian, must mirror the worship of Christ in heaven. Moreover, Christ is "Mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8: 6). What is that covenant? In the words of the Lord, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1 Corinthians 11: 25). Just as the blood of bulls and goats in the old covenant prefigured Christ's sacrifice to come, so the Eucharistic feast brings to us the fullness of His new covenant offering, completed at the Cross and fulfilled in His Resurrection. This

once-for-all offering of Himself (Hebrews 7: 27) which He as High Priest presents at the heavenly altar is an offering in which we participate through the Divine Liturgy in the Church. This is the worship of the New Testament Church! Given this biblical background, a number of New Testament passages take on new meaning.

1. Acts 13: 2: "As they ministered to the Lord [lit., "as they were in the liturgy of the Lord"] and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul.'" We learn that (a) these two apostles were called by God during worship, and (b) the Holy Spirit speaks in a liturgical setting.
2. Acts 20: 7: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, St. Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them." Communion was held each Sunday.
3. Romans 16: 16: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." A kiss of greeting was common in this ancient culture. The "holy kiss," however, was an element of the Christian liturgy that signified the people of God were reconciled to one another, so that they might receive the Body and Blood of Christ in peace.
4. Ephesians 5: 14: "Awake, you who sleep, / Arise from the dead, / And Christ will give you light." This is an ancient baptismal hymn, already in use by the time Ephesians was written. Other examples of creeds and hymns of New Testament times are seen in 1 Timothy 3: 16 and 2 Timothy 2: 11– 13.
5. Hebrews 13: 10: "We have an altar" reveals the continuation of the altar in New Testament worship.
6. Revelation 1: 10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Many scholars believe John saw his vision of Christ during the Sunday liturgy, as the Lord appeared to him "in the midst of the seven lampstands" (Revelation 1: 13). Lampstands would be found in the Christian sanctuary just as they were in the Hebrew temple.

**CONCLUSION:** In this lesson, we have seen the intimate connections between the Divine Liturgy and the Bible, and in particular, the close connections between the Divine Liturgy and the Book of Revelation. The scene is very impressive and awesome in the beginning of Chapter 4 in the Book of Revelation. As he looks up into the sky, St. John sees *there before me . . . a door standing open in heaven* (verse 1). If the sky was like an open window to Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:10-11), it is like an open door to John, for a voice, the same trumpet-like voice he heard once before, beckons him to pass through the door: *Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this* (verse 1). St. John stops short of narrating a full-blown heavenly journey like the journeys of such characters as Enoch in Jewish literature (see, for example, 1 Enoch 14:8-25) or even like the journey of St. Paul, who was "caught up to the third heaven" and "heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell" (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4). All St. John will say is, *At once I was in the Spirit* (verse 2), just as in the introductory vision on Patmos (1:10). There he was "in the Spirit" first and then heard the voice; here it is the other way around. Nowhere have we been told when or under what circumstances St. John stopped being "in the Spirit," but now we are told that he is *in the Spirit* once more. This time he is indeed caught up to heaven, for he sees before him *a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it* (verse 2). But in this chapter and in those to follow we will again look in vain for any clear signal as to when St. John stops being "in the Spirit" or when he "comes down" from heaven. Only to a limited degree can we attain in our reading of the Revelation "a sense of where we are."

St. John's description of what he saw in heaven is, like the rest of the New Testament, true to the classic Jewish principle that "no one has ever seen God" (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12; compare Exodus 33:20). In many ways it recalls Ezekiel's introductory vision (Ezekiel 1:4-28), except that John is, if anything, even more reticent than Ezekiel about naming or describing God directly. What John sees is both a throne room and at the same time (because it is *God's* throne room) a place of worship, specifically a temple. Ezekiel in his day saw "a throne of sapphire" and on it "a figure like that of a man" (Ezekiel 1:26), which he identified as "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (1:28). John, by contrast, speaks only of *a throne in heaven* and *someone* seated on the throne (verse 2). This *someone* has no name or title, but for the moment at least is simply *the one who sat there, with the appearance of jasper and carnelian* (verse 3).

To St. John, the *throne* represents the power and majesty of the one sitting on it, and everything else he sees is described in relation to this central throne. Encircling it he saw *a rainbow, resembling an emerald*. Surrounding it in a wider circle were *twenty-four other thrones*, on which were seated *twenty-four elders* in white, wearing gold crowns (verse 4). From it came *flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder* (verse 5). Before, or in front of it, *seven lamps were blazing*, which John identifies for us as *the seven spirits of God* (verse 5). In front of it too he saw *what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal* (verse 6). Finally, *in the center, around the throne* St. John saw *four living creatures*, with eyes on every side and six wings, who continually said, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come*" (verse 8).

What started as a heavenly tableau unfolding step by step before St. John's eyes now becomes a scene of active worship and proclamation. The use of verbs in the present tense, beginning in verse 5, and the phrase *day and night* in verse 8 give the impression that this is no longer something St. John saw once in a vision, but a ritual in heaven repeating itself over and over again without rest or interruption. The throne is suddenly alive with living creatures hailing the anonymous *someone* seated on it as *the Lord God Almighty* (compare to 1:8). In reply, the twenty-four elders continually fall down to worship this one *who lives for ever and ever* (verse 9), laying their crowns in front of the throne (verse 10) and saying, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (verse 11). The elders' song celebrates creation and God the creator, probably as a reference point for the new creation to come. Although St. John in his vision does not claim to experience the passage of time, he manages to convey a sense that what he saw is something still going on in heaven even as we read his prophecy today and every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

**VERSE TO REMEMBER:** "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" (Revelation 20:11).

## 11. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. St. Paul said “For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit” which means:
  - a. There is diversity in the church
  - b. There is Unity in the Church
  - c. Church has unity through diversity
  - d. There is no diversity in the church
  
2. LOWLINESS means:
  - a. The having a humble opinion of one's self
  - b. A deep sense of one's (moral) littleness
  - c. Modesty, humility, lowliness of mind
  - d. All of the above
  
3. GENTLENESS can be translated as:
  - a. Meekness
  - b. Weakness
  - c. Faithfulness
  - d. Negligence
  
4. THE "BASIS" OF UNITY (Ephesians 4:4-6) does NOT include
  - a. One Body
  - b. One Church
  - c. One Spirit
  - d. One Hope of your calling



5. Diversity:

- a. Is important in the Body of Christ
- b. Is the source of all heresies
- c. Is the unique source of all gifts
- d. Encourages the building new churches

6. Liturgy is:

- a. When I go to church watch the work of the priest and the deacons and then take communion at the end
- b. When the People of God participate in "the work of God."
- c. When a person performs public service
- d. All of the above

7. \_\_\_\_\_ is a Latin word meaning 'the sign of something sacred and hidden.'  
Its Greek resemblance is \_\_\_\_\_ which is *not something unknowable*, but it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals* it.

- a. Blessing
- b. Mystery
- c. Church
- d. Sacrament
- e. Ευχαριστία

8. What are the 3 offices of Christ?

- a. High Priest
- b. Master
- c. Pantocrator
- d. Prophet
- e. King

9. We celebrate which paschal mysteries in the liturgy?
- a. Christ's death
  - b. Christ's resurrection and Ascension
  - c. Christ's burial
  - d. All of the above
  - e. None of the above
10. Oneness in the church means
- a. One Pope
  - b. One Building
  - c. One Faith
  - d. One Language
11. A Holy Church means
- a. That the members of the church are free from Sin
  - b. That the church is *set apart for a special purpose*
  - c. *That the church members are ready for the kingdom in heaven*
12. "Catholic" church in the Creed means
- a. is proclaimed to all people
  - b. Under the pope of Rome
  - c. The church is full and complete
  - d. A&C
13. The church is holy because of
- a. The Sacraments
  - b. It has the body of Christ
  - c. It belongs to Christ
  - d. The church objective is to make us holy

14. The Coptic church is an apostolic church that was founded by:

- a. St. Peter
- b. St. John
- c. St. James
- d. St. Mark

15. Apostolic Churches are churches that

- a. Are changelessness over time.
- b. Have preset rites.
- c. Contain the Kingdom of heaven.
- d. B & C

16. The purposes of Spiritual gifts include

- a. Prepare members of the body for service.
- b. Distinguishing between one another.
- c. To build up the members of the body.
- d. A & C

17. Spiritual gifts are

- a. Results of long spiritual work
- b. The source of everyone's pride in the church
- c. Given only to saints
- d. Very different but all valuable

18. Gifts support church unity because

- a. They are all from one source
- b. They are all for one purpose
- c. They are all of the same value
- d. B & C

19. The spiritual gifts as mentioned by St. Paul Exclude

- a. The word of knowledge
- b. Serving the poor.
- c. Faith
- d. Working of miracles

20. The gift of speaking in tongues

- a. Is useless without translation
- b. Proof of holiness of a person
- c. Proof of the work of the Holy Spirit
- d. Is the most important spiritual gift.

21. BEING LIKE-MINDED means

- a. Making the same spiritual decisions
- b. Thinking spiritually the same way
- c. Having the same virtues
- d. A & C

22. One of the enemies of unity include:

- a. Selfish Ambition
- b. Ambition In general
- c. Self Esteem
- d. All of the above

23. What helps us to esteem others better than ourselves?

- a. When we are aware of our own defects
- b. When others are esteemed before God more than us.
- c. When we do not judge another person's heart
- d. A & C

24. Man blessing God means

- a. Adoration and surrender of man to His creator.
- b. Dedication of man or things to God
- c. Offering gifts to God
- d. All of the above

25. God blessing man means

- a. Adoration and surrender of man to His creator.
- b. Dedication of man or things to God
- c. Offering gifts to God
- d. All of the above

26. Which part is NOT part of the Preparatory section of the Divine Liturgy?

- a. Putting on the Vestments
- b. The Canonical Hours
- c. The Rite of Choosing the Lamb
- d. The Hand Washing

27. Which part belongs to the Offeratory section of the Divine Liturgy?

- a. The bread and wine
- b. The altar preparation
- c. The baptizing of the lamb
- d. Both A and C

28. What does preparing the Altar symbolize?

- a. Preparing the Upper Room in Jerusalem where our Lord instituted the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist.
- b. Preparing our heart
- c. Preparing our meal
- d. All of the above

29. What is the name of this?



- a) The Chalice
- b) The Paten
- c) The platter
- d) The dome

30. What does the Paten Symbolize?

- a. The Womb of Saint Mary
- b. The Burial of Jesus
- c. The Manger where the Lord was born
- d. All of the above

31. Which statement is true regarding the dome?

- a. It is made of two arches that cross together and form the shape of a cross
- b. There is usually a small cross on top of it
- c. The Cross Represents the star that appeared to the wise men
- d. All of the above

32. What is the name of this?



- a. Chalice
  - b. Paten
  - c. Prosperine
  - d. Myster
33. Which hour in the Agpeya speaks of the commemoration of Jesus' trial and also the descent of The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
- a) 3<sup>rd</sup> hour
  - b) 6<sup>th</sup> hour
  - c) 9<sup>th</sup> hour
  - d) 12<sup>th</sup> hour
34. Which hour in the Agpeya speaks of the Cross of our Lord?
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> hour
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> hour
  - c. 9<sup>th</sup> hour
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup> hour

35. Which hour in the Agpeya speaks of the Death of our lord as a fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice?
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> hour
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> hour
  - c. 9<sup>th</sup> hour
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup> hour
36. Which hour in the Agpeya signifies the taking down of Christ's body from the Cross and anointing Him with fine spices?
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> hour
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> hour
  - c. 9<sup>th</sup> hour
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup> hour
37. Which hour in the Agpeya commemorates the burial of Christ?
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> hour
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> hour
  - c. 9<sup>th</sup> hour
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup> hour
38. Which hours of the Agpeya are recited in non-fasting days during the liturgy?
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>
  - c. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>
  - d. Both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>
39. Which statement is True about the Qrban:
- a. The middle part is called the Spadikon
  - b. It has 6 holes
  - c. The 6 holes represent the wounds of Christ
  - d. All of the above are true



40. Which Statement is true regarding the covering of the Altar
- a. the large covering is called the Prosphering
  - b. The process of covering represents the burial of our Lord's body in the tomb
  - c. Only the Priest can touch the covering
  - d. All of the Above except c)
41. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, ...." (Hebrews 13:15).
- a. burnt offerings
  - b. saying hymns and songs
  - c. giving thanks to His name
  - d. giving tithe to the poor
42. The word "Liturgy" means:
- a. group public worship
  - b. Sunday prayers
  - c. the last supper
  - d. Christian worship
43. In which part of the liturgy does "baptizing the lamb" take place?
- a. The Liturgy of the Catechumens
  - b. The Offertory
  - c. The Liturgy of the Faithful
  - d. The Consecration

44. What Psalms do the priest and deacons say when they put on their Vestments (tonyas)?
- a. Psalm 92 in Agpeya: The Lord has reigned; He has clothed Himself with beauty...
  - b. Psalm 29 in Agpeya: I will exalt you O Lord, for you have accepted me...
  - c. None of the above
  - d. A and B
45. During the Great Lent, the following canonical hours are prayed in liturgies:
- a. Third and Sixth hours
  - b. third, sixth, ninth hours
  - c. third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours
  - d. third, sixth, ninth, eleventh, and twelfth hours
46. The round shape of the Orban symbolizes:
- a. Noah's ark
  - b. The eternity of our Lord
  - c. The unity of the church
  - d. The twelve apostles
47. The name of the middle square in the center of the Orban is the
- a. Masteer
  - b. Prospherine
  - c. Spadikon
  - d. Jesus Christ

48. Around the Spadikon, there are:

- a. Five crosses
- b. Five holes
- c. Five lines
- d. Five circles

49. The yeast in the Orban symbolizes:

- a. Our sins that our Savior bore
- b. The Lord Jesus Christ who gives us righteousness
- c. The Holy Spirit who sanctifies us
- d. The prayers of the saints

50. The Liturgy of the Catechumens begins with:

- a. Shere ne Maria
- b. The absolution
- c. The Pauline Epistle
- d. The procession

51. After reading the Praxis, the priest has completed:

- a. 5 rounds
- b. 6 rounds
- c. 7 rounds
- d. 8 rounds

52. "Synaxarium" is a Greek word that means:

- a. The News
- b. The Archive
- c. The Prophecies
- d. The Spiritual Struggles

53. When is the following prayed by the priest?

“O Master...who said to His saintly and honored disciples and pure apostles, many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see and have not seen them and to hear the things which you hear and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.”

- a. The offertory
- b. The Trisagion
- c. The litany of the Gospel
- d. The prayer of the veil

54. Which of those is a silent prayer prayed by the priest asking the Lord to make him worthy of touching the Holy Sacraments?

- a. The consecration prayer
- b. The prayer of the veil
- c. The last confession
- d. The absolution

55. The Divine Liturgy of the Faithful in the Coptic Orthodox Church begins with the:

- a. The Anaphora
- b. The Gospel
- c. The Prayer of Reconciliation
- d. The Orthodox Creed

56. In the pre-anaphora, the priest stands by the Sanctuary's door, facing west, and shakes his hands before the people. This action is to:

- a. Bless the congregation
- b. Repent from his sins
- c. caution and warn people
- d. reconcile with the congregation

57. The triangular veil that the priest lifts up during the prayer of reconciliation represents:

- a. The barrier between heaven and earth
- b. the seal on the Savior's sepulcher
- c. the angels covering their faces
- d. all of the above

58. The word "Anamnesis" means:

- a. Thinking of our Lord's crucifixion
- b. Remembering the grace of God
- c. Reconciliation of heaven and earth
- d. Recalling and re-enacting

59. The Holy Spirit transforms the bread and wine into the Holy Body and precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ during the:

- a. The epiclesis prayer
- b. The anamnesis prayer
- c. The reconciliation prayer
- d. The seven litanies

60. When the priest dips the Holy Body in the Holy Blood, this teaches us that:

- a. Our Lord Jesus' Blood was shed on the cross
- b. In the resurrection, the blood will return to the body
- c. This Body is for this Blood; and this Blood is for this Body
- d. The Blood and Body cannot be separated

Answers:

1- C

2- D

3- A  
4- B  
5- A  
6- B  
7- D,B  
8- A,D,E  
9- D  
10- C  
11- B  
12- D  
13- C  
14- D  
15- A  
16- D  
17- D  
18- A  
19- B  
20- A  
21- B  
22- A  
23- D  
24- A  
25- B  
26- C  
27- D  
28- A  
29- D  
30- D  
31- D  
32- A  
33- A  
34- B  
35- C  
36- C  
37- D

38- D  
39- A  
40- D  
41- C  
42- A  
43- B  
44- D  
45- D  
46- B  
47- C  
48- B  
49- A  
50- B  
51- C  
52- A  
53- C  
54- B  
55- D  
56- C  
57- B  
58- D  
59- A  
60- C

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