

Take Heed
TO YOURSELF & TO THE DOCTRINE



ENGLISH EDITION | **GR 9-12**



"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." 1 Timothy 4:16



H.H. Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria &
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark



H.G. Bishop Mina

Bishop of Mississauga,
Vancouver and Western Canada



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	4
Take Heed To Yourself And To The Doctrine	6
The Book Of Acts	13
The Orthodox Faith	30
Border Gaurds	39
The Teacher Of Generations	48
Memorization	60



INTRODUCTION


MAHRAGAN ALKERAZA 2017

As we celebrated the conclusion of last year's Mahragan with the distribution of the trophies for the first, second and third place winners, we were grateful for God's blessings for a successful 2016 Mahragan. His Holiness Pope Tawadros II said during the Awards Ceremony in Egypt, "I am happy to see the activities of the Youth Bishopric, I am glad that our beautiful Church that is 2000 years old is full of young youth and I am proud to see the creative work and achievements of the youth."

Last year, in addition to the usual participation from Egypt and Sudan, we had a great worldwide participation from 192 Churches representing more than 20 countries and 8 languages.

The theme for Mahragan 2017 is "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16). This year, God is asking each one of us to grow in Christ. To do this we will learn about the following topics:

1. Take Heed To Yourself And To The Doctrine
2. The Book Of Acts
3. The Orthodox Faith
4. Border Gaurds
5. The Teacher Of Generations



We hope that all of you will participate in the Mahragan activities this year, and encourage everyone you know to join us in one of the greatest annual events, presented by our mother, the Coptic Orthodox Church.

May God bless Mahragan Alkeraza this year and the efforts of all the participants and coordinators, through the prayers of our beloved father Pope Tawadros II.

✠ My best wishes for a happy
Festival

✠ Bishop Mousa



Take Heed To Yourself And To The Doctrine

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”
1 Timothy 4:16

A. Take heed to yourself

This was the instruction given by St. Paul to his disciple Timothy; it also applies to our lives today.

The word “Take heed” means to watch out continuously and in depth. So with different matters in our lives we have to discern, examine and take nothing lightly. The word “yourself” does not mean physically only, but we must also pay attention to:

Instincts: For example, hunger, thirst, fear, love of life, love of possessions, sexual desires... etc.

Emotions: Relationships with people and feelings that we have towards others in our family, church and society.

Habits: A routine of behaviour, usually acquired since childhood.

Tendencies: The different paths that we choose for ourselves based on our priorities. Some will choose money, others relationships, and others spirituality.

These are the motives that govern our everyday actions and interests. The wise



person is the one who watches what is inside him and what is in his surroundings.

On the inside: One has to watch what goes through his mind, emotions and feelings. Where are these taking him? What does he really want? Does he really pay attention to the spiritual matters that will lead him to the kingdom of heaven? Does he have a relationship with the angels and the saints? Or is he just interested in earthly things?

It is not wrong to use the world (1Corinthians 7:31) but the mistake is when the world uses us and drives us in the wrong direction.


The human being is formed of:

- a. **The body:** Does the action (work and thrive)
- b. **The soul:** Feels and helps in forming different relationships (emotions)
- c. **The mind:** Controls both (the body and the soul) to keep them in the right direction.
- d. **The relationships that the person builds:**
 - In the family:** His love to his parents and siblings and relatives.
 - In the church:** His relationship with his father of confession (to be regular in confession and obtain spiritual guidance) and his relationship with members of the congregation to be an active member in the church.
 - In the society:** The relationship that he builds with his friends at school and at work.
- e. **The Spirit:** This is the breath of God that is immortal.

Our Lord said: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

This verse tells us that:

1. God loves us

- 
2. He saved us when He was incarnate and showed us the way of salvation and was crucified for us “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” 1Peter 2:24.
 3. He gave us salvation through the Holy Sacraments by making us members His church.


In the sacrament of Baptism: We die and resurrect with Him. We gain renewal of our nature through the new birth. “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” Colossians 2:12, “since you have put off the old man with his deeds” Colossians 3: 9.

In the Sacrament of Myron: We are anointed 36 times

1. The head and the senses: The head, the nostrils, the mouth, the eyes and the ears (8 anointments)
2. On the heart (chest), the navel, the back and the lower back (4 anointments)
3. Right arm (6 anointments)
4. Left arm (6 anointments)
5. Right leg (6 anointments)
6. Left leg (6 anointments)

The locations of the anointments have a beautiful spiritual meaning as if the church prays for the baptized saying:

1. Lord sanctify his thoughts (anointment of the head)
2. Lord sanctify his senses (anointment of the senses)
3. Lord sanctify his heart (anointment of the heart and navel)
4. Lord sanctify his will (anointment of the back and lower back)
5. Lord sanctify his deeds (anointment of the arms)
6. Lord sanctify his way (anointment of the legs)



The priest then puts his hand on the head of the baptized saying: “May you be blessed by the heavenly blessings, and the blessings of the angels. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you in His name, breathing in the face of the baptized saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit and be a pure vessel through our Lord Jesus Christ”. Then the baptized dresses with white clothes saying: “garments of eternal life not corrupted Amen”.

How beautiful is our life in the church! We abide in Christ, we unite with the believers on earth, we unite with the saints in heaven and we gain our power and strength from our Lord Jesus Christ.

We unite with our Lord Jesus Christ through:

Holy Communion: When we receive His Holy Body and Blood.

Prayer: When we pray, communal prayers or personal prayers, for example praying from the Agpeya which is the book of the prayers of the different hours of the day. That makes us live with our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the day. It teaches us to remember all what our Lord Jesus did for us and prepare us for eternal life.


B. And the Doctrine

Besides being vigilant in our spiritual life, God is also asking us to pay special attention to the church teachings that we received from our saintly church fathers. This includes:

- a. To know the right teaching:

As the Bible says, “You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered” Romans 6:17. Also, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” 2Timothy 2:2.

These are the pure, spiritual orthodox teachings that our early church fathers are handing down to us since the time of Christ. “Building yourselves up on your most holy faith” Jude 1:20.



That is why it was said about the disciples in the early church, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” Acts 2:42.

- b. To act according to the teachings of our church:
 - “Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it” Proverbs 8:33.
 - “He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray” Proverbs 10:17.
 - “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” 1 Timothy 4:16.
 - “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” Titus 2:1.
 - “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him” 2 John 1:10.


- c. Make sure that the teaching must be according to the Holy Bible and the teachings of the Apostles and the Tradition. Furthermore, it must be according to the Orthodox rites and the church history that we received.

Coptic Teachings References

Doctrines in our church are based on strong pillars across the ages, because they are based on:

1. The Holy Bible

There is no single dogma that has no origin in the two testaments. For example, for Baptism: “All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” 1 Corinthians 10:2. Referring to the Israelites that crossed the Red Sea after it was split and the water was like a wall on their right and on their left and the cloud that overshadowed them.



And in the New Testament: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
Matthew 28:19.

2. The Church Tradition

Several doctrines were formed as a result of the early church fathers defending the faith against heresies. For example, the doctrine of the “Mother of God” came after the church faced the Nestorian heresy that said that the human nature of Christ was separated from His divine nature. And others like Eutyches who said that Christ said that His human nature was swallowed up and dissolved in His divine nature or Sabellius who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. As a result the church father wrote the creed to confirm that we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God in truth and in nature and that we are sons of God by adoption.

3. The Sayings of the Fathers

Saint Augustine said, “We receive the Holy Bible from the church, the Fathers explain it to us and we see it lived by the saints”.

4. The Orthodox Creed

We believe in One God, three different persons or hypostasis of the same essence of one God. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. Catholic meaning “universal” and apostolic meaning “founded on the commission of Christ to the Apostles”. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age.

5. The Commentaries of the Contemporary Fathers

For example, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, who had been teaching since the 1950’s, first in Sunday School as Nazeer Gayed, then as the Bishop of Christian Education for 10 years and then as the Patriarch through his sermons and books for 40 years. Many priests and bishops learned from him. And Now Pope Tawadros II is following the same course through his sermons, writings and research that support our Orthodox doctrine.

Our Coptic Orthodox Doctrine Includes:

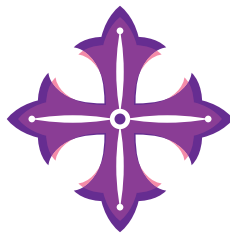
- a. Principles of sound Christian faith (One God, Trinity, holy church, resurrection, the life of the coming age...)
- b. The correct Orthodox doctrine as we received it from our Fathers
- c. The daily behavior of the members of the body of Christ that witness for Him.

Conclusion

It is important that we stay vigilant by:

- Examining ourselves every day.
- Regular confession and seeking guidance from our father of confession.
- Connection with the church to become an active member in the church.
- Studying of the church teachings.

May God grant us a holy life that we may, by His grace, have a share in His kingdom through the intercessions of St. Mary and the prayers of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and all his partners in the apostolic ministry, the reverend bishops.
Amen.



The Book Of Acts

Chapters 1-12

Introduction:

The four Gospels and the Book of Acts are considered the historical books of the New Testament. In the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was the leader who worked in and through the disciples when:

- He established the church
- He told them what to say in their preaching
- He gave them the authority to perform miracles
- He bestowed upon them special gifts such as speaking in tongues, teaching and prophesying

The writer of the Book of Acts is St. Luke, whose name means “bearer of light” or “enlighten”. He was a physician from Antioch. He was also a painter and was the first to paint a picture of St. Mary. He addressed his book to Theophilus, which means “lover of God”.

The book of Acts is the only book that does not end with the word “Amen” because the works of the Holy Spirit and the spread of the Church will continue until the end of ages.

Chapter 1 - The beginning of the Church

1- Ascension (1-11)

- Jesus presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by His disciples. This was to prove His resurrection and that He is not an imaginary spirit.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples everything concerning the Church orders and sacraments. These were handed over from generation to generation until it came to us. This is what we call “tradition”.

2- Gathering of the disciples in the Upper Room (12-14)

- Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven 40 days after His Resurrection. He promised His disciples that He will come again, and He will send them the Holy Spirit, Who will stay with them and with the Church forever.



3- Choosing of Matthias instead of Judas Iscariot (15-26)

- Judas was counted as one of the disciples; but his heart changed and he became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
- The disciples asked the guidance of the Holy Spirit and prayed before choosing lots to select another disciple.
- The name Matthias, who was the disciple picked, means “Gift of God”.

Chapter 2 - The Holy Spirit

1- The descent of the Holy Spirit and speaking with tongues (1-13)

- The day of the Pentecost was the Feast of the Harvest when Jews from different places and different languages came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.
- That day, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. The descent of the Holy Spirit was accompanied with the rushing of a strong wind, which attracted the attention of those who were gathered to celebrate the feast, and the Tongues of Fire, which signify the presence of God.





2- The effect of St. Peter's sermon (14- 41)

- St. Peter stood very courageously witnessing for Christ. He started with Joel and David's prophecies, which spoke about the coming of the Messiah who would be crucified, die and rise from the dead.
- The Holy Spirit worked in St. Peter's sermon and three thousand men were baptized. He explained to them that in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, they have to repent, be baptized.

3- The first Church (42-47)

- "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).
- Breaking bread from house to house was a chance to share the meals with the needy.

Chapter 3 - Jesus is glorified

1- Healing the lame man (1-10)

- The first miracle mentioned in the Book of Acts was performed by the apostles as our Lord promised.
- St. Peter and St. John had nothing to give to the lame man but they were very rich through Christ's Name. They gave the man a new life and he began to thank and praise God.

2- St. Peter and St. John witness to the Lord (11 – 26)

- God alone is worthy to be glorified. In every success, we should always glorify Him as St. Peter and St. John did after healing the lame man. We must not steal God's glory for ourselves.
- One of the Church fathers once said, "There is no gift without increase except for that without thanksgiving"

Chapter 4 - The courage the Apostles

1- St. Peter and St. John witness before the High Priests (1-22)

- Although the miracle was very clear, the Sadducees refused the Word and stood against St. Peter and St. John, but there were many who believed in Christ and the number of these believers was about five thousand.
- On the next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as the High Priests (the Sanhedrin) gathered together at Jerusalem. These were the same people who judged Christ.
- The disciples were asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" St. Peter responded saying that only through Jesus' name can one perform such miracles and wonders.

2- St. Peter and St. John pray with the people (22- 31)

- They prayed the second psalm, followed by personal prayers asking God for power and help to complete their mission.
- The place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, they were able to speak the Word of God with boldness.

3- Communal life in the church (31- 37)

- The believers were of one heart and one accord.

Chapter 5 – Beware... do not lie to the Holy Spirit

1- Ananias and Sapphira's lie (1-11)

- Their sin was not that they did not give their money, for God does not force anyone to give. Their sin was that they lied to the Holy Spirit. They did not give out of their love for God, for the poor or for the Church but rather to look good in front of the disciples and all the believers.
- They thought they could hide something from God, so their punishment was severe. We must not forget God's justice. Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the people but they could not deceive God.



2- St. Peter's shadow heals the sick (12-16)

- They brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and the shadow of St. Peter would heal them. Yet many of the people were afraid to follow the disciples because they feared the Romans and the Jews.

3- The disciples in the same prison and Gamaliel's advice (17 – 40)

- Satan filled the heart of the Sadducees and the High Priests with envy, while the disciples and the believers were full of the Holy Spirit.
- The Lord sent His angel to open the prison doors. God never leaves His children. He is a compassionate Father, but sometimes He allows them to share in carrying the cross for His glory. When people see their steadfastness and their love to God, they will believe.
- The disciples felt that suffering for Christ was a great gain and that they were not worthy of it. Whoever will suffer with Him will be glorified with Him. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.
- The descent to the Holy Spirit on the disciples and their transformation had many fruits; such as faith and trust in God's promises and true peace and joy despite sufferings.

Chapter 6- The first deacons

1- Seven deacons are chosen (1 – 8)

- A problem arose among the believers between the Greek Jews and the Hebrew Jews because unintentionally, no one was taking care of the Greek widows.
- They elected deacons, men with good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and "They laid hands on them". This is the same ritual that the Church follows for appointing deacons.
- St. Stephen, one of the seven deacons, was full of the Holy Spirit and did many miracles. He also witnessed for Christ in the Council of the Jews.



2- St. Stephen's wisdom (9-15)

- The synagogue was a place of worship without the offering of sacrifices.
- St. Stephen was debating with the Jews in many of their synagogues to teach them the true faith and enlighten their way.

Chapter 7- The first martyr

1- St. Stephen's speech (1-53)

- St. Stephen started his speech by addressing the Jews in a Christian manner with a heart full of love. He ended his life as a good witness to Christ.
- He told them that when people are more privileged; their judgment is greater if they deviate from the right way.
- He mentioned Abraham, who was an honourable father for them and how he obeyed God and left his people and his land to go to a land that he did not know. He believed in God's promises and trusted that He will give this land to him and to his children.
- He mentioned Moses, who led the Israelites from the land of slavery to the Promised Land. He spoke with God and received the commandments and the Law, yet they rebelled against him many times with their hearts, minds and deeds.
- St. Stephen rebuked them for their disobedience. He told them that they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in their hearts and ears.
- Circumcision is a symbol of cutting out sin from our lives. This was a covenant between God and His people. But they were circumcised in their bodies only and their hearts were away from God and full of evil and impurities.

2- St. Stephen stoned (54-60)

- After his speech, they stoned him and he saw the Heavens open.
- Although St. Stephen was responsible for the service of the widows, he knew the Holy Scripture well and was able to debate with the Jews.
- St. Stephen loved our Lord Jesus Christ and followed Him, forgiving those who stoned him as Jesus forgave those who crucified Him.



Chapter 8 - The persecution of the Church leads to its growth

1- The Church is persecuted and the believers are scattered (1-8)

- Saul stood against the church, entering every house and dragging out men and women, committing them to prison. As a result, the believers were scattered to Judea and Samaria. They were preaching Christianity and spreading the Word, fulfilling the Lord's plan before His ascension to witness in Judea and Samaria.
- The power of the Church increased and the disciples became more bold and courageous. They rejoiced and did not fear tribulations.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ empowered His disciples with miracles. The people trusted the Word of God and experienced true joy.

2- What did Simon do? (9-25)

- As with Simon the sorcerer, the devil can deceive those who are far away from God. When God's Word is in us, it enlightens our way and disperses the darkness, revealing Satan's deceiving acts.
- Although Simon the sorcerer was baptized, his thoughts were evil. He wanted to buy the gift of the laying of the hands to serve his corrupt intentions.

3- Philip and the Eunuch (26-40)

- God sent Philip to help the Eunuch when he wanted to understand the Word of God.
- The Eunuch's faith was not enough. To become Christian, he had to be baptized by Philip.
- Philip was taken by the Holy Spirit to Azotus, 20 miles away from Gaza, where God wanted him to serve.



Chapter 9 - Saul becomes Paul

1- The Lord calls Saul (1-9)

- One of the greatest examples of transformation in the Holy Bible is Saul of Tarsus who changed from the biggest enemy of the Church to becoming the apostle of the Gentiles.
- Saul was a Jew from Tarsus, a Pharisee with a Roman citizenship. He learned at the feet of Gamaliel, a famous Jewish teacher.
- As a Pharisee, he studied the Law and the Prophets which helped him later on in his mission. His zeal for Judaism made him hate Christianity. He guarded the clothes of the men who stoned St. Stephen, consenting to his death. He wreaked havoc on the Church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.
- After the Lord's call, he discovered that all what he learned in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He believed that Christianity was the true religion and he started to defend the Christian faith with great enthusiasm until his death.
- Although Saul was persecuting the believers, the Lord considered this persecution to be towards Him personally.

2- Saul is baptized and persecuted by the Jews (10-30)

- The scales were like a hindrance on Saul's eyes that prevented him from seeing and knowing that Jesus was the true God.
- Satan was surprised that the tool that he used to attack the Church (Saul) became the same tool that the Church used to attack him (Paul). So he moved the Jews to kill him but Saul was growing in strength.

3- The Church's growth and its empowerment by miracles (31-40)

- In spite of the tribulations and persecutions, the Church grew. God gave the apostles the gift of performing miracles to support their preaching that Jesus Christ is God. St. Peter healed the lame man and raised Tabitha from the dead.
- St. Peter always prayed before performing any miracle to ask God for power.



Chapter 10 - A call for change

1- Who was Cornelius? (1-8)

- After the spread of the Word of God from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, God wanted to spread His Word to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were always rejected by the Jews and treated as dogs. Therefore the Jews refused to share the faith with the Gentiles before they became Jewish first. But God sent His Son for everyone who is willing to accept Him.
- Cornelius was a centurion but he loved and feared God although he did not know Him. He was a devout man who gave alms generously to people. God was pleased with his faith because he sought Him with all his heart and loved all people. Whoever loves others is not far from the kingdom of God.


2- St. Peter's vision (9-16)

- It was not easy for St. Peter as a Jew to understand that God would accept the Gentiles. So God revealed to him His acceptance to them.
- The unclean animals resemble the Gentiles in Judaism but Christianity accepts all people.
- God did not come for a special nation but He came for the whole world.

3- Cornelius' faith (17-48)

- God prevented the interaction between the Jews and the Gentiles because He did not want the Jews to worship idols and eat unclean animals as the Gentiles did. But after God's salvation for the whole world, He sanctified all the believers in the Church.
- Peter spoke about how God loved the world, was incarnate, crucified, died and rose from the dead to save the whole world. We have to witness for the risen Christ to feel His power in our life.
- God declared the descending of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles. He granted them





the gift of speaking with tongues, as He did with His disciples. This was to prove that God accepts all people, whether Jewish or Gentile.

Chapter 11 - The Son of Encouragement

1- The Jews' opposition to the acceptance of the Gentiles (1-18)

- The Jews heard about what St. Peter did in Jerusalem and the acceptance of the Gentiles. They contended with him and tried to make circumcision a requirement for the Gentiles in order to become Christians.

2- The result of the scattering (19-21)

- The Church continued to go through tribulations and persecution, which led to the scattering of the believers. Those who were scattered after the persecution traveled everywhere preaching the Word.

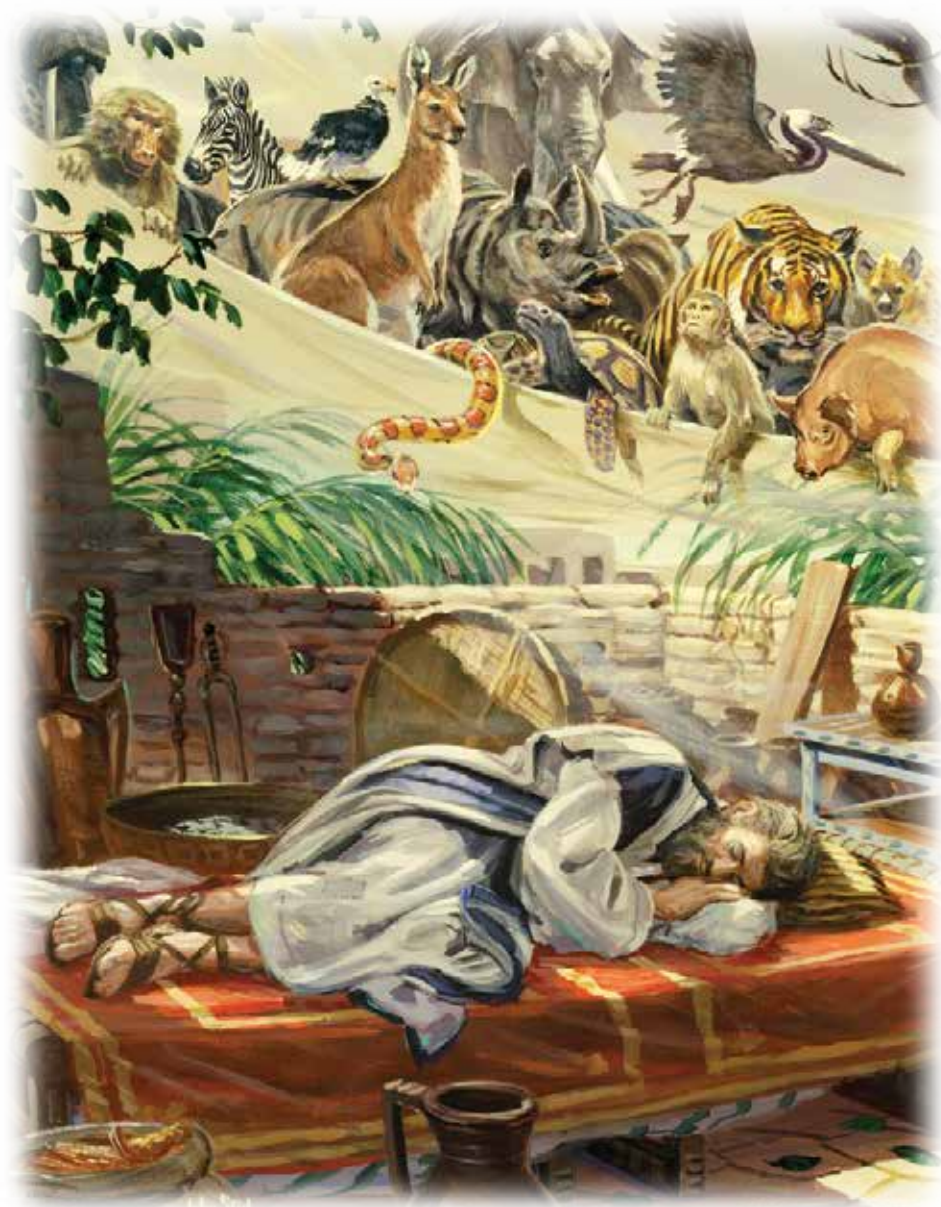
3- The ministry in Italy (22-30)


- The first Gentiles' church was instituted in Antioch. The believers were first named "Christian" in Antioch.
- Barnabas, whose name means "the Son of Encouragement", was a preacher and a good man filled with the Holy Spirit and many believed because of him. He was St. Mark's uncle and was the one who introduced St. Paul to the disciples and accompanied him during his mission.
- He was sent by the Church in Jerusalem to outreach the Church in Antioch since it was going through some difficulties.
- Our good behaviour can attract people to Christ. Actions speak louder than words.

Chapter 12 - Peter sleeping peacefully

1- St. Peter in prison (1-5)

- St. James was the first apostle martyred.



- 
- In times of tribulations, we must pray as the first Church did when St. Peter was in prison.

2- How did Peter get out of the prison? (6-17)

- In prison, St. Peter was not afraid; he went into a deep peaceful sleep until the angel came and struck his side to wake him up. Peter was transformed from feelings of fear and denial to feelings of comfort and peace. It is his trust in the Lord's power that gave him this peace.
- The disciples thought that it was St. Peter's angel who knocked on the door. They thought he was martyred.
- James the Son of Alphaeus is also referred to as "the Lord's brother". He was the bishop of Jerusalem's council and the writer of the Epistle of St. James. He is not James the son of Zebedee who was the first to be martyred.

3- What happened to Herod (18-25)

- The people of Tyre and Sidon shouted saying to Herod, "The voice of a god and not of a man!". Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.
- When God gives us success, we must remember to thank Him and not attribute it to our own efforts. Herod was the reason for the Church's destruction, but God always took care of her growth. Herod died but the Church spread to the whole world.
- We must put our life in God's hands and not trouble ourselves with problems, so we can feel His peace and comfort.
- The Word of God will grow and multiply in His Church forever.





The Orthodox Faith

The church is the consecrated house of God; it is also the community of the believers with the angels and the saints. God dwells in it in His glory. In the church we meet to partake in the Holy Communion to unite with God. As St. Irenaeus said: "the church is the gift of God to the world" from it God smells the aroma of joy and satisfaction through the prayers and praises.

The Coptic Orthodox Church is the church of dogmas, straight faith. It is an Apostolic Church a church of Tradition. The church kept all the doctrines and the rituals that she received and transmitted them from generation to generation.

How do we understand and live our orthodoxy?


I. Understand the Doctrine

The word "Orthodox" means straight faith. The Orthodox is the one who chose not to deviate from the way that our Lord Jesus started and was followed by the apostles and was given to the Forefathers and lived by the saints. This was given to us and will be transmitted by the grace of God to other generations.

We heard about Arius, Nestorius, Macedonius and other heretics who went astray from the right Christian teachings. The church defended the faith in the different ecumenical councils and the right teachings spread to the whole world.

What is the meaning ecumenical?

Ecumenical means universal. Bishop from all around the world attended the



ecumenical councils, it is noted that the head of each council was from the church of Alexandria, for example:

Pope Cyril I (The pillar of faith) is the one who stood against Nestorius
St. Athanasius the Apostolic confronted Arius; he was a deacon at that time. They told him "Athanasius the world is against you" to which he replied "And I am against the world".

From the early history the church of Alexandria has always and is still defending the church dogma. So it is normal that the descendants of those heroes should understand the dogma using all their writings that was left for us as reference and guide. In our church each and every teaching has a historical background that was explained and lived by our saintly fathers.

A. Orthodox in his faith

The Coptic Orthodox lives by the Orthodox Creed that represents the true faith "We believe in one God.." He believes in one God 3 persons and one Essence

The Father – No one had seen

The Son – Begotten of the Father before all ages (we saw, we heard and we touched)

The Holy Spirit- Proceeds from the Father and teaches us to worship the Holy Trinity.

The Coptic Orthodox believes in Jesus Christ the true God who was incarnate from St. Mary for our salvation (fully God and fully human). Through His death and resurrection He saved us from the original sin and from death and He renewed our nature that was corrupted as a result of the sin.


One church - one body with our Lord Jesus Christ the head of the church.

Only church - no others, as was desired by our Lord Jesus (that they all be one)

Holy church - through the sacraments and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit

Catholic church - inviting all to the faith (one baptism)

Apostolic church - received the teachings from the apostles.



“That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” John 17:21

B. Orthodox in the Sacraments

The Orthodox starts his eternal life with the sacraments of Baptism and Myron, abide in it through the sacraments of Repentance and Confession (obtain absolution and guidance from the father of confession) and the Holy Eucharist.

Get married through the holy sacrament of Matrimony. Receive healing in the sacrament of the Unction of the sick. When he prays the Lord prayer “Our Father...” his heart longs to be in God’s presence and when he says “give us this day our daily bread” he wishes for the bread of life (the Body and Blood of Christ) not the earthly food.

C. Orthodox in the Liturgy and Altar


Our Orthodox worship is centered on the altar. **“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat” Hebrews 13:10**

Around the altar there is incense that represents our prayers, praises and petitions.

“And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.” Revelation 8:4

It is an extension to the faith of the first Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they lived before the time of the Law but they knew the altar and took the power from it. “Then God said to Jacob, **“Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” Genesis 35:1**

The Coptic Orthodox rejoices when he enters the church and sees the altar and the bosom of the Father behind it that reveals to him the love of God the Father the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.



The Coptic Orthodox lives the life of prayers; he calls on the name of Jesus all the time “Lord Jesus have mercy on me”. The liturgical prayers include all the components of prayer: thanksgiving, praises, repentance, petitions and supplications, relationship with the saints, meditations on redemption and salvation and looking for the second coming, during the liturgy we also pray for all people.

The Liturgy is:

An open bible explained and simplified for the congregation

A heavenly celebration with God amongst His people

A school of prayer for the beginners

A review of all the church’s dogmas

It teaches us repentance, humility and holiness

D. Orthodox in Fasting

Fasting does not mean abstaining from food only, but also includes abstaining from sins (e.g. gossips, anger, stubbornness and others). In the Coptic Orthodox Church fasting is to abstain from food for a certain period of time and then eat vegetarian food (free from animal proteins or fat and without any dairy products). Most important fasting gives us the opportunity to control the body and to be filled spiritually.

The church put for us two different types of fasting.

Communal Fasting

These are fixed period of fasting for all believers.

There are many examples in the bible of communal fasting (Esther 4, Jonah 3, Nehemiah 9:1, Ezra 8:31, Joel 2:12-17, Acts 13:2-3 and 27:21)

Individual Fasting

Fasted by individual under special circumstances with the guidance of the father of confession.



The benefits of Fasting:

Teaches us humility and repentance

Gives us victory in spiritual wars and helps us defeat the devil

Gives us more time to worship and live a spiritual life.

Helps us to have a stronger will to overcome the bodily instincts

Helps us to have more self-control

Adam and Eve food in the Garden of Eden was vegetarian. In general vegetarian food is healthier.

II. Live the Dogma

We believe in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We declare it every time we do the sign of the cross (the Father in heaven sent us His Son who incarnate from St. Mary the Virgin for our salvation)

In the Good Friday when we read the gospel of the six hour “there was darkness on the earth” the church turns off all the lights, the church wants us to live this moment with the Christ hanging on the cross.

According to our Orthodox faith there is no salvation with new birth through baptism. **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. John 3:5**

The sources of the church doctrines

1. Holy Bible
2. Church Tradition: put together by the apostles and the church forefathers
3. Ecclesiastical law: according to the ecumenical councils and local councils
4. The teaching of the apostles (The Didascalla) 39 chapters
5. The sayings of the Fathers

The benefits of the church doctrines

1. It proves that God is not the author of confusion but of peace (order)
2. It unites all Christians “that they may be one” John 17:11
3. It takes us closer to the life of the early church
4. It keeps all doctrines and rituals to be transmitted to the next generations
5. It allows us to use our five senses in the worship
6. It is a way of learning
7. It makes us live the different events that are in the Holy Bible and the Tradition

Is doctrine in the Holy Bible?

In the Old Testament

See: Exodus 25, Numbers 12, 1 Kings 18

In the New Testament

See: Luke 2:32, Luke 4:16, Luke 2:22

Doctrines instituted by Christ that we practice in the New Testament

See: Matthew 28:19, John 20:22, Matthew 26:26-28

Doctrines that we received from the Apostles


See: 1 Corinthians 1:23, Philippians 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:2

III. Loving to the church hymns and praises

David the psalmist said: Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, and in Your righteousness they are exalted.” Psalm 89:15-16

In hymns and praises we join the heavenly hosts in their praises.

The more you know the hymns and praises the more you will enjoy your presence in



the church and you will be able to understand and participate in the different rituals. We do not have to memorize all the hymns but do not waste a chance when you can learn a hymn to nourish your desire to participate in the church praises.

What do we do during the long hymns in the different occasions? We can get bored specially if we don't understand or participate?
Use this time for meditation and prayer or try to understand the meaning of the hymn.

Praises and Hymns, is this a commandment in the Holy Bible?

Ezra 3:11 • 1Chronicles 13:8 • Psalm 33:1 • Psalm 147:1 • Psalm 135:3 • Hebrews 13:15 • Acts 3:8 • Matthew 26:30 • Ephesians 5:19

Characteristics of the Coptic Orthodox Praises

1. Praise the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

It is not just meditations but also joyful repetition of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ like the Psalis

Saturday Psali: Remembering your Holy Name brings joy to our souls O my Lord Jesus Christ my good Savior.

Sunday Psali: I sought after you from the depth of my heart, My Lord Jesus help me.

Friday Psali: Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a sign to His servants, who do fear him

2. Communal spirit in praise

In general we use the plural terms "we" instead of "I"

For example we say: "Amen, amen, amen your death O Lord we proclaim" and not "I proclaim"

3. Praises explains the faith

All church hymns and praises include deep meaning related to the church and Christian faith

4. Praises involves humility and repentance



The words most used in praises are:

Amen: continuous faith

Alleluia: joy over God's goodness to us

Keriyalison (Lord have mercy): a continuous request of God mercy and forgiveness

The different tunes used in Praises

1. Kiahk tune: during the month of Kiahk
2. Joyful tune: during the different feasts, the monthly commemoration of the feast of the annunciation, nativity and resurrection on the 29th of each Coptic month except for the months of Tobah and Amshir
3. Fasting tune: during the Lent and Ninevah's fast
4. Palm Sunday tune: during Palm Sunday and Feast of the cross (17 to 19 Tobah and 10 Baramhat)
5. Sad tune: during the Holy Week and funeral except during the Holy 50 days
6. Annual tune: during the rest of the year except on the occasions mentioned above

IV. Regular prayer from the Agpeya

No doubt individual and personal prayers are important for every Christian person.


“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” Matthew 3:3

Communal prayers are equally important that is why the church put together a communal system of prayers in the prayers of the Agpeya.

What does Agpeya mean?

The word “Agp” means hour, Agpeya is the book of church the day and night prayers. These are the prayers that the fathers of the church put together in the first century with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Individual prayer might be restricted in petitions, but when we pray from the Agpeya our prayer would include: Thanksgiving, humility, praises, glorification, petitions



and other... as the Apostle said: **“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men” 1 Timothy 2:1**

The use of the psalms in prayers is a biblical commandment

1 Corinthians 14:26 • Ephesians 5:19 • Colossians 3:16

Some example of petitions that are found in Psalms

Psalm 52:9 • Psalm 6:1 • Psalm 19:1 • Psalm 109:26

St. John Chrysostom said: “Prayer with psalms make earth heaven and people angels and adorn the whole life”

St. Athanasius said: “Praise with psalms is a therapy to the soul”

St. Isaac the Syrian said: “Let there be love without cease to recite the Psalms, for it is the nourishment of the Spirit”

Generally speaking... You will find in the psalms many prayers that you will find useful in time of need for example if you have a big problem you will find the appropriate prayers for your situation. If you are in sin they will teach your repentance.

When we pray the Psalms, we talk to God with His own language. Isn't it best for a lawyer when defending a defendant to leave his own words and speak the judge with the provisions of the law because the judge is committed to it! Likewise Psalms has prayers including God's justice and love for human beings and His mercy and promises.

Psalms also include praises, which is the language of the angels.
Psalms are a good material of spiritual meditations.



Border Guards

The Coptic Orthodox church that St. Mark instituted in Egypt brought forth many heroes who defended the faith for the whole world. As the verse said: "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." Revelation 3:11


There was an era for the councils in the history of the Christian church. This was a very important period of the church history. In which the Creed was written and many important church decisions were taken. The idea of councils is well known even before Christianity, we see the Jewish council the Sanhedrin who consulted to kill our Lord Jesus and also the councils who judges the disciples.

The types of councils:

Local councils: In which the Bishop meets with the priests and deacons in the local dioceses to discuss important subjects. All the councils that were held in the first three centuries are considered local councils.

General councils: In which the Patriarch meets with the bishops, like the meeting of the Holy Synod in the Coptic Orthodox Church under the leadership of his Holiness Pope Tawadross II.

Ecumenical councils: In which all the bishops from the whole world to discuss general church issues. Ecumenical councils are held when there is a heresy or a new teaching that can lead to the split of the church.



The 3 councils to which those rules apply are the Council of Nicea, the Council of Constantinople and the 1st Council of Ephesus.

All the churches from East and West approved those three councils. They followed their Creed and their decisions. In the liturgy those councils are mentioned in the absolution of the servants and the commemoration of the saints. They are also mentioned in the praises (Annual and Kiahk)

There are other councils not accepted by the Coptic Orthodox Church


1- Ephesus 2nd Council

Not approved because it accepted Eutyches who claimed that our Lord Jesus Christ had one mixed nature

2- Council of Chalcedon

The Church considers this council illegal because it excommunicated the Pope Dioscorus the 25th Patriarch of Alexandria in his absence after he was forcibly prevented from going out to attend the second session held two days earlier, which confirms the existence of a pre-existing anti-Pope agenda. This made some assert that the Council had a political objective under the guise of religion to eliminate the authority of the chair of Alexandria. Where the assembly claimed that the Pope Dioscorus believes in Eutyches' heresy, despite that he confirmed that he rejected this heresy in the first session. There was an intervention of the emperor to support the Pope of Rome and the believers in the two natures of Christ (Divine and Human nature)

This council approved Tome of Leo, it is a letter sent by Pope Leo I explaining the position of the Papacy in matters of Christology. The Coptic Orthodox Church rejected this letter because it was leaning to Nestorian's teaching that was rejected by the Ecumenical Councils because it includes the sentence "in two natures after the union" As a result there was a big schism in the churches and they were divided into Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches.



A- Non-Chalcedonian churches include the Coptic Orthodox church, the Ethiopian church, the Nicene church, the church of Jerusalem the churches of Asia Minor (except the church of Constantinople) and also the church in Eretria, the Syrian church, the church in India and the Armenian church.

B- Chalcedonian Churches include the Roman churches and the church of Constantinople.


“Insert a diagram of the history of the church Schism”

The Council of Nicea year 325 AD

Arius began to teach heresies while he was still a deacon during the papacy of Pope Peter the Seal of martyrs the 17th Pope. Who tried to correct him from his teachings but he refused. As a result the Pope prevented him from practicing the deacon’s service and teachings.

After the martyrdom of Pope Peter, his disciple Achillas became the patriarch; Arius who pretended to return from his wrong ideas deceived him, so he ordained him a priest. After his departure Pope Alexandros (19th Pope) set on the throne of St. Mark. He wrote to King Constantine asking him to hold an ecumenical council to decide on Arius’s heresy. King Constantine sent a message to all bishops calling them to a council in the city of Nicea. 318 bishops attended, Pope Alexandros also attended accompanied by the deacon Athanasius the Pope’s disciple who was in his early twenties at that time.

Arius and his followers also attended, the council was held in year 325 AD. The hero of this council was the deacon Athanasius who stood against Arius and answered all heresies. When Arius could not answer he objected the presence of Athanasius in the council because he was just a deacon but the king declined this objection.



Arius explained his heresy saying: "The Son is not equal to the Father in eternity and in essence" he considered the Son a god who was created and not equal to the Father. And that the Son is a mediator between the Father (the true God) and the humanity because it is not appropriate that God communicate with His creation. So God created the Son for our sake. All the attendees refused these sayings.

Arius tried to use some verses from the Bible that point to Jesus' human nature and tried to apply them to his divinity for example:

"My Father is greater than I" John 14:28

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Matthew 24:36

Athanasius answered him explaining that our Lord Jesus Christ was talking to the Father as a human but this does not cancel His Divinity.

The Creed was put together from "We believe in One God Till His kingdom has no end". The Council rejected Arius' heresy and signed on the Creed.

They excommunicated Arius and his followers. The king ordered Arius to be exiled and burned all his books and anyone who would refer to them will be put to death. A miracle in the council.

The number of bishops who attended the council was 318, but every time they were trying to count them they found them 319. The fathers of the church explained that this was because our Lord Jesus was amongst them.

The council of Constantinople 381 AD

Pope Athanasius fought against Arius' heresy for years.

At the end of 4th century during the kingdom of the Christian Emperor Theodosius the



Great (who was called the “Orthodox King”) other heresies came up.


Pope Timothy

Pope Timothy was called the “poor” because he donated all what he had to the poor. He also exposed the intrigue of Arius’ followers in the council of Tire in year 334, when they brought a sinful woman to accuse Pope Athanasius that he did the sin with her. Pope Timothy stood up (he was a priest and Pope Athanasius disciple at the time) and asked the woman if it was him who did the sin with her, she replied that yes it was him. Thus the innocence of Pope Athanasius was revealed. The wisdom of Timothy -who became the pope afterward- was known to everyone.

One of the most important heresies that appeared at the time was the heresy of Macedonius, the Bishop of Constantinople, who was against the Holy Spirit and denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, but he did not deny the divinity of Christ. He said that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct Person, but is a creature less than the Son because he takes from the Son (John 16:14) and does not speak of himself (John 16:13) and He proceed from the Father **“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things” John 14:26**

The fathers answered Macedonius “All things from the Father, through the Son by the Holy Spirit” The Father does everything through the Word in the Holy Spirit.
The council decisions

The Bishops tried to explain to Macedonius his error and to convince him of the wrong teaching. They told him: We only have one Spirit, the Spirit of God... The Spirit of God is nothing other than His life, and if we say that His life was created then He is not alive... if He is not alive this is a great mistake. But he refused and insisted on his teaching so the council excommunicated him. The emperor exiled him. The fathers confirmed that the Holy Spirit is the 3rd Person of the Trinity and that He is equal to the Father and to the Son. The second part of the Creed was completed “Yes we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life who proceeds from he Father.... till the end of the Creed.



The Council was held in the city of Constantinople under the leadership of St. Milatteos the Patriarch of Nicea. Pope Timothy the Pope of Alexandria also attended. The total number of bishops who attended was 150.

1st Council in Ephesus 431 AD

Was held to discuss the heresy of Nestorius - the patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius was preoccupied in fighting the Arius' teachings, which denies the divinity of the Son and His equality to the Father. He continued to defend the Logos and that He, like the Father, does not die and does not suffer, so He chose a man from his mother's womb and settled and dwelt in him and made him a means of salvation. He said that the only Son did not die and was not born from a woman. But the one born was the man Jesus Christ, in whom the Logos dwelt since his creation in the womb of his mother by the Holy Spirit. That is why
He said the Our Lord Jesus is two persons of two natures and two essence
He said that we should not call St. Mary the Mother of God
He reproach the worship of the Magi to the child Jesus

Because of his position he began to spread his corrupted teachings everywhere using some of the bishops and priests.

When Pope Cyril "the pillar of faith" heard about his heresy he wrote letters to rebuke them and to confirm the correct teaching. He sent him many letters to Nestorius to try to correct his believes nevertheless, Nestorius refused them.

Which required the calling for an ecumenical council in Ephesus in the year 431 AD with an invitation from Emperor Theodosius the younger and was attended by 200 bishops.

Pope Cyril attempts with Nestorius in the year 430 AD


The pope sent many letters to Nestorius, but he did not accept the discussion. He was furious and sent a letter to the Pope full of indignation rebuking him. The Pope's messengers spent a month trying to meet Nestorius or to speak to him in vain, so they returned to Alexandria.

The Pope sent letters to the Emperor's wife and to Pulcheria, Archaria ad Marina his sisters to explain to them the true faith. So that Nestorius would not influence Emperor Theodosius the younger who was his friend. He also wrote letters to Pope John the patriarch of Antioch who was supporting Nestorius. He wrote a letter to Nestorius asking him to return to the true faith and to sign of the letter that included church punishments. He also sent 2 letters to the monks and priests in Constantinople. Nestorius refused to sign the letter and preached against it with the help of some bishops in Antioch.

There was a division in the church- Rome, Jerusalem and Asia Minor were with Pope Cyril and Antioch with Nestorius.

The situation became more complex when Nestorius provoked the Emperor against Pope Cyril because he sent letter to his wife and his sisters without his permission. The Emperor sent the Pope a letter of strident tone and called the bishops to hold an ecumenical council this was on 19 November 430 AD.

Pope Cyril went with 50 bishops, Anba Shenouda the Archimandrite, Anba Boctor El-Souhagui the abbot of the Pachomian's monasteries, Dioscorus the dean of the Catechetical school of Alexandria and the bishop of Jerusalem went with them. The bishop of Rome sent two bishops and a priest supported with a letter to do and follow the rules of the Pope of Alexandria.



Nestorius also went with 140 bishops and armed men thinking that he would scare the assembly so they would not take decisions against him.

The council sessions

The sessions started in St. Mary's church in Ephesus on 17 July 431 AD on the day of the Pentecost. 200 bishops attended, and from Nestorius followers Count Candidian representing the Emperor

The delay of the Antiochene delegation

When the Antiochene delegation was late; the bishops saw that the opening session should be delayed until they arrival.

In the meantime, there were talks with Nestorius to convince him to return to the true faith but in vain.

The delay was for about 16 days because of the length of the distance and horses sickness. The Antiochene delegation sent two bishops along with their advice to the assembly not to delay the meetings. This was because John of Antioch did not want to attend and did not want to take part in the judgment against his friend Nestorius.

The start of the council sessions

1. Pope Cyril was chosen to be the leader of the council
2. The council sent a note to excommunicate Nestorius
3. Nestorius did not want to attend (he was called 3 times) as he did see a need for him to attend. Finally he said that he would not attend unless his friend John the Patriarch of Antioch attends.
4. The first session was held, the decisions of the council of Alexandria that Pope Cyril put against Nestorius heresy were read. The council agreed on them and decided to excommunicate Nestorius.

The council decisions

The council decided that the Mystery of the incarnation is based on the union between the Divinity and the humanity of Logos the eternal hypostasis without separation or mingling or change.

St. Mary is the Mother of God (the Theotokos)

The fathers put together the introduction of the Creed “we magnify you O Mother of true light...”

The people rejoiced when the council announced its decisions

Nestorius did not accept the judgment of the council and send to the king and to Candidian the emperor delegate.

How did the council decisions reached the emperor?

When the fathers saw that the Emperor’s representative was working in all ways to prevent the decisions of the council to reach Constantinople. They thought of a way to deliver their message. They brought someone disguised as a beggar and were able to hide the letter in a hollow cane. Thus he managed to escape the siege and reached Dalmatius the ascetic whom the emperor revered for his sanctity and piety. Dalmatius went to the emperor and showed him the council decisions the emperor approved and signed them. The Council was then adjourned after they appointed Maximianus bishop of Constantinople to replace Nestorius.

The Fathers returned to their chairs, and the Pope to Alexandria his people received him with great joy.

The emperor exiled Nestorius to Mount Qusakam in Egypt, as people in Egypt were steadfast in their faith.

To this day, the Church continues to defend the true faith and the work of the Lord shows in the great teachings of the Church and the true faith

The Teacher Of Generations

H. H. Pope Shenouda III , The 117th Patriarch

The renewal movement in the church started in the era of Pope Cyril IV "Father or reform". He was the first to import the printing press, he established a school for the education of girls and another one to teach hand work. Pope Cyril V continued the renewal movement by giving special attention in ecclesiastical education (spiritual education) especially for children, with the help of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis the dean of the Theological Seminary.

Then came Pope Cyril VI who undertook a huge reform movement by ordaining 4 bishops who are considered leaders in church education: H.G. Bishop Athanasius (bishop of Bene Sweif), H.G. Bishop Shenouda (bishop of Christian education), H.G. Bishop Samuel (bishop of general and social service) and H.G. Bishop Ghrighorious (bishop of theological studies and scientific research).


Pope Shenouda's name was Nazeer Gayed before his ordination. He obtained his bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1947 from the Unirversity of Cairo.

He joined the Military University and graduated in 1948. Before he graduated from the University of Cairo he joined the Theological Seminary and graduated in 1949.

He became a monk in El-Suryan monastery (St. Mary's Monastery in Wadi El Natrun) and was given the name of Father Antonios El Suryani in the year 1954.

He lived in solitude for about 8 years in a cave about 12 Km away from the monastery. In 1962 H. H. Pope Cyril VI ordained him as Bishop Shenouda, the first bishop of Christian Education and assigned him to be the president of the Coptic Theological Seminary.





After the departure of Pope Cyril VI, the Altar ballot was conducted on 31 October 1971 and the selection process resulted in Bishop Shenouda becoming a new Pope. On November 14, 1971, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III was enthroned as the 117th Patriarch on the Holy Apostolic See of St. Mark.


Pope Shenouda And Church Education

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III focused his attention on the following areas during his papacy:

1. He paid special attention to educating the congregation through his weekly meetings in the Cathedral of St. Mark in Cairo and in Alexandria which were attended by thousands.
2. He was the editor-in-chief of the weekly Keraza magazine.
3. He was an elected member of the Journalists Syndicate.
4. He was the editor of the Sunday School magazine.
5. He published more than 120 books on a variety of important topics such as theology, church history, the Holy Bible, the service and different spiritual topics. Many bishops and the priests followed his example and gave special attention to the church teachings.
6. He was the first Patriarch to put together the rites of ordination of deaconesses.
7. He instituted 7 branches of the Theological Seminary throughout Egypt and abroad.
8. He founded many churches and dioceses in the countries of immigration.
9. He wrote the regulations of the Holy Synod in 1985.
10. He was the first Patriarch to be awarded four honorary Doctoral degrees in Theology.

Pope Dioscorus, The 25th Pope

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said that Pope Dioscorus the 25th pope had a lot of influence on him.




Dioscorus means “Lord of hosts”. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt. He succeeded St. Cyril the Pillar of Faith as Patriarch in the year 444 AD. When Empress Pulcheria failed to convince Pope Dioscorus to sign on “Tome of Leo” which wrongfully stated that Christ has two distinct and separate natures, she was furious. She told him: In my mother’s time there was a stubborn man like you, his name was John Chrysostom, don’t you know what happened to him as a result of his stubbornness? I see you will have the same fate.

Pope Dioscorus answered her bravely: “You also know what happened to your mother as a result of her persecution of this saint. How she suffered from a sickness that did not have any healing until she went and wept at his tomb. She cried and asked God for forgiveness and carried his body with great honor to Constantinople and the Lord was gracious to her and healed her. You can do with me whatever you wish.” The empress then slapped him on the face and two of his teeth fell out. She commanded him to be beaten, so the people of the court beat him furiously and they were plucking the hair of his beard. He endured the suffering saying “For Your sake we are killed all day long”. He took the hair and teeth that were knocked out and sent them to Alexandria saying, “This is the fruit of the faith”.

The Heresy of Nestorius

Nestorius stated that St. Mary gave birth to a normal man, and that God came down on that man later. His doctrine emphasized a distinction between the human and the divine persons of our Lord Jesus and that our Lord Jesus had two separate natures. Pope Cyril, the Pillar of Faith and Pope Dioscorus answered him and said, that our Lord Jesus is God the Word incarnate with complete humanity and complete divinity. And that His humanity and His divinity are united without mingling, confusion or alteration.

This is beyond the explanation of any language as St. Paul said: “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” 1 Timothy 2:16.



And as we say in the liturgy His divinity did not part from His humanity for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye.


The Holy Spirit sanctified St. Mary's womb so the Son born from her would not inherit the original sin. She gave birth to God incarnate, both natures were united in her womb from the very beginning of this miraculous conception. That is why the church calls her "the Mother of God".

"Tome of Leo" refers to a letter sent by Pope Leo I to the Council of Chalcedon explaining the position of the Papacy in matters of Christology. The text confessed that Christ had two natures and two wills. The council of Chalcedon accepted this letter but the non-Chalcedon churches (old oriental churches including our church, the church of Alexandria) rejected it.

When Emperor Marcian, who had great authority, wanted to interfere in church matters to weaken the position of Pope Dioscorus. Pope Dioscorus opposed him and his wife to protect the church against any wrong teachings. He endured the exile as a result.

When Emperor Marcian and his wife Empress Pulcheria saw that Pope Dioscorus would not deviate from his Orthodox belief they called for a council in the city of Chalcedon in the year 451 and 630 bishops attended. Pope Dioscorus said: "I am not changing the faith and do not accept to divide Christ and I repeat what the Forefathers said that Christ is God incarnate, He is God who took the form of a man. He is the Son of God which is why the two natures are united without mingling or confusion or alteration. This unity leads to the Oneness of the nature.

The Example of the Union of Iron and Fire: St., Cyril the Great used this analogy and so did St. Dioscorus. In the case of ignited iron, we do not say that there are two natures: iron and fire, but we say iron united with fire. Similarly, we speak about the



nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and we do not say “God and man”. In the union of iron with fire, the iron is not changed into fire or fire into iron. Both are united without mingling, confusion or alteration.

The Council of Chalcedon

The Chalcedonian bishops consulted and decided to hold a council in secret without the attendance of the judges or Pope Dioscorus in order to issue the decrees they wanted.

And to assure that Pope Dioscorus would not attend they put guards on the door of his house to prevent him from going out. At the end of this council they announced the removal of the episcopate from Pope Dioscorus and his removal from the service of priesthood. Pope Dioscorus had refused to sign on “Tome of Leo” that many bishops signed under pressure. He said, “if they cut off my hand I will not sign”.

When Pope Dioscorus learned the council’s decision, he was sad and felt that his ministry was not over yet, and that he must warn the entire world of the corruption of this council. They sent him the transcript of the council and he saw that most of the bishops signed it with the exception of the bishops from Egypt. He wrote on the four sides of the book “Whoever supports the decision of this council is excommunicated, along with any one who adds to the three ecumenical councils (Nicea, Ephesus and Constantinople) or changes any of the sayings of the fathers of those councils.” Some said that this is boldness from him and that he challenged the Emperor.

They let the Emperor know and he was angry and wanted to kill Pope Dioscorus. But they told him this never happened in any council before. So the Emperor exiled Pope Dioscorus to the Island of Gangra.

He departed on 7 Tout, in the year 451 AD in the Island of Gangra, where his body was laid.



St. Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

His Holiness also said that one of the contemporary saints that he admired was Archdeacon Habib Guirguis.

He was born in the year 1876 to a simple Christian family. He loved the Church and its teaching and he always wanted to see the Church grow. He set for himself a goal to see the Church back in her glory and to see her as the leader in teaching and enlightenment.

He also gave special attention to new generations. He served the Church all his life and he was a true witness for Christ. He departed in peace in the year 1951, at the age of 75 years.

The Leader

He led the teaching movement in the Church. He was a strong preacher and had great influence on those who listened to him

The Innovator

He established Sunday school throughout the whole country. He helped institute the Theological Seminary and established many charitable organizations. He issued El-Karma magazine, the Sunday school magazine, and wrote many theological books as well as many of the Church songs and poems.

The Patriot

He loved Egypt and its people very much. He had very good relations with the country officials and, through them, he was able to serve the church. He witnessed for Christ through his strong values and charitable deeds. He served the needy and took care of them without any discrimination.

The Saint

The Holy Synod, under the leadership of Pope Tawadros II, announced on the 20th June 2013 that the Church recognized the sainthood of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis. His name was added to the Commemoration of the Saints.





Deaconesses In Our Church

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III believed that the church needs deaconesses. The deaconess is not a priestly rank as there is no priesthood for women and no laying of hands. Ordination of deaconesses occurs after the prime raising of incense. Those recommended for this position stand in front of the Altar and the bishop prays from the Laws of the Apostles.

Her role in the church:


- Helps the priest during women baptism
- Outreaches and teaches the youth and older females
- Serves in Sunday school and the church daycare

St. John Chrysostom and Olympias the deaconess

Thanks to the instruction of her spiritual father St. John Chrysostom, the life of St. Olympias the deaconess became known in our church history. St. John Chrysostom found in her a good example of love to the poor, love of the ascetic life and prayer.

Olympias was born around year 368 AD into a wealthy family. Her grandfather Flavius Ablabius was able to become closer to king Theodosius, not because of his wealth or the honor of his family, but because of his own personal efforts. Rising through the ranks, he became governor of Constantinople. Olympias lost her parents when she was very young. Her uncle then took care of her. He was a pious Christian man and a friend of St. Gregory of Nazianzus.

Olympias grew in an atmosphere of luxury and pampering which is why St. John Chrysostom praised her in one of his letters. He said about her, "It was not easy for someone like her to live an ascetic life from her early youth with all the wealth she possessed and the relation of her family with the king's court." She knew how to bear responsibility in maturity with wisdom.



When Emperor Theodosius wanted her to marry one of his relatives she refused. The King ordered that all her properties be put under trusteeship until she reaches the age of 30.

She wrote a letter to thank the King that he took from her the burden of taking care of her money and properties, she also asked him to distribute her money to the needy and the poor. This letter left a great impression on the King. She went away to the East for four years then she came back to live a strong ascetic life. The King was impressed and returned to her all her properties in the year 391. Afterwards, she went to St. Nectarius the patriarch of Constantinople and told him that she wanted to devote her life to serve God. He ordained her as a deaconess. She built a house where she stayed with the widows and the virgins who wanted to dedicate their lives to serve God.

As soon as St. John Chrysostom became in charge of his people, he opened his heart with love towards the poor. He met with Olympias and found her to be a compassionate mother to the poor. Perhaps this was the secret of the strong bond between them that grew stronger as she opened her heart to the poor and the oppressed.

St. John Chrysostom was called "The great preacher of almsgiving". He did not stop practicing charity and found in Olympias the heart that did not know limits for almsgiving. He had to advise her to give in moderation and wisdom. But she felt that all what she possessed belonged to the Lord. St. John Chrysostom was her spiritual father. He advised her to institute charitable organizations. She also supported him with the necessary expenses needed to send missionary trips to the Phoenicians in the hills of Lebanon and Syria.

Due to her holy life she found favor in the eyes of many saints. The bishop Palladius said about her that "she is a wonderful woman, resembling a precious vessel filled with the Holy Spirit".



Phoebe The Deaconess, The Servant Of The Church In Cenchrea

Phoebe means “bright and radiant”, she was the only woman among St. Paul’s friends whom he called “sister” in his letter to the Romans. St. Paul introduced her by calling her: Sister, servant of the church and helper. “She has been a helper of many and of myself also” Romans 16:2.

“Sister”- shows the spiritual relationship between St. Paul and Phoebe and the believers that resulted from their unity in Christ.

“Servant of the church”- is related to the local church in Cenchrea.

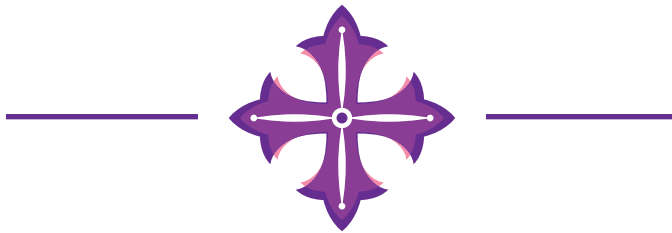
“Helper”- Illustrates her clear role in helping St. Paul in the service.

In the early church servants were not just men, but there were many women and virgins like Phoebe whom St. Paul mentioned in his Epistle to the Romans, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also” Romans 16:1-2.

Cenchrea was the Eastern harbour of Corinth, and the outlet for its trade with the Asiatic shores of the Mediterranean. Phoebe was serving as a deaconess in the church of Cenchrea. As stated in the Law of the Apostles deaconesses were serving the females in the church and in the early church they were outreaching females especially in the houses of the non-believers.

During the Holy Synod meeting on the feast of Pentecost in 1992, the Holy Synod established certain rites and conditions pertaining to the order of consecration for the Consecrated Deaconess. It is well known that the rank of deaconess in the church is not a priestly rank. It also includes regulations regarding their lives and service and also the promotion from Assistant Deaconess to Deaconess.

It is likely that she went to Rome not only to deliver St. Paul's letter but he must have entrusted her with a special mission that he found more prudent not to disclose. He commanded the church to facilitate her mission. We celebrate her on the 3rd of September each year according to the Greek Church calendar. Saint John Chrysostom praised her and said: "She is a saint who served the church through her service as deaconess".



A. MATTHEW 5: 1-12

The Beatitudes

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.


B. PRAYER OF THE THIRD HOUR

Psalm 19

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you; May He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion; May He remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice.

May He grant you according to your heart's desire, and fulfill all your purpose.

We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners! May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. Now I know that the Lord saves His



anointed; He will answer him from His holy Heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright. Save, Lord! May the King answer us when we call. Alleluia.

Psalm 22

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. Alleluia

John 14: 26 - 15:4

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. "You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and He has nothing in Me. "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. Glory be to God Forever.



The Litanies

Your Holy Spirit, O Lord, which You sent forth upon Your holy Disciples, and Your honourable Apostles at the third hour, take Him not away from us, O Good-One, but renew Him within us. Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

“Zoksapatri ke Eiyou-ke agi-you epnevmaty” (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

O Lord, Who at the third hour, sent down Your Holy Spirit upon Your Holy Disciples and honourable Apostles, take Him not away from us, O Good-One, but renew Him within us. We beseech You, O Christ our Lord, the Word, and Son of God. Renew within us a righteous and life-giving Spirit, a Spirit of prophecy and chastity, a Spirit of sanctification, righteousness and authority. O Pantocrator; for You are the Light of our souls, O You who enlightens every one that comes into the world and have mercy on us.

“Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen.” (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

O mother of God, you are the true vine, bearing the Fruit of Life, we ask you, O full of grace, together with the apostles, to pray for the salvation of our souls. Blessed be the Lord our God. Blessed be the Lord day by day. He prepares our way, for He is the God of our salvation.

“Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen.” (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

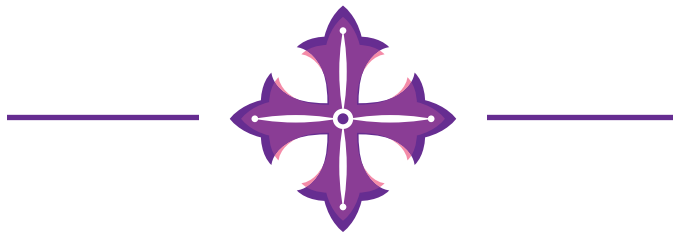
O Heavenly King, and Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who is in every place, and fills all, You who are the Treasure of goodness, and Giver of life, graciously come and dwell in us, purge away all stain, O Good-One, and save our souls.

“Zoksapatri ke Eiyou-ke agi-you epevmaty” (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

Just as you were with Your Disciples, O Saviour, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, save us, and deliver our souls.

“Kenin ke aa-ee ke-ic-touce e-on-ace ton e-onon Amen.” (Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

Whenever we stand in Your Holy sanctuary, we are considered as those standing in Heaven. O Mother of God, You who are the gate of heaven, open unto us the door of mercy.





A series of horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the entire width of the page, leaving a margin at the top and bottom.



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.



COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

To order please contact
Canadian Coptic Centre

1245 Eglinton Avenue West
Mississauga, ON
L5V 2M4

P: 905-567-4032

F: 905-567-3618

www.mahragan.ca

info@mahragan.ca