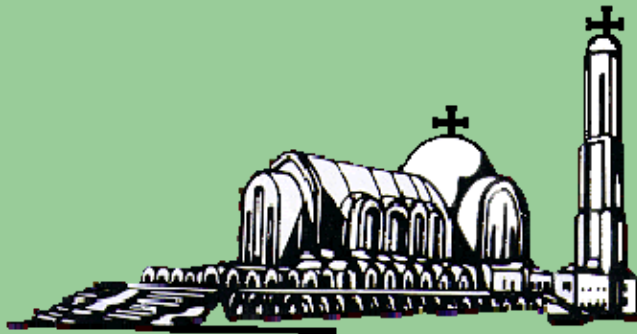




St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 14:

*THE MIDNIGHT
PRAISES*

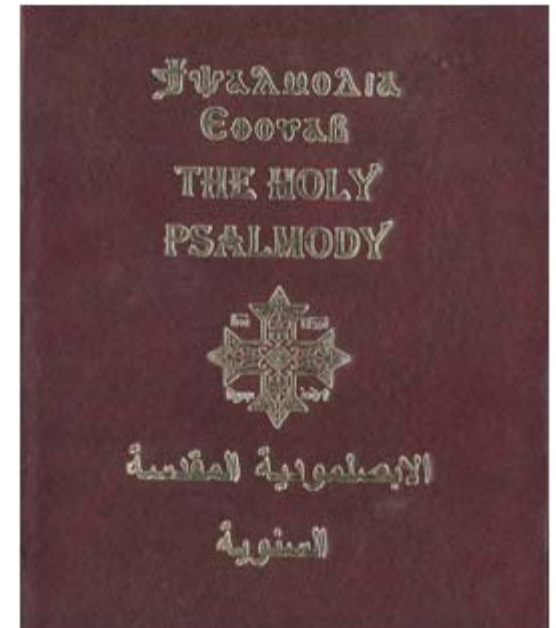
**“For God is not the author of
confusion, but of peace”
(1 Corinthians 14:33)**



Introduction to Praises



- ❖ One of the functions of the Church
- ❖ Praising is a cooperative function between the Struggling Church and the Victorious Church
- ❖ Praising is the work of the Angels
 - *“Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!”*
(Psalm 148:2)
- ❖ We share with the Angels in praising God
- ❖ We are training our selves for our life in Heaven – Praising God





Introduction to Praises



- ❖ The praises are the preparation for the banquet of the King who is to come in the Liturgy
- ❖ Praising was practiced even in the early Church
 - *“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, **praising God** ...”* (Acts 2:46-47)





Introduction to Praises

❖ Praising is a living Sacrifice

- *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* (Romans 12:1)
 - Through praising, we present ourselves a living sacrifice to Christ, who presented Himself a Sacrifice for our sins.
- We say in the Liturgy, "A mercy of peace, A Sacrifice of Praise" What is this "Sacrifice of Praise"?
 - *"Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The **lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice**."* (Psalm 141:2)
 - *"... Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me."* (Hebrews 10:5) => We offer our sacrifice through our bodies
 - *"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)





Introduction to Praises



- ❖ **We do not praise God alone, but rather together with the heavenly**
 - *“I will praise You with my whole heart; Before the angels I will sing praises to You.”* (Psalm 138:1)
 - *“Praise God in all saints”* (Psalm 150:1)
 - *“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.”* (Psalm 22:22)



The Midnight Praises - Introduction



- ❖ Saint Basil the Great said that the work of praising attracts the service of the angels because this is part of their job and they come closer to those who do the same as they.
- ❖ The Psalmody is a deep spiritual monument based in the order of the Holy Liturgy. It was placed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is clear from the words of the psalmody, which are taken from the Holy Bible, the Book of Psalms, and from the accurate and deep theological understandings.
- ❖ These understandings can be found in either the Theotokiat or the Psalis (which make up the Psalmody), or from its soul-lifting tunes.



Terminology of the Praises



- ❖ **Psalmody: The Book of Praises**
 - There are two different Psalmodies:
 - Annual Psalmody: Contains all the praises prayed during the year
 - Kiahk Psalmody: Contains all the praises and expositions prayed during the month of Kiahk

- ❖ **ϣoc (Hos): A Coptic word meaning “Praise”**
 - There are Four “Hos-es” that are prayed in the Midnight Praises



Terminology of the Praises



- ❖ **Λωβδ (Lobsh):** A Coptic word meaning “Explanation”
 - There are two “lobsh-es” in the Midnight Praises – After the First and Second Hos-es



- ❖ **Ψαλι (Psali):** A Greek word meaning “Song”
 - There are different kinds of Psalies:
 - For Our Lord Jesus Christ
 - For the Virgin Mary
 - There is also one for the three young men in the fiery furnace, chanted after the Third Hos
 - For the Saints
 - There are Psalies for the feasts and fasts





Terminology of the Praises



- ❖ **“Theotokia”**: From the Greek word meaning “Mother of God”
 - There is always one Theotokia for every day of the week



- ❖ **“Doxology”**: A Greek word meaning “Glorification” or “Veneration”
 - There may be one for any saint or angel, or a feast or fast



- ❖ **“Antiphonarium” (Def-nar)**: A Greek word meaning “A brief history”
 - Contains a brief history and veneration of the saint of the day



Terminology of the Praises



- ❖ **ΑΔΑΥ (Adam):** Coptic word meaning “Adam”
 - It is used to refer to the first three days of the week – Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday – along with their hymns, and tunes.
 - It is taken from the first word of the Monday Theotokia: “ΑΔΑΥ ΕΤΙΕΦΟΙ ...” (“While Adam was sad ...”)
- ❖ **ΒΑΤΟΣ (Watos):** A Coptic word meaning “Bush”
 - It is used to distinguish the last four days of the week – Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday – along with their hymns, and tunes.
 - It is taken from the first word of the Thursday Theotokia: ΠΙΒΑΤΟΣ ΕΤΑ ΥΩΥΣΗΣ (“The bush which Moses has seen ...”)



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Psalmody starts with the prayer of the psalms of the midnight hours which are found in the *Agpeya* (the book of prayers).



- ❖ Then follows the tune of "Ten Theno..." (sung in a long tune) then it is completed normally. "Ten Theno..." is composed of the parts said in the midnight prayers and those which are said after Psalm 50 (Have mercy upon me O God).



- ❖ "Ten Theno..." means "Let us rise o sons of light that we may praise the Lord of powers."



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ After this, "Tennav" is sung, which means "Let us look at the resurrection of Christ." And it is said from the feast of the Resurrection and during the 50 days after it, then after that only on Sundays until the end of the month of Hatour.





Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Then the beginning of psalmody comes with the first "hos" (canticle). The word *hos* means praise. The first *hos* consists of the praises of Moses and we can find it in the book of Exodus chapter 15. "And it was said when he and Israel crossed the Red Sea, they were saved from the hands of the Egyptians." This was the cause of joy and praising to the entire congregation. It also symbolizes every person who has come out of the strict slavery of the devil and from the bondage of this hard world. He (anyone doing the psalmody) thus praises with Moses saying, "Your right hand O Lord is glorified with power, Your right hand my Lord has defeated Your enemies."



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Following the first hos, the "**Lobsh**" is sung. The Lobsh is an explanation or a praise about the previous hos, and it is a poetic piece to be sung in a long hymn and a beautiful melody. Then follows the second hos which consists of Psalm 135.
- ❖ In the **second hos** we thank God for He is good and beneficent and the Doer of great wonders, we meditate on all His creation, we thank Him for His creation, and we say "for His mercy endures forever." This phrase is repeated after every verse of the Psalm.
- ❖ Following the second hos is **another lobsh** with its beautiful, easy tune and whose beginning verse is, "Let us thank Christ our Lord with the psalmist David the prophet."



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ The **third hos** is the praise of the three saintly youths [Prayer of Azariah], which we find in the "Apocrypha" which are mistakenly called the "lost books." And in it the three youths ask all the creation to join with them in the praise of God and the blessing of His Mightiness. For example it is sung, "Praise the Lord you rain with the dew," "Praise the Lord you clouds and wind," "Praise the Lord you whales." So how does the creation that is without thought, praise Him, while the creation that has a mind that was created to praise God, stands silent? "Let us praise Him and exalt Him above all forever," (*"Hos erof ari ho oo shasf sha ni eneh."*) This is the phrase sung after every verse.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Following the third *hos* comes the "***Vatos Psali***" for the three saintly youths. All its words are in the Coptic & Greek languages. This *Psali* (hymn) has a charming tune. It does not differ in its meaning from the meaning of the *hos* itself. Following is another Greek piece for the three saintly youths, "*Tenen*", which is sung only during the month of Koiahk.
- ❖ And then follows another praise for the three saintly youths, sung in a long and meditative tune, "*Tenoweh ensok khi pen heet tirtf*," meaning, "We follow You with all our hearts."



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Proceeding these hymns is the commemoration of the saints. When we have become involved in praising God and glorifying Him, we have the participation of the victorious church with us. It is the souls of the saints who have preceded us to the paradise of joy, that come to support us and to accompany us in our continuous struggle against the world, sin, and the weaknesses of the body. So we ask from their love and their aid to remember us before the Throne of blessing with a stronger intercession. So we say, "Intercede (or pray) on our behalf that the Lord may forgive us our sins."



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ After the commemoration of the saints, come the Doxologies (from the Greek word *doxa*, meaning glory). The Doxologies are the hymns in which we honor the Virgin Mary and all the saints. We remember also their virtues and their struggles in their spiritual lives and this is also in conjunction with the teachings of the church and the Holy Bible where the Lord said, "Honor those who honor Me." We also gain the blessing and help of these saints when we remember them in our praises. Usually we sing the Doxology of the Virgin Mary and after that we pick the various Doxologies according to the various feasts of the saints and of the saint of the church or the monastery or whichever we wish from other Doxologies.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ After we have gained blessing from the victorious church and the heavenly hosts we return once again to praising God that is sweet and blessed in the mouths of this saints.
- ❖ This is in the fourth *hos*, which is composed of three psalms. Their numbers according to the Coptic translation are 148, 149, and 150. And these psalms express the state of joy, victory, and rejoicing from all the heart and from all the soul.





Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Then we come to the Psali, which changes every day. There are seven Psalis, and each day of the week has one psali specifically for that day. The word Psali means hymn and, in the Psalmody, is organized around the name of the Lord Jesus, which is always repeated in almost every paragraph (verse). Sunday has two Psalis. The first psali is a hymn for the Virgin Mary and the second is about the name of the Lord Jesus.
- ❖ Thus we say at the end of the first stanza, "My Lord Jesus help me" and in the second paragraph, "My Lord Jesus Christ help me." And these two phrases are repeated until the end of the Psali.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ For the Psali there is an ending, which is a beginning for the *Theotokia* in itself. In the days of the "Adam", "*Lipon anshan tho ooti*" is sung, which means, "And also if we meet for prayer let us praise the name of the Lord Jesus." And in the days of "Vatos", the ending of the Psali or the beginning of the theotokia is "Eshop an shan erepsalin" and it means when we sing hymns let us say with... "O Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on our souls". *Adam* refers to the days Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. *Vatos* refers to the days Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ Then comes the theotokia which is a Greek word meaning, "The mother of God" for the word "Theo" means God and "tokos" means mother. And in these "theotokiat" are all the symbols and allusions which are in the Old Testament about the Holy Virgin Mary.
- ❖ And in them also are the deep theological understandings about the truth (essence) of the Godly incarnation which is beyond comprehension and the human mind and about the nature of the holy birth of our Good Savior our Lord Jesus Christ of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ For each day of the week, there is a specific *theotokia*. Also the way or tune of singing the *theotokia* in the days of *Adam* is different from the tune of the *Vatos* days. So is the case with the *Psalis* as well. The *theotokia* ends with the *lobsh* which means praise, as we said earlier, with a different way than that of the *theotokia* with the exception of Sunday which does not have a "*lobsh*" but there is a replacing piece instead. And this piece is "*Nem ghar ni nooti*" which means, "Who in the gods is like You O Lord..." This piece is sung in the holy fifty days after the glorious feast of the Resurrection, then only on Sundays until the last Sunday in the month of *Hathor*.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ And before we say the end of the *theotokia*, "*Nek nai o panooti*" which means, "Your mercies O my God are countless" is sung in the days of *Adam* or "*O pen chois Isos Pichristos*," which means "Our Lord Jesus Christ" which is sung in the days of *Vatos*.
- ❖ Before this ending, the "Antiphonarium" of the day is read and in it is the shortened story of the saint of the day in which the psalmody is done and it has a Coptic beginning that is specified to it, then the saint story is read.



Structure of the Midnight Praises



- ❖ And after the ending of the "*Theotokia*" we say, "We magnify you o mother of the true Light..." until the end and the creed also in full.
- ❖ After that we ask for God's mercies and we say, "*Kirie eleyson*" meaning "Lord have mercy" along with the different requests for our bodily, psychological, and spiritual lives and with the proclamation of our faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Rock of the ages.
- ❖ At its end we pray, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth..." until "Our Father who art in heaven." Finally the morning psalms are recited with their praise as an introduction to the morning rising of incense.



Summary of the Structure - Sunday



1. The psalms of the midnight hours
2. The Hymn of “Ten Theno” (“Arise O Children of the Light”)
3. The Hymn of “Tennav” (“We look at the Resurrection of Christ”)
4. The First Hos (Exodus 15)
5. Lobsh of the First Hos
6. The Second Hos
7. Lobsh of the Second Hos
8. The Third Hos



Summary of the Structure - Sunday



9. The Psali of the Three Young Men in the fiery furnace: “Aripsalen” (“O sing unto Him who was crucified...”)
10. A Greek Psali also for the Three Young Men in the fiery furnace: “*Tenoweh ensok khen pen heet tirt*” (“We follow you...”)
11. The Commemoration of the Saints
12. The Doxologies
13. The Forth Hos (“Praise the Lord from the heavens”)
14. Psali for the Virgin Mary





Summary of the Structure - Sunday



15. Psali for the Lord Jesus Christ (“I sought after You from the depth of my heart...”)

16. The Theotokia

17. The Antiphonarium is read



18. The Conclusion of the Theotokia: “*Nek nai o panooti*” (“Your mercies, O my God, are countless...”)

19. “*Kirie eleyson*”



20. “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth...” until “Our Father who art in heaven.”

21. The morning psalms are recited with their praise.



Conclusion



- ❖ With the ending of this psalmody, we would have obtained great blessing and strength for our spiritual lives and joy and consolation and gladness that only those who have experienced it can know its meaning.
- ❖ We call all in the love of the Lord Jesus that they may have the life of praise which the fathers have instituted by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our Coptic Orthodox Church whose love runs in our veins and with every beat of our hearts.