



St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 1:

*THE SPIRITUALITY
OF THE RITUAL/RITE*

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



Course Contents



- ❖ The Spirituality of the Ritual/Rites (1)
- ❖ The Seven Holy Sacraments (7)
- ❖ The Coptic Feasts and Fasts (1)
- ❖ The Sanctuary of the Church (1)
- ❖ The Rite of the Holy Liturgy (2)
- ❖ The Agpeya (1)
- ❖ The Midnight Praises (1)
- ❖ Child Psychology (1)
- ❖ Introduction to the Service (1)



Course Outline



- ❖ 1 Hour of Lecture/Discussion per session
- ❖ A test every 4 lectures
- ❖ Will provide reading/course material
- ❖ Observe/Practice the rites closely
- ❖ Attendance and commitment are key
- ❖ Please provide us with feedback



The Spirituality of the Ritual/Rites



- ❖ What is a Ritual/Rite?
- ❖ The importance God gives to the Ritual
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus and the Ritual
- ❖ The Apostles and the Ritual
- ❖ The Ritual and the Holy Bible
- ❖ Rituals and Church Stability
- ❖ What is a Sacrament?
- ❖ Overview of the Holy Sacraments



What is a Ritual/Rite?



- ❖ The Arabic word for ritual is derived from Greek and means a system or order.
- ❖ The word “ritual” in the Church means the order of the holy service and its organization (the prayers that are said whether verbally , through worshipful actions, or symbolically)
- ❖ Examples include:
 - the shape of the Church
 - the ranks of the priests and their clothes
 - The actions in the Holy Liturgy



The importance God gives to the Ritual



- ❖ The ritual being the order of service, is compatible with the nature of God Who loves order and organization in everything
- ❖ Rituals have been followed from the beginning of time
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Noah's offering of sacrifice after the flood (Gen. 8:21)
 - Abraham's habit of building an altar for God wherever he went (Gen. 12:7,8; Gen. 13:18)
 - Abraham's offering of his son followed the ritual (Gen. 22:9)
 - God gave clear instructions to Moses on who He is to be worshiped (Exodus and Leviticus)



Our Lord Jesus and the Ritual



- ❖ Our Lord respected the Mosaic ritual greatly in spite of the fact that He gave the law and ordered the rituals
- ❖ Examples include:
 - His circumcision on the eighth day
 - He observed the feasts and shared in celebrating them (The Passover – John 2:13, 23)
- ❖ What about the Sabbath?





The Apostles and the Ritual



- ❖ The Apostles determined the organization of the Churches as it had been entrusted to them by the Lord Himself



- ❖ St. Paul said:
 - “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you” (1 Cor. 11:23)
 - “And the rest I will set in order when I come” (1 Cor. 11:34)
 - “And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking” (Titus 1:5)
 - “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40)





The Ritual and the Holy Bible



- ❖ The Coptic Church is a Biblical Church
- ❖ Consider the Holy Liturgy as an example
 - "O Great and Eternal God...", comes from,
"You show loving kindness to thousands - the great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of Hosts" (Jer.32:18)
 - "...Death that entered into the world through the envy of the devil...", refers to,
"As God created man in incorruption, in His image, and through the envy of the deceiver, death entered into the world" (The Wisdom of Sirach 2:23-24).



The Ritual and the Holy Bible (Cont.)



❖ Consider the Holy Liturgy as an example (Cont.)

- "...You have destroyed death by the life giving manifestation of Your Only Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ...", refers to, *"According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus"* (2Tim.1:1), *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world , received up in glory"* (1Tim.3:14), *"...Once at the end of the ages He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself..."* (Heb.9:26).



The Ritual and the Holy Bible (Cont.)



- ❖ Consider the Holy Liturgy as an example (Cont.)
 - "...Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill toward men...", comes from, *"Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14).*
 - "...and make us all worthy, O our Master, to greet one another with a holy kiss...", is taken from, *"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you" (Rom. 16:16), "All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss" (1Cor. 16:16), and, "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (2Cor. 13:12).*



Rituals and Church Stability



- ❖ Christian groups who want to maintain continuity and stability in the church adapt a certain order for their worship
- ❖ If worship is shaped according to the moods and fashions of the congregation, the church will inevitably lose its stability.
- ❖ Such continuous erosion of the holistic apostolic content eventually leads to the tragic neglect of the needs of some members of the church.
- ❖ The apostolic system of our church is permanent and unchangeable, fulfilling the needs of all people at all times.



What is a Sacrament?



- ❖ Latin “sacer” (holy) + Greek “mysterion” (secret rite)
- ❖ Sacrament = Mystery of Grace
- ❖ Two elements; visible and invisible
- ❖ St. Augustine: “*The visible form of an invisible grace*”
- ❖ Requirements of a sacrament:
 - It’s institution by our Lord Jesus Christ
 - An outward sign (water, bread, wine, oil, etc.)
 - The power of conferring the grace
- ❖ The Brazen Serpent



Overview of the Holy Sacraments



1. The Sacrament of Baptism

2. The Sacrament of Confirmation

3. The Sacrament of Eucharist



4. The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

5. The Sacrament of Repentance & Confession



6. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

7. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony