



Coptic Orthodox Christianity

Coptic Faith

Fall 2018



The Faith of the Coptic Church

One is **God the Father** of everyone.

One is **His Son, Jesus Christ the Word**,
who took flesh and died and
rose from the dead on the third day, and raised us with Him.

One is **the Holy Spirit, the Comforter**,
one in His hypostasis, proceeding from the Father,
purifying the whole creation, and teaching us to

worship the Holy Trinity,
one in divinity and one in essence.
We praise Him and bless Him forever.

Amen.

Contributions to Ecumenical Christianity

The Coptic Church prides itself as being one of the oldest churches to preserve its unblemished traditions, rituals and theological beliefs since its inception at the birth of Christianity.

The Coptic Church is recognized for significant contribution to the Ecumenical Christianity in the areas of:

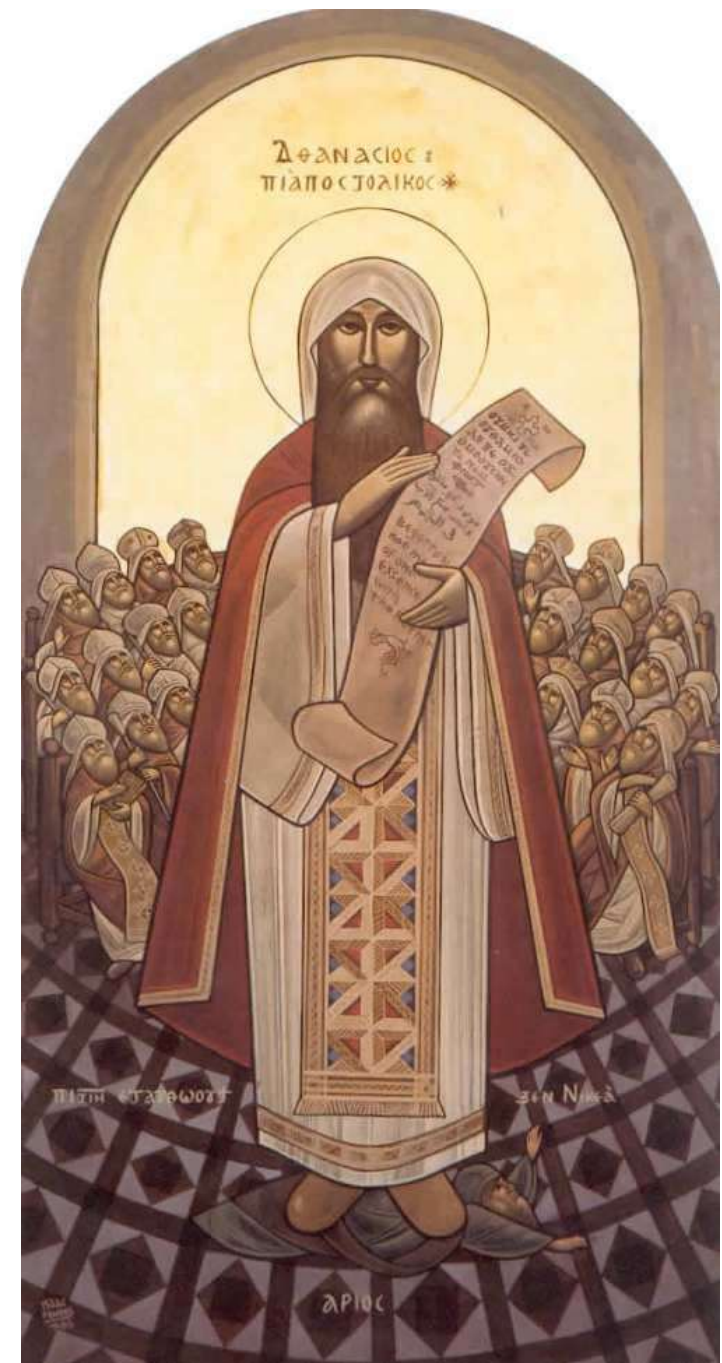
- **Monasticism**
- Preserving **sacred sites** and commemorating the refuge of the **Holy Family** across the land of Egypt
- The first three **Ecumenical Councils**

Contributions at Ecumenical Councils

- **Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)**
Repudiated Arianism, adopted the Nicene Creed.
Chaired by St. Athanasius, who would later be the 20th Coptic Patriarch.
- **Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)**
Repudiated heresy of Macedonius and revised the Nicene Creed into present form used in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.
Chaired by Pope Timothy, the 22nd Coptic Patriarch.
- **Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)**
Repudiated Nestorianism and proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos (“Mother of God”).
Chaired by St. Cyril the Great, the 24th Coptic Patriarch.

Saint Athanasius *at Council of Nicea against Arianism*

- Arianism claims that the Son of God was created at a point of time, and is subordinate to God the Father.
- The Coptic Church and the Universal Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) considers Arianism as a heresy (incorrect teaching).
- ***We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, begotten of the Father before all ages ... begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father***



Pope Timothy *at Council of Constantinople against Macedonianism*

- Macedonianism denies the full personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, claiming that the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and Son.
- The Coptic Church and Universal Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) rejects this teaching as heretical.
- ***We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.***



Pope Cyril the Pillar of Faith *at Council of Ephesus against Nestorianism*

- Nestorianism emphasizes a distinction between the human and divine natures of Jesus, and therefore deny the title “Theotokos” to Saint Mary.
- The Coptic Church and Universal Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) reject Nestorianism, emphasizing a unity between the human and divine natures of Our Lord.
- ***Introduction added to the Nicene Creed:***
“We exalt you, the mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint, the Theotokos (Mother of God), for you brought forth unto us the Savior of the whole world; He came and saved our souls ...”



The Nicene Creed

is recited out loud in every Coptic service

- Declaration of our **Faith** in God
"[Truly] we believe in One God ..."
- Declaration of God's **Love** for us
"... who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven ..."
- Declaration of **Hope** in God's promise
"... We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen."



The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

Ascended into the heavens; He sits at the right hand of His Father, and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And in one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism, for the remission of sins.

The people chant the last sentence in a loud voice.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

Orthodox Faith in the Holy Trinity

- 1) We believe in **One God**
- 2) One **Triune God** not 3 Gods
- 3) The Term **Hypostasis**
 - Hypostasis of the **Father**
 - Hypostasis of the **Son**
 - Hypostasis of the **Holy Spirit**
- 4) The **Holy Trinity** within us

1) We believe in One God

- Biblical verses

- *“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)*

- *“For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the **Father**, the **Word**, and the **Holy Spirit**; and these three are one”
(1John 5:7)*

- Biblical manifestations

- *“When Jesus had been baptized ...
the Spirit of God descending like a dove ...
a voice saying ‘this is My beloved Son’”
(Matthew 3:16-17)*

We believe in One God

- **God** vs. no God
(against *Atheism*)
- **One** vs. Multi-gods
(against *Polytheism*)
- ***The One God of Christianity
is the Holy Trinity***

God Exists (response to Atheism)

*“The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.”
(Psalm 19:1-3)*

God, the Almighty Creator

- Created the Universe (the heavens declare ...)
- Created our Human Body
- Created Nature

“We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, who created all things seen and unseen.” (Orthodox Creed)

God is One (Orthodox response to polyeism)

- Our Christian belief: God has to be **One**
 - Some other religions believe in polyeism (multi-gods)
 - Hinduism; Buddhism; Ancient Egyptian, Roman, Greek religions
 - The Holy Bible clearly emphasizes **One God**

*“O **You**, who art, who were, and who abides forever ...*

*It is fitting indeed, and right, that we praise You, bless You, serve You, worship You, and glorify You; **the one, only, true God**, the Lover of Mankind,*

Unutterable, invisible, infinite, without beginning; everlasting, timeless, immeasurable, incomprehensible, unchangeable Creator of all; Saviour of everyone.”

(St. Gregory’s Liturgy)

The One God of Christianity is the Holy Trinity

- God is **Spirit**
- God is **Infinitely Perfect**
- God and His Perfections are one
 - God is the **source of all goodness**
 - God is Love, Light, Truth, Righteousness, ...
- God is **Personal**
- God is Trinitarian (we worship the **Holy Trinity**)

*“The love of **God the Father**
and the grace of His only-begotten **Son, our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ**,
and the communion and the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, be with you all.”*

(St. Gregory’s Liturgy)

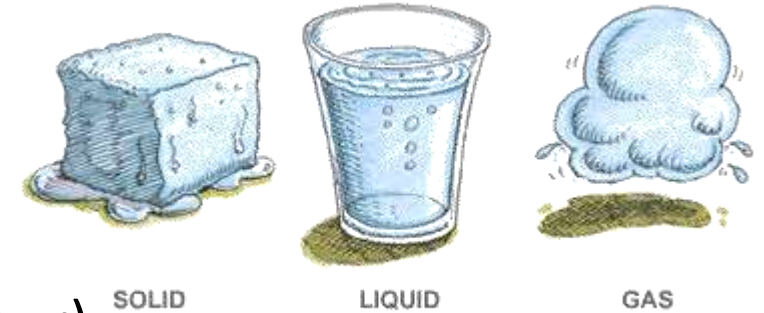
2) One Triune God not 3 Gods

- We believe in a Triune God
 - God is effective by His Son, and alive by His Spirit
 - A non-Triune God is deficient and inactive
- Without a Trinity, we do not have Salvation or Sanctification
 - If the Son were not equal to God in every thing, His atonement on the cross would not be sufficient to fulfill God's justice.
 - If the Holy Spirit is not God then our fallen nature cannot be sanctified to meet God's requirements of holiness.

Analogies (3 in 1)

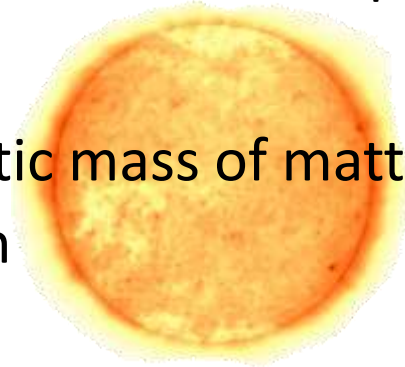
- **Water**

- Three forms (solid ice, liquid water, gaseous vapour)
- Yet one nature, one chemical composition (H_2O)



- **Sun**

- Heat, gas and gigantic mass of matter
- Yet remains one sun



- **Human Being**

- Composed of BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT
- Yet remain as a single human being



- **Candle**

- Heat, light, flame
- Yet a single candle



3) The Term Hypostasis

- The Three Hypostasis have **ONE ESSENCE**
 - The Three are **One** God
 - The Three are the **One** Creator
 - The Three are the **One** dwelling in us
- Each Hypostasis has a **DISTINCT ROLE / FUNCTION**
 - The Hypostasis of the **Father**
 - The Hypostasis of the **Son**
 - The Hypostasis of the **Holy Spirit**
- God is **One Godhead**, with one nature & one essence
- God is **Three** distinct yet inseparable **Hypostasis/Persons**

Hypostasis of the Father

- Distinctive Characteristics
 - The Father gives birth to the Son
 - From the Father, proceeds the Holy Spirit
- **Creator of all things**
 - *“The Father, of whom are all things” 1 Corinthians 8:6*
 - *“The Father of spirits” Hebrews 12:9*
 - *“The Father of lights” James 1:17*
- **The Father of believers**
 - *“Our Father Who Art in Heaven” Matthew 5:9*
 - *“you may be sons of your Father” Matthew 5:45*

Hypostasis of the Son

- Distinctive Characteristics
 - **Only-Begotten Son**
“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” John 1:18
 - **Son of God**
“are you the Son of God” Matthew 26:63
 - **Eternally Begotten of the Father**
“You are My Son; today I have begotten You” Psalm 2:7
- **Incarnation & Redemption (Mediator)**
 - *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” John 1:14*
 - *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law” Galatians 3:13*
 - *“Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant” Hebrews 12:23*

Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit

- Distinctive Characteristics
 - Proceeded from the Father
 - Sent by the Father and the Son
- Not merely a Force but a Person
 - Speaks, Calls, Hears, Teaches, Counsels, Forbids, and Intercedes
 - Knows the future:
“the man who owns this belt will be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles”
Acts 21:11
 - Can be lied to:
“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” **Acts 5:3**
 - May be grieved:
“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit” **Ephesians 4:30**

4) The Holy Trinity within us

“baptizing
them in the **name** of
the **Father** and of the
Son and of the **Holy**
Spirit,”

-Matthew 28:19

- Through **BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION**
 - We are children of **God the Father**
 - We are members of the Body of **Christ**
 - We are the dwelling place & temples of the **Holy Spirit**
- Through **COMMUNION** (following **CONFESSION**) we are in fellowship with **Our Lord God & Saviour Jesus Christ**

Faith in the Holy Trinity

We believe in **One God**.

One **Triune God** not 3 Gods.

The **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit** as **One God**.

What Copts Believe

Coptic Faith

- In the Holy Trinity:
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – One God.
- In Christ's perfect Divinity without beginning nor end, of the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- In Christ's perfect Humanity, beginning with His Incarnation, united eternally with His Divinity.
- Faith declared in the Nicene Creed
(Ecumenical Council of Nicea, St. Athanasius while he was a deacon)

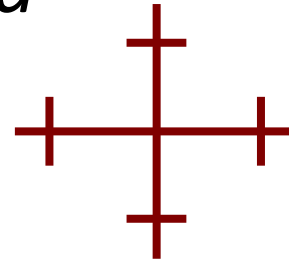
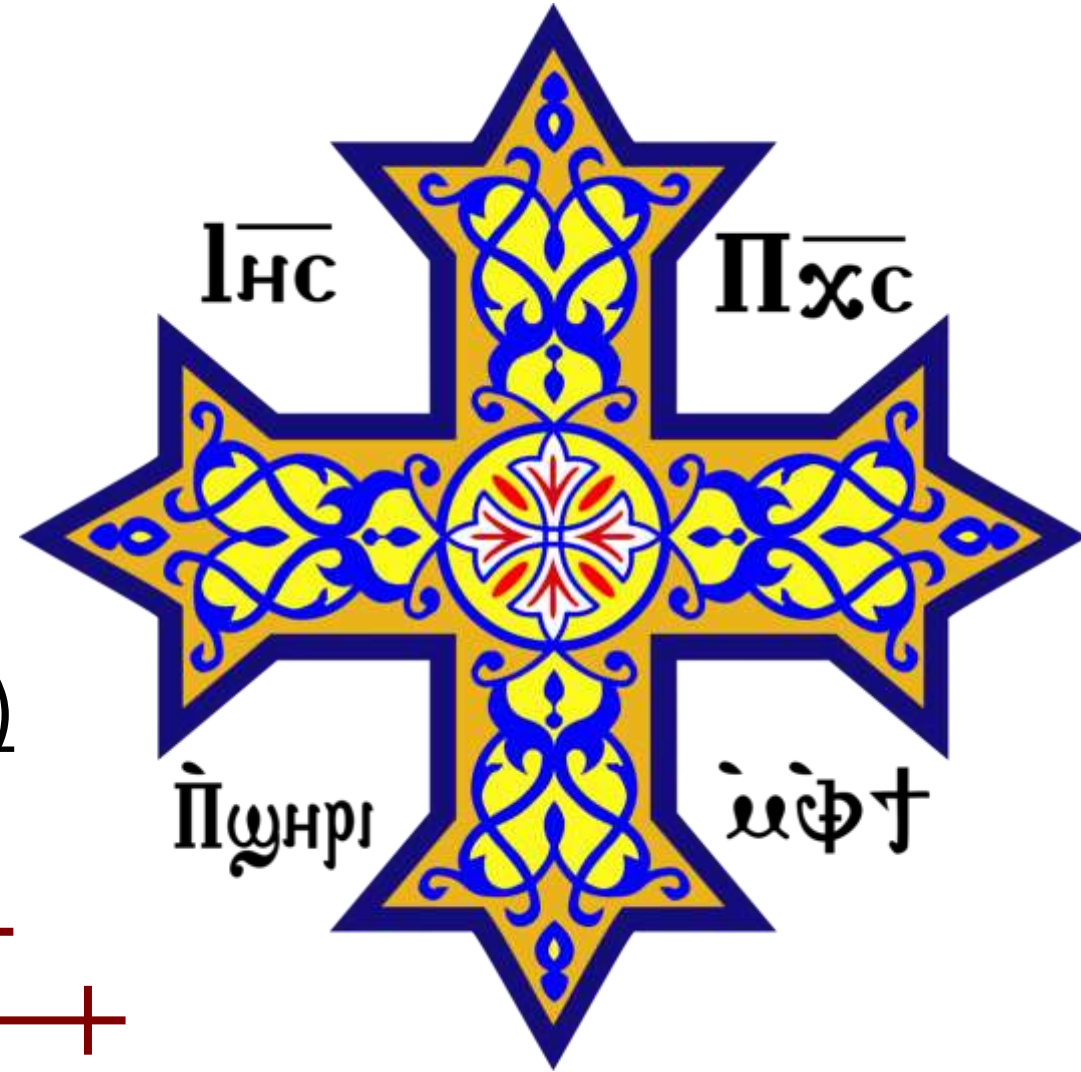
Sacraments (practical expression of our faith)

- Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Communion, Unction of the Sick, Marriage, Priesthood



Coptic Cross

- Jesus (“Isoos”)
*declaration of faith in the Lord’s **humanity** as he has a name like us*
- Christ (“Pi-Ekhristoos)
*declaration of faith in the Lord as Christ our **saviour***
- The Son of God (“Epshiri em Efnoti)
*declaration of faith in the Lord’s **divinity** as He is the Son of God*
- Emphasis on the Holy Trinity
3 points in each direction



Optional (18 minute video) Homework 😊

Rev. Fr. Shenouda Boutros about the Coptic Church in Ottawa

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpC-vbEhHDQ>

