



# Coptic Orthodox Christianity

## **Coptic Liturgy (Holy Eucharist)**

Fall 2018

3

# Introduction to the Coptic Liturgy

## *10 things you should know about Coptic Liturgy*

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1. Length of Service</b>      | <b>6. Fasting</b>            |
| <b>2. Standing &amp; Sitting</b> | <b>7. Music &amp; Chants</b> |
| <b>3. Sign of the Cross</b>      | <b>8. Incense</b>            |
| <b>4. Kiss of Peace</b>          | <b>9. Our Saints</b>         |
| <b>5. Breaking Bread</b>         | <b>10. All are Welcome</b>   |

Adapted from <http://mycorchurch.ca/new/10things/>

# 10 things you should know ...

## 1. ARE WE THERE YET?!

- Although a **2-3 hour Coptic Liturgy** may seem long, believe it or not, this is actually the short version!
- Although you may have ideas of how to paraphrase certain things but please note that **each prayer** is **intentional** and **critical** to the **service**.
- It helps to remember that the **core of our life as a church family** is the Holy Eucharist (**Communion**) and each prayer is prayed in preparation for receiving the **Holy Body and Blood of Christ**.

**Being at Church, particularly during the Divine Liturgy, we are lifted spiritually into Heaven, above time and the physical realm.**

# 10 things you should know ...

## 2. TAKE A SEAT ... NOW STAND ... NOW SIT ... NOW STAND :-)

*As per Orthodox tradition, Copts stand during most of the service; however, you will likely find pews or chairs in most churches so feel free to use them. Standing gets easier with practice.*

## 3. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

*You may notice that Copts cross themselves quite a few times during service; it is usually done when the **Holy Trinity** is invoked, or when we hear the words “**worship**” and “**glorify**”, or to venerate an icon. This practice is not set in stone but rather a personal behaviour.*

# The sign of the Cross

- In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – **One God, Amen.**
- In the Name ... singular (not “Names”)
- The Coptic Church adds “One God” as of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century to emphasize that we are monotheistic (believing in One God, not three)



# Rich Symbolism

Traditionally we hold our hands in a prescribed way – right thumb and first two fingertips pressed together, last two fingers pressed down to the palm, cross from left to right. Can you figure out the symbolism?

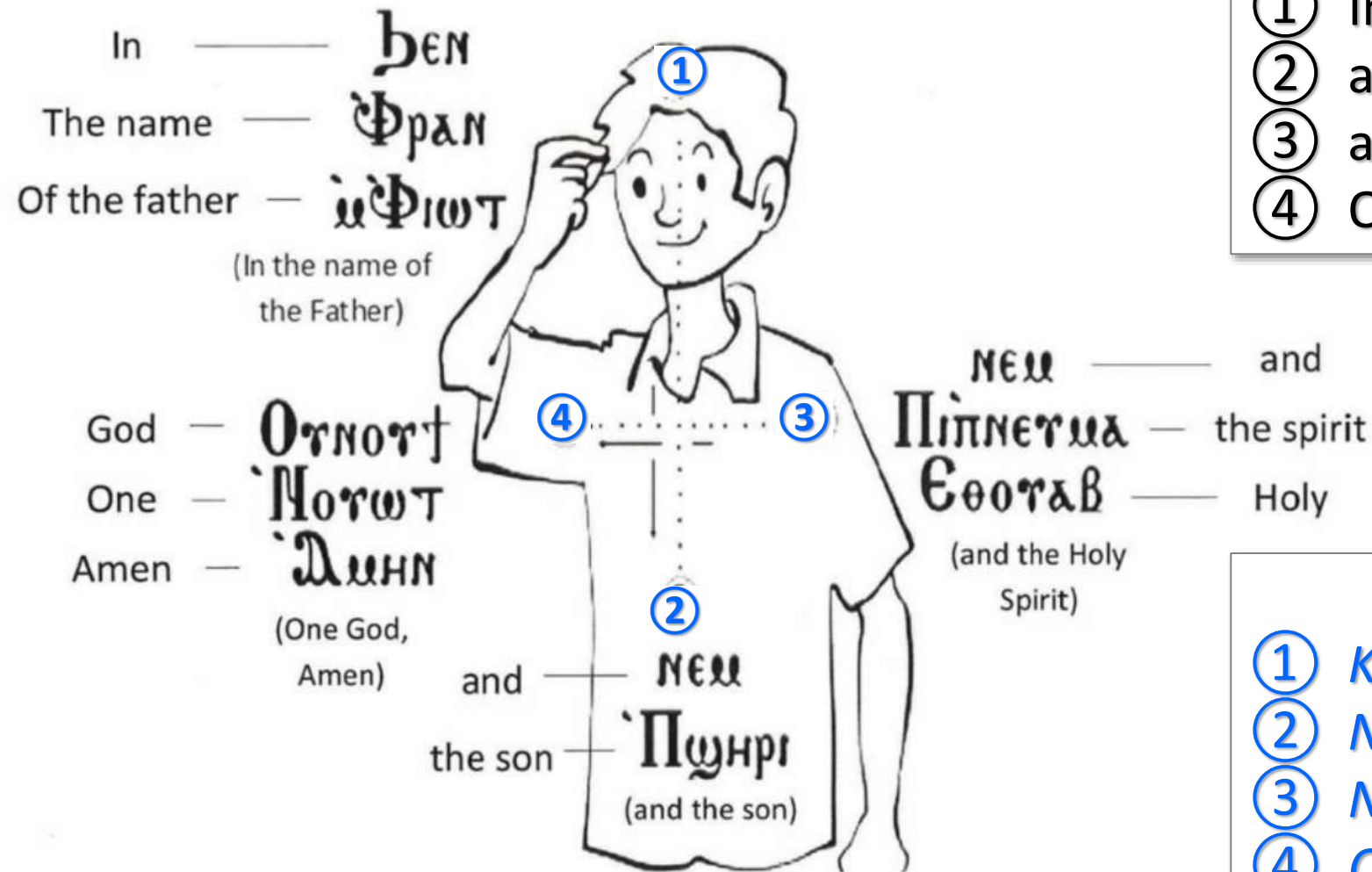
Three fingers together for the **Trinity**; two fingers brought down to the palm for the **one nature** of Christ that is **both** fully **human** and fully **divine**, and His coming down to earth.



- 3 fingers together to remind us of the Holy Trinity, united as One God (3-in-1)
- 2 fingers together to remind us of the inseparable Divinity and Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ



# The sign of the Cross (Coptic)



## English

- ① In the Name of the Father
- ② and the Son
- ③ and the Holy Spirit
- ④ One God - Amen.

## Coptic Pronunciation

- ① *Khen Ephran Em-Ephiot*
- ② *Nem Epshiri*
- ③ *Nem Pi-Epnevma Ethoav*
- ④ *Onooti Eno-ot. Ameen.*

# 10 things you should know ...



## 4. EXCHANGING A KISS OF PEACE

- So you're probably wondering why (and how) the Coptic Church includes a kiss in the liturgical service.
- Since a kiss is an **expression of sincere love** you can catch us kissing **icons, relics** of saints, and a **priest's hand** upon greeting him.
- During the liturgical service you'll hear the deacon say "***Greet one another with a holy kiss...***" (see Romans 16:16 and 1Peter 5:14).
- You too can participate and it's not as intense as you may imagine: **both palms touching** with **thumbs crossed over** each other, touch the hands of your neighbour and then kiss your own hand. Repeat.

***This kiss of peace is an important action of reconciliation before entering the holiest part of the Liturgy***



# 10 things you should know ...

## 5. WE'RE NOT JUST BREAKING BREAD ...

- The focus of the entire liturgical service is **The Holy Eucharist** as we believe it is the actual **Body and Blood of Jesus Christ**.  
As such, it is reserved for those who are baptized into the faith. This is not meant to create exclusion but rather it is reverence for the treasure which is reserved for those who have united themselves with the Church.
- After the liturgy, the bread which you may spot being distributed is not the Eucharist; however, it was prayed on by the priest and everyone is welcome to it as a sign of fellowship.
- The bread itself carries much symbolism: it is a **circle** to symbolize that God has no beginning or end and it is stamped to symbolize Christ's **wounds**, His **apostles** and more ...
- The bread is baked in a special way, and includes **leaven** (do you know why?)



# Orban (Oblation Bread)

## *Eulogia in Coptic*



- ① Holy God
- ② Holy Mighty
- ③ Holy Immortal

### Greek Pronunciation

- ① *Agios O-Theos*
- ② *Agios O-Issheros*
- ③ *Agios Athanatos*

# 10 things you should know ...

## 6. FASTING

- Coptic Christians **fast without animal products** more days out of the year than days with a regular diet, needless to say this can be tough to swallow (pun intended) at first but becomes with practice & prayer.
- We don't consume meat or dairy products nearly every **Wednesday** and **Friday** and during five other periods of the year.
- This practice is **not one size fits all** and is guided by one's spiritual father (Father of Confession) based on both physical and spiritual capability. It is a personal practice and is frankly no one else's business.
- The important thing to remember is this – fasting is used as a **tool** by the Church to **discipline** our **bodies** and **feed** our **spirit**. It is an exercise that with **practice**, is meant to yield **spiritual growth**.

*It is also important to note that fasting is not intended to focus solely on the diet, but needs to be accompanied by fasting of the senses with devotion to God in prayer and spiritual readings, and a focus on charitable deeds (helping others in need all around us).*

# 10 things you should know ...

## 7. MUSIC

- The Coptic congregation sings (chants) responses in the Liturgy, if you are moved to do so don't be shy ... please sing along!
- The words and tune of the hymns carry meaning and you will notice that different seasons have a different tune.
- The triangle and cymbals are used in Liturgical service to accompany many congregational responses and hymns.
- ***The majority of the Liturgy is chanted.***



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# Symbolism in the Shape of Cymbals & Triangle

## Circular Cymbals

- Reminds us of God's infinite nature (as a circle has no beginning & no end)

## Equilateral Triangle

- Remind us of the Holy Trinity (3 sides in 1 triangle)



# 10 things you should know ...

## 8. INCENSE

- Raising of incense helps to engage our senses and has deep meaning.
- The incense which is released from the censor held by the priest represents **prayers** and **repentance** ascending to **heaven**.
- ***“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”***  
(Revelation 5:8)





# 10 things you should know ...

## 9. THE SAINTS - OUR CHAMPIONS

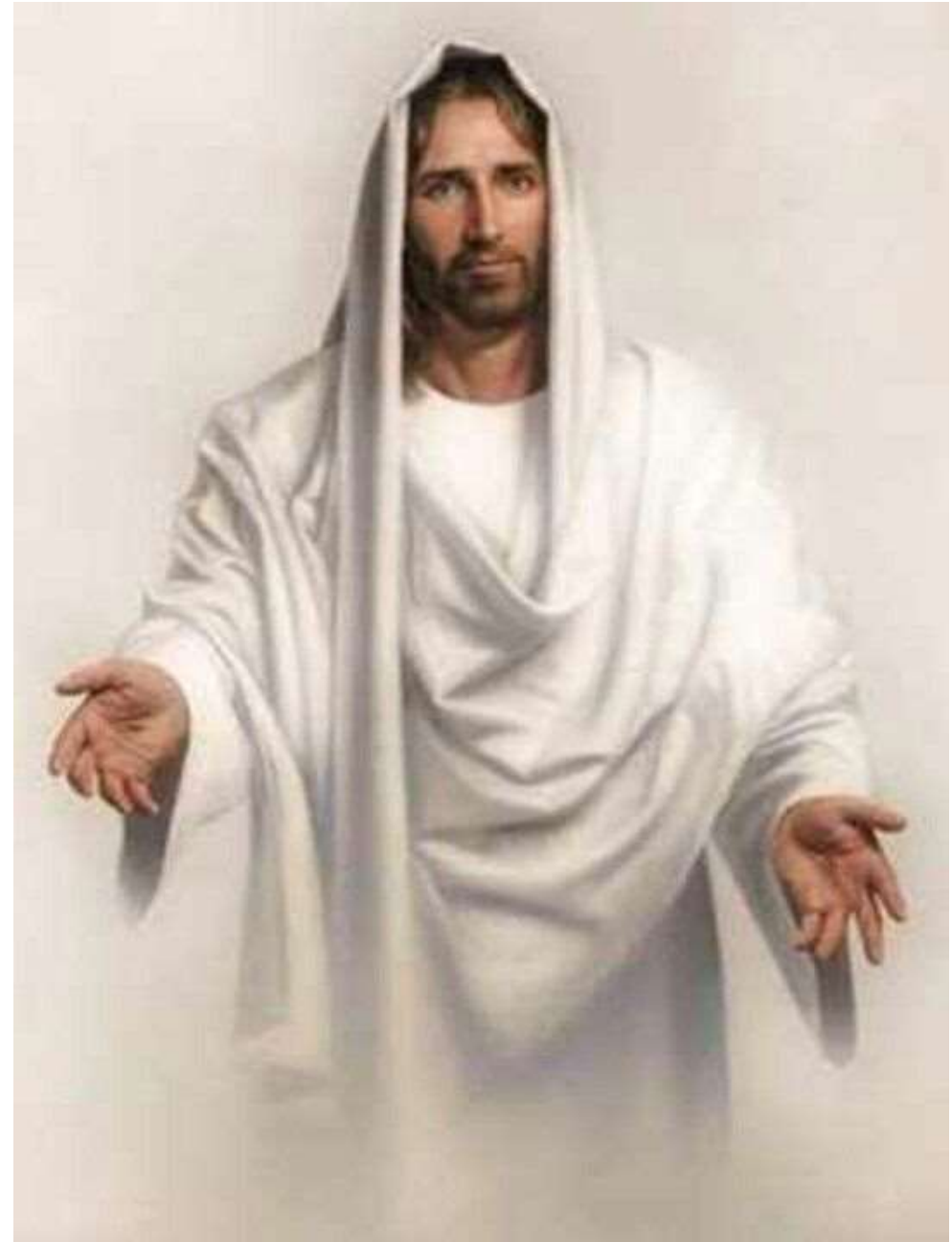
- Coptic Orthodox worship includes **veneration** of the **saints** and especially the **Virgin Mary**.
- We believe the saints which have **departed** this world are **still alive** and remain **part of the Church**.
- They are the **victorious** part of the church, having finished the race and received the prize of eternal life; and since we remain the **struggling** church here on earth, we ask for their prayers. It's the same idea as asking a friend, family member, or clergy to pray for you; you are not praying to them, but asking for their advocacy before the Lord.



# 10 things you should know

## 10. ALL ARE WELCOME

- And, all questions are welcome ...
- Our goal is to leave no question unanswered and in so doing, we hope that you get to know more about Orthodoxy and the Coptic Church



# Three Coptic Liturgies

- **Saint Cyril's Liturgy**

*Addressed to the Father*

***Often used during Great Lent***

*Original Liturgy of Coptic Church*

***Attributed to Saint Mark the Apostle***

*Passed down originally by oral tradition*

***Later recorded and organized by Saint Cyril, 24<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria***

- **Saint Gregory's Liturgy**

*Addressed to the Son*

***Often used for Feast Days***

***Attributed to Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople***

- **Saint Basil's Liturgy**

*Addressed to the Father*

***Most commonly used Liturgy***

***Attributed to Saint Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia***



# Typical Coptic Liturgy Schedule

## Saturday Night

- **7 PM**      **Vespers** Raising of Incense including *Evening Gospel & Psalm*
- 7:30      Evening Sermon or Bible Study
- 8:15      Midnight Prayers & Psalmody (optional)

## Sunday Morning

- **8 AM**      **Matins** Raising of Incense including *Morning Gospel & Psalm*
- 8:20      Agpeya Prayers (typically 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Hour Prayers)
- 8:40      Offering of the Lamb (Oblation Bread)
- **9 AM**      **Liturgy of the Word**  
*Pauline & Catholic Epistles, Acts & Synexarion, Liturgy Gospel & Psalm*
- 9:40      Sermon / Homily
- **10 AM**    **Liturgy of the Faithful**
- **11 AM**    **Eucharist (Communion)**

# Biblical Foundation of the Liturgy (Acts 2:42)

“And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine** and **fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**.”  
(Acts 2:42)

## 1) Apostles’ Doctrine

*Church Readings (Teachings) & Sermon*

## 2) Breaking of Bread

*Holy Eucharist (Communion Sacrament)*

## 3) Prayers

*Litanies and Prayers throughout the Liturgy*

## 4) Fellowship

*Sharing a Meal in a spirit of Unity*

# Structure of the Liturgy

## Offering of the Lamb (Oblation Bread)

- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- Absolution

## Liturgy of the Word (Readings)

- *Intercessions (Hiten Hymn)*
- Pauline, Catholic Epistles, Acts
- Synexarion (saints of the day)
- *Trisagion (Agios Hymn)*
- Holy Gospel  
with introductory prayer & Psalm
- Sermon (now or at end of service)

## Liturgy of the Faithful

- Nicene Creed
- Prayer of Reconciliation
- Invocation of the Holy Spirit
- **Supplications**
- Commemoration of Saints
- Fraction of the Lord's Body
- Declaration of Faith
- **The Holy Communion**
- *Psalm 150 and appropriate hymns  
(concurrently with Holy Communion)*
- Benediction
- **The Eulogia distributed**



# Liturgy Structure:

## (1) Apostles' Doctrine

### Liturgy of the **Word**

- **Pauline** Epistles
- **Catholic** Epistles
- **Acts** of the Apostles and its extension, the Coptic **Synexarion**
- **Gospels & Psalms** (one set during Liturgy plus two in preparation)
  - Vespers (*raising of incense the evening before the Liturgy*)
  - Matins (*raising of incense the morning before the Liturgy*)
  - Liturgy Psalm & Gospel

“And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

# Liturgy Structure:

## (2) Breaking of Bread

- Institution of the Holy **Eucharist**
- Distribution of Christ's **Body** and **Blood** (Holy Communion)

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the **breaking of bread**, and in prayers.”

# Liturgy Structure:

## (3) Prayers

- Prayers which lead to the Holy Communion.
- Supplications for the Church unity and peace, the hierarchy and clergy, the safety of the world, the seasons, and the offerings.
- There are also preparation prayers and praises extending from Vespers (evening before the service) until the time of the Holy Communion.

**“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in **prayers.**”**






# Liturgy Structure:

## (4) Fellowship

- **Agape Meal** after the Liturgy may be offered to the congregation in the Church Hall after the Holy Communion
- **Eulogia** (Arabic: “orban” or “lukmat al-barakah”)  
This is a portion of consecrated bread, distributed to worshippers by the priest at the end of the liturgical service.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and **fellowship**, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

# Biblical Foundation of the Liturgy (John's Gospel)

BIBLE RESOURCE		LITURGY
Disciples prepare Last Supper (John 13:4-11)		Vespers (night before service)
Jesus washes Disciples feet (John 13:12-17)		Matins (morning of service)
Teachings of Jesus (John 14,15,16)		Readings
Prayers of Jesus (John 17)		Liturgy Prayers
Disciples take Communion		Holy Communion

# Daily Coptic Readings

The Church selects out daily **readings** from the **Gospels, Acts,** the **Pauline** Epistles, **Catholic** Epistles, **Psalms** and parts of the **Old Testament** (other than the Psalms, OT scripture is read during the holy days of Jonah's Fast, Lent and the Holy Week).

These readings recited in the Divine Liturgy are contained in a book called The "**Lctionary**", a Greek word literally meaning "a section for every day."

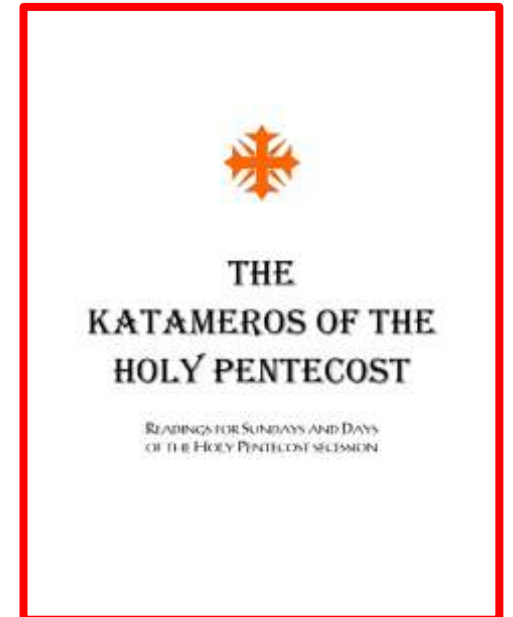
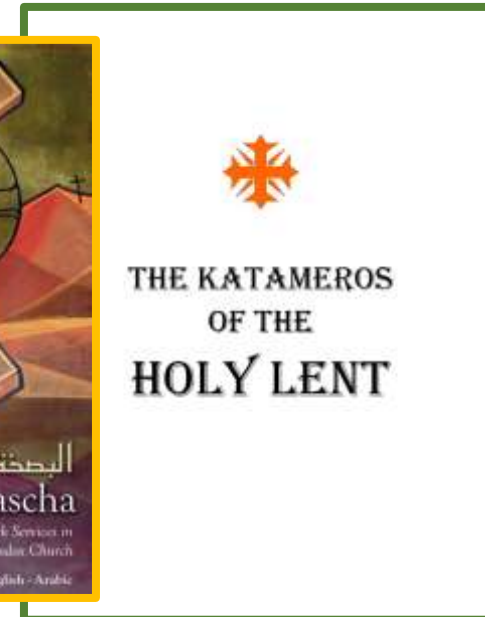
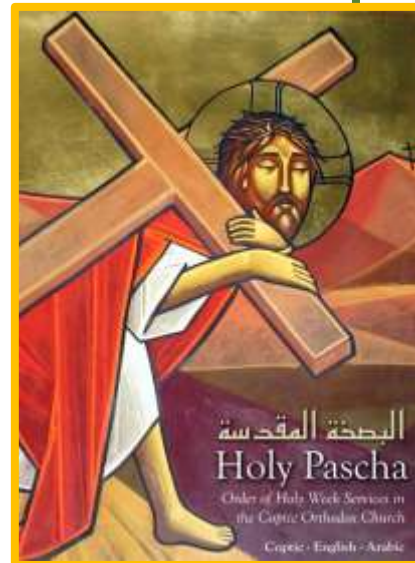
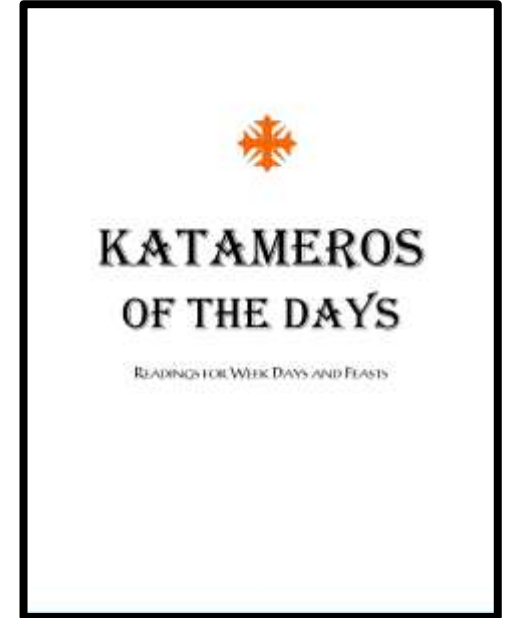
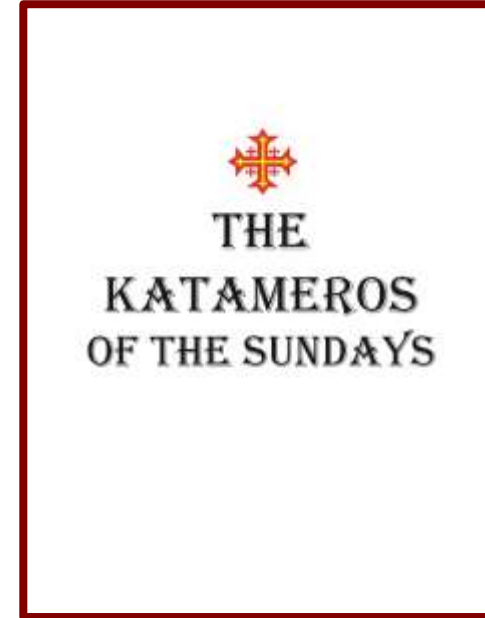
It is an ecclesiastical book, which contains sections from the Holy Bible, divided and assigned to each day of the year.



# Coptic Liturgical Readings

## Coptic Lectionaries

- **Sunday Katameros**  
*Sunday Readings*
- **Weekday Katameros**  
*Readings of Monday to Saturday  
Based on one of the Saints of the Day*
- **Lenten Katameros**  
*Readings during Great Lent*
- **Passion Week Services**  
*Services of Holy Pascha*
- **Pentecostal Katameros**  
*Readings of 50-day period  
between Easter & Pentecost*



# Coptic Readings Explained

- I GENERAL INTRODUCTION**
- II SELECTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ ON SUNDAYS**
- III THE WEEKDAYS AND HOLY FEASTS OF THE CHURCH**
  - The Head of the Church**
  - The Weekdays Lectionary**
  - The Body of the Church**
- IV THE GREAT LENT**
- V HOLY WEEK, OF PASCRA [Passion Week]**
- VI HOLY PENTECOST**

## **FOCUS ON THE COPTIC FAMILY**

*A Scriptural and Liturgical Guide  
Based on  
the Coptic Orthodox Lectionary  
(Katamaros)*



by Fr. Mikhail E. Mikhail, D.Min



*The Author with  
H.H. Pope Shenouda III  
during his historic 1989  
visit to America*

# Coptic Lectionary sections

## 1. Sundays

*Focus on the work of the Holy Trinity, showing the Love of God the **Father** (who sent to us His Son), the Grace of His Only-Begotten **Son**, and the Fellowship of the **Holy Spirit**.*

*These readings present to us **Jesus Christ** in various aspects of His **life, work, teachings and miracles**.*

## 2. Weekdays

*Present to us the Holy **Saints** of the Church and its martyrs who witnessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ despite persecutions.*

## 3. **The Great Lent**

## 4. **The Holy Week**

*In addition to NT & Psalms readings,  
heavy focus on OT prophecies every day.*

## 5. **Pentecost** *focus on Christ as our Faith, Bread of Life, ...*

# The Coptic Liturgical Calendar

`Thoout (1-30)	Paope (1-30)	Hathor (1-30)	Koiahk (1-30)	Tobe (1-30)	Meshir (1-30)	Paremhotep (1-30)	Parmoute (1-30)	Pashons (1-30)	Paone (1-30)	Epep (1-30)	Mesore (1-30)	Nesi (1-5)
Sept 11 - ...	Oct 11 - ...	Nov 10 - ...	Dec 10 - ...	Jan 9 - ...	Feb 8 - ...	Mar 10 - ...	Apr 9 - ...	May 9 - ...	June 8 - ...	July 8 - ...	Aug 7 - ...	Sept 6-10
Coptic New Year			Christmas	Theophany	Great Lent	Easter		Ascension & Pentecost		Apostles' Feast	Saint Mary's Feast	

**The Love of  
God the Father**

**The Grace of His  
Only-Begotten Son**

**The Fellowship of  
the Holy Spirit**

# The Coptic Calendar (1734 AM) – 2017/18 AD

Thoout (1-30)	Paope (1-30)	Hathor (1-30)	Koiahk (1-30)	Tobe (1-30)	Meshir (1-30)	Paremhotep (1-30)	Parmoute (1-30)	Pashons (1-30)	Paone (1-30)	Epep (1-30)	Mesore (1-30)	Nesi (1-5)
Sept 11 - ...	Oct 11 - ...	Nov 10 - ...	Dec 10 - ...	Jan 9 - ...	Feb 8 - ...	Mar 10 - ...	Apr 9 - ...	May 9 - ...	June 8 - ...	July 8 - ...	Aug 7 - ...	Sept 6-10
<b>The Love of God the Father</b>				<b>The Grace of His Only-Begotten Son</b>				<b>The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit</b>				
<b>Coptic New Year (1)</b>			<b>Christmas (29)</b>	Circumcision (6)	<b>Great Lent starts (4)</b>	Feast of the Cross (10)	Thomas Sunday (7)	<b>Ascension (9)</b>		Apostles' Feast (5)	Transfiguration (13)	
Feast of the Cross (17)				Theophany (11)	Presentation in Temple (8)	Hosanna Sunday (23)		<b>Pentecost (19)</b>			Assumption of St. Mary (16)	
				Wedding at Cana (13)		Covenant Thursday (27)		Entrance to Egypt (24)				
				Jonah's Fast (21)		Great Friday (28)						
				Jonah's Passover (24)		Joyous Saturday (29)						
						Annunciation (29)						
						<b>Easter (30)</b>						

# Coptic Reference Books

- Holy Bible
- Agpeya Prayer Book
- Katameros (Lectionary of Church Readings)
- Divine Liturgy Services (known as “Kholagi” in Arabic)
- Passion Week (Pascha) Services
- Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)
- Antiphonary
- Psalmody Praises
- Other Services (Baptism, Crowning, Unction, Ordination, Funeral, ...)
- Various Sunday School Curriculums followed in Coptic Dioceses





# Bible Translations used in Coptic Church

## Greek & Coptic

- NT **Greek**, and OT Septuagint translation to Greek from original **Hebrew**
- **Coptic** text translated from original scripture (preserved in manuscripts)

## English, French, Arabic

- **NKJV** (New King James Version) commonly used for both NT & OT  
*(Psalm numbering typically follows Septuagint in Coptic Prayer Books, #'s may be  $\pm 1$  off of NKJV)*
- **OSB** (Orthodox Study Bible) and **NRSV** (New Revised Standard Version) also used
- **Louis Segond** and **Darby** among the commonly used French translations.
- **Smith and Van Dyke** is one of the commonly used Arabic translations.
- Scripture can also be translated directly from **Coptic** text  
*(e.g. for **Deutro-Canonical Books** and some Biblical Prayers particularly during Holy Week)*

# Coptic Readings

## ***Daily Readings available at:***

- [copticchurch.net/classes/getLectionary.php](http://copticchurch.net/classes/getLectionary.php)
- [suscopts.org/readings](http://suscopts.org/readings)
- [suscopts.org/wiki/Coptic Reader](http://suscopts.org/wiki/Coptic_Reader)  
(Apple iOS & Android 'Coptic Reader' app)



# Coptic Reader App

Coptic Reader is a mobile application ... developed and maintained by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States and contains the official Diocese translation of all the prayer books of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Prayers include the Coptic Book of Hours (**Agpeya**), the Holy **Psalmody**, the Holy **Pascha**, the three Divine **Liturgies** with integrated Service of the Deacons, Unction of the Sick, Crowning, Baptism, Distribution Melodies, Antiphonary, and the **readings for the entire liturgical year** including the Synaxarion.



# Coptic Prayer of Thanksgiving

Used at start of all church services

- Liturgy (Eucharist)
- Raising of Incense (Vespers & Matins)
- Baptism Ceremonies
- Crowning Ceremonies
- Funeral Services

Used in daily prayers ...

- More on this next time, God willing



## ●The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

For He has covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to Himself, spared us, supported us, and has brought us to this hour.

Let us also ask Him to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life, the Pantocrator, the Lord our God.

O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ,

we thank You for everything, concerning everything, and in everything.

For You have covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to Yourself, spared us, supported us, and have brought us to this hour.

Therefore, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind, grant us to complete this holy day and all the days of our life in all peace with Your fear.



All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us and from all Your people, and from this Your holy place.

But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us, for it is You who have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, Through the grace, compassion, and love-of-mankind of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

Through whom the glory, the honor, the dominion, and the worship are due unto You, with Him and the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, who is of one essence with You, now and at all times and unto the age of all ages. Amen.

# Optional (45 minute) 3-part video series

## *Fr. James Soliman gives introduction to the Coptic Liturgy*

- <https://www.theotokos.org/single-post/2018/03/17/Journey-to-Heaven-Introduction-To-The-Coptic-Orthodox-Divine-Liturgy>

"Journey to Heaven: Introduction To The Coptic Orthodox Divine Liturgy"

March 17, 2018

