



Coptic Orthodox Christianity

Coptic Rites (Sacraments)

Fall 2018

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What is a Church?

According to the Coptic Orthodox Teaching

- **Ecclesia** (Greek) is a **Congregation**/Gathering for all, Universal, United, Undivided by ethnicity or culture or circumstance
- **God's Chosen People** as Saint Peter says, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people ..."* (1 Peter 2:9)
- The **Body** of Christ as stated by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:27
- The **Bride** of Christ as seen by Saint John in the Book of Revelation
- A **New Creation** as Saint Paul states, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (1 Corinthians 5:17)
- The **Dwelling** of God – the Church is everywhere because God is everywhere
- The **Kingdom** of God as Our Lord Jesus tells us; it is **Heaven** on Earth
- The Church is our **Mother** as Saint Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage) writes:

*"nobody can call **God** as His **Father**, unless they call the **Church** as their **Mother**"*

Beloved Mothers



Our Natural Mother



Our Spiritual Mother
(Church & Baptismal Font)



Mother Mary
(Intercessor
and Maternal
Role Model)

My loving mother ...

My mother:

- **gave birth** to me
- **feeds & nourishes** me
- **guides & teaches** me
- **cares** for me

My spiritual mother, the Church:

- **gave birth** to me
(spiritually in baptism)
- **feeds & nourishes** me
(with the Word of God)
- **guides & teaches** me
(spiritually)
- **cares** for me
(through the **Sacraments**)

The Coptic Church is a Sacramental Church

What is a Sacrament?

Invisible Gift of God with Visible Sign

Visible Sign

Administered by a Priest
Seen by our Physical Eyes



Invisible Gift

Work of the Holy Spirit
Seen by the Eyes of Faith

“Outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.”

-- St. Augustine

Sacraments of the Coptic Orthodox Church

1. **Baptism** Gift of a **new nature** able to enter God's **Kingdom**
2. **Confirmation** Gift of becoming a **dwelling** of God's Holy Spirit
3. **Confession** Gift of **forgiveness** of sins when we faithfully repent
4. **Communion** Gift of the Lord's **Body & Blood**
Given for remission of sin, and attaining eternal life
5. **Unction** Gift of **healing**
6. **Marriage** Gift of **unity** of Bride & Groom in Christ
7. **Priesthood** Gift of **administering** God's sacraments

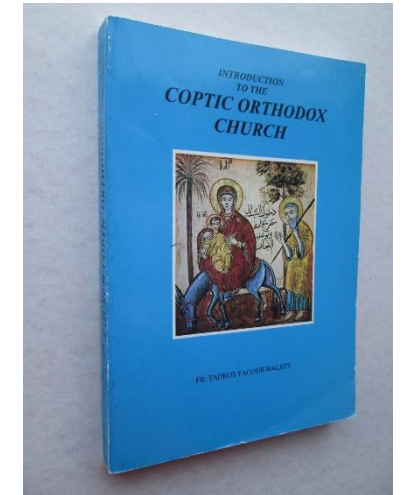
Coptic Personalities

Father Tadros Malaty



Fr Tadros Malaty

Fr Tadros Malaty is a Coptic Orthodox priest serving in Alexandria, Egypt but travels often to lecture as well as fulfilling other pastoral duties. He is a theologian and historian.



Literature

1. You are my delightful garden
2. Tradition and orthodoxy
3. Unity of the church and the church sacraments
4. The school of Alexandria-Origin
5. The epistle to the Hebrews
6. The fiery spirit
7. The divine grace
8. The book of Deuteronomy
9. Lectures in patrology-The Apostolic fathers
41. Preaching in the post Apostolic era
42. Purity...topics, question & answers
43. Short stories
44. Short stories 2
45. Song of Songs
46. Genesis
47. Exodus
48. Hosea-a patristic commentary
49. Isaiah-a patristic commentary
50. Joel-a patristic commentary
51. Malachi-a patristic commentary

Fr. Tadros Malaty's *Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church*

is an excellent reference.

On pages 316-317, he
enumerates the Coptic
Orthodox view of the
sacraments.

1) Sacrament of Baptism

- The Church baptises babies and adults
- Baptism is by total immersion three times
- The Church teaches that baptism is essential for salvation

Baptism



***Instituted by the Lord Jesus by His Baptism in the River Jordan
and by His words to Nicodemus saying:***

“Most assuredly I say to you,

unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God ...

Most assuredly, I say to you,

unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”

John 3

and by saying to our fathers the Apostles,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 28:19

Baptism

- A New Birth
- Gift of a New Nature
- **Citizenship into God's Kingdom**
- Die with Christ (old nature);
Rise with Christ (new nature)
- **Visible Sign: Water**
- Baptism by immersion 3 times
 - In the Name of the Holy Trinity
 - Buried with Christ for 3 days
- Infants permitted to be baptized
 - Not denied the right to partake of the Spiritual sustenance
 - Based on the acceptance of faith by parents or godparents

2) Sacrament of Confirmation

- This sacrament takes place immediately after Baptism.
- The person is anointed with oil of Myron with 36 signs of the cross on their joints and sense organs.
- An appropriate prayer is used for each place of anointing.
- Oil of Myron is made by adding spices and perfumes (including those used to anoint Jesus after the Crucifixion) to pure olive oil.

Confirmation



Instituted by Lord Jesus when He said:

“If anyone thirsts let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” John 7:37-39

About the Sacrament of Confirmation, in the Book of Acts it is mentioned:

“Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” Acts 8:14-17

Confirmation



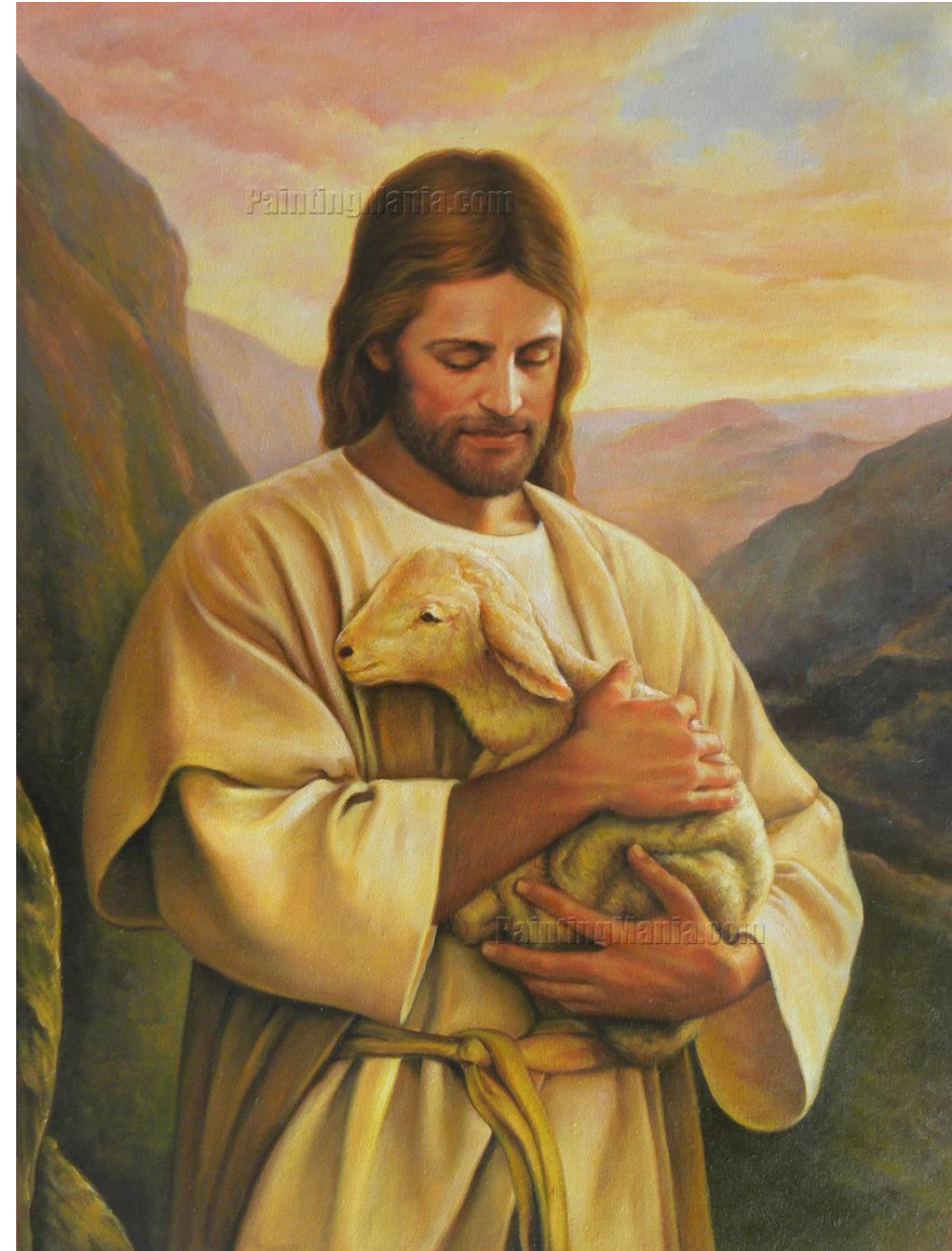
- Dwelling of the Holy Spirit
- Visible Sign: Holy Chrism Oil
(previously was by the laying of hands of the bishops)
- Confirmation also called Chrismation
 - Holy Chrism 'Myron' Oil
 - 36 crosses on entire body
 - The body (along with spirit) are dedicated to the Lord
- Coptic Church administers this immediately following Baptism

3) Sacrament of Confession

- Two parts: Repentance & Confession
- Regular confession is necessary if a person wishes to take communion

***“If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us our
sins and to cleanse us from all
unrighteousness.”***

1 John 1:8-9



Coptic Prayer for Repentance “LORD, PLEASE HELP!”

My Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, treasure of mercy and spring of salvation, I come to You confessing my sins. I confess that with boldness I dared to defile Your holy sanctuary with my sins.

Now I seek Your **mercy** and **love**, for Your mercies are **boundless**; You never turn back a sinner who comes to You. I confess that my mind is burdened with sin and that I have no strength left. Do not turn away from me; do not rebuke me in Your anger nor chasten me in Your displeasure. I am worn out; have **compassion** upon me, O Lord. Do not judge me according to Your justice, but according to Your **mercy**.

Remember Your creation; do not put me on trial, because none of Your servants can justify their deeds. Dress me in a new attire that befits Your glory. Forgive my sins and I shall sing, “**Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven.**” When I confess my sins and reveal my iniquities, You cleanse me. Amen.

Confession



Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He said to His pure disciples:

**“Assuredly I say to you,
whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and
whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”**

Matthew 18:18

and after Resurrection He said,

**“As the Father has sent me, I also send you”
and when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them
“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are
forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”**

John 20:21-22



Confession

- **Gift of Forgiveness**
- Hand in hand with Repentance
- **Visible Sign: Laying of hands of the Priest to give Absolution**
- Repentance & Confession
 - Stop doing bad/harmful things
 - Increase doing good/useful things
 - Forgiveness through the price paid by the Lord
- Practiced regularly in Coptic Church (we are reminded to confess every 1-2 months)
- Was originally practiced publicly
- Important to receive absolution prior to communion
- A general absolution is prayed at the beginning of the Liturgy, for sins that have yet to be confessed

Analogy

- I am in a car
- Speeding towards the West part of town
- GPS is on my phone, but it's voice is drowned out
- With the radio music blaring
- I don't realize that I'm heading towards imminent DANGER
- I am speeding towards a chemical spill
- IF I am able to hear the GPS, THEN, I would STOP the car, AND, make a legal U-turn, AND, quickly drive ... away from DANGER towards SAFETY.

I am in a car
(in this body in this life)

DANGER
(traps of wicked one)

GPS
(Word of God)

STOP
(Realizing Danger)

U-TURN
(Repentance)

Keep DRIVING to SAFETY
(Life of Repentance)

Coptic Personalities

Father Anthony Messeh



***“there is no practice
that will DIRECTLY contribute
to your spiritual growth
more than the regular
practice of Confession”***

-- Fr. Anthony Messeh

www.franthony.com/blog/a-how-to-guide-for-confession

***Fr. Anthony is a Coptic Priest and author of
“Whatever, God” Rediscovering the One I thought I knew***

Coptic Prayer before Confession “LORD, I AM SORRY!”

*O Holy Father, who desires the repentance of sinners,
promising to accept them back;
look now, O Lord, at my sinful soul for I have erred and lost my way in
the valleys of transgressions for many years, and I am embittered and
wretched for being removed from the fountain of my salvation.*

*Yet, now I come to You, asking to be cleansed from all defilement and
filth. Do not reject, but accept me. Look at me with **compassion** and
deal with me **mercifully** and I will be **cleansed** and **saved**; do not
neglect me lest I perish. Grant me **grace** that I may approach You
with **faith** and **hope**, to **confess** my trespasses and my sins. **Enlighten**
my heart that I may **realize** my sins, my mistakes and my straying.
Grant me **determination** to forsake evil that I may be **established** in
Your commandments and live for the glory of Your holy name. Amen.*

Coptic Prayer after Confession “LORD, THANK YOU!”

I thank Your goodness, O Lover of Mankind because You did not desire that I perish, but have awakened me from my slumber and guided me to Your path. You saved me from the valley of destruction, and brought me to the safety of Your bosom.

*Fill me with hope and faith, for I have come to You as the sick one to his **physician**, and as the hungry to the **Spring of living water**, as the poor to the **Source of riches**, as the sinners to the **Savior**, and as the dead to the **Fountain of Life**; for You are my **salvation**, my **healer**, my **life**, my **strength**, my **comfort**, my **joy**, and my **rest** is in You.*

Help me, protect me, and teach me to put my will in Your hands, that I may live according to Your will.

Remove my weakness that I may be firm and continue to be faithful to You until the end. Amen.

4) Sacrament of the Eucharist (Communion)

- This is considered the most important sacrament
- The Church accepts the doctrine of transubstantiation
- Copts typically receive Communion immediately after the sacraments of Baptism, Confession, Matrimony and Priesthood
- Children (once baptized) of any age can take Communion
- Adults fast for 9 hours without food or water before Communion

Communion



*Instituted by the Lord Jesus in the upper room in Zion,
on the night of His passion when He took bread,
blessed it and broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying,*

“Take eat, this is My Body.”

**Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to
them, and they all drank from it and He said to them
“This is My Blood of the new covenant which is shed for many”**

Mark 14: 22-24

Prayer before Communion

by St. John Chrysostom

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are truly Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is truly Your own immaculate Body and that this is truly Your own precious Blood.

Therefore, I pray You, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance.

Make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Your immaculate Mysteries, unto the remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen

Communion



- **Body & Blood of Christ**
- Sacrament of Sacraments
- **Visible sign: Bread & Wine**
- Bread transformed to the Body; Wine transformed to the Blood
- Eucharist is given for:
 - (i) Remission of Sins
 - (ii) Eternal Life
- A single Orbana bread, baked in a specific way, is chosen to become the Lamb (leaven is used a sign of the sins Christ bore on our behalf)
- We remove our shoes to partake of this sacrament (as Moses was instructed to take off his sandals at the burning bush passage)

Prayer after Communion

by St. Basil the Great

O Lord, Christ our God, King of the ages, and Creator of all, I thank You for all the good things which You have bestowed upon me, and for this communion of Your immaculate and life-giving Mysteries.

Therefore, I entreat You, O Good One and Lover of Mankind, keep me in Your tabernacle and under the shadow of Your wings. Grant that, with a pure conscience, even unto my least breath, I may worthily partake of Your holy things, unto the remission of my sins and unto life eternal.

For You are the Bread of life, the fountain of all holiness, the giver of good things, and unto You we ascribe glory, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.

5) Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He said to His disciples,

“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers”

Matthew 10:8

and

**“Whatever city you enter ...
heal the sick who are there.”**

Luke 10:8

Unction



The Apostles then put the Lord's words into practice:

"They anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them."

Mark 6:13

St. James the Apostle advised believers to practice it, by saying,

"Is anyone among you sick?

Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

James 5:14-15

Unction



- **Healing ...**
according to God's will
- **Visible sign: Holy Unction Oil**
- Coptic Church practices this sacrament:
 - For Families or Individuals
(in houses of the believers)
 - Communally
(in church, typically during the Great Lent fast)

6) Sacrament of Holy Matrimony (Marriage)

Instituted by the Lord Jesus who blessed the Sacrament of Matrimony by attending the wedding of Cana of Galilee, where,

“He manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him”

John 2: 1-11

Also, our teacher St. Paul says,

“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church”

Ephesians 5:32

This means that the physical union between a man and his wife is a sign and symbol of a greater spiritual matter, that is, of the unity of heart and soul, resembling the unity of Christ and the Church.

Marriage



- **Union of ...**
Christ, Groom, Bride
- **Visible sign: wedding rings**
- Unbreakable covenant
(no divorce) according to the words of Christ, “what God has joined, let no man separate”
- Coptic Ceremony full of wonderful symbols with deep meanings (crowns, robes, rings)

7) Sacrament of Priesthood

Instituted by the Lord Jesus when He chose His twelve disciples among many of His followers, and called them Apostles.

The selection was accomplished after a whole night of prayer, when the Lord Jesus went out to the mountain to pray (Luke 6: 12-13), and then sent them to preach saying,

“The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” Matthew 10:7

The Lord said to them,

“I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” John 15:16

He gave them the authority saying,

“Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”

Matthew 18:18

Priesthood



After the resurrection, the Lord ...

“Breathed on them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained” John 20:23

... and to them only, He said,

“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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” Matthew 28:19-20

He gave the mystery of His Holy Body and Blood only to them saying,

“Do this in remembrance of Me” Luke 22:19

Priesthood



- **Minister of Christ to administer the Sacraments**
- Unbreakable covenant
- Priesthood is a calling for life
- **Visible sign: laying of hands**
- No man takes this honour unto himself, but it is for those who God calls, as Aaron was
- Coptic Priests can be Celibate (e.g. monks) or Married
 - Coptic Priests serving in the community should be Married
- Coptic Priestly attire
 - outside of service is a black tunic, black hat
 - during Liturgy is white tunic with embroidered crosses
- Grow beards (Lev 19:27, 21:1-5)

Additional Coptic Rites

In addition to the Rites of the 7 Sacraments, there are ...

- **Funeral** Rites
- **Holy (Passion) Week** Services
- **Ordinations** (monks, nuns, deacons in addition to clergy)
- **Consecrations** (icons, church vessels, churches & monasteries)
- **Coptic Psalmody** (Midnight Praise, Morning Praise, Vespers Praise)
- Special Feasts & Occasions:
 - **Palm Sunday** Service
 - **Bright Saturday** Service (Praise, Prophecies, Book of Revelation)
 - **Blessing of the Water** “Laqqan” (Epiphany, Covenant Thursday, Feast of the Apostles)
 - **Pentecost Kneeling** Prayers
 - **Feast of the Cross** procession
- Baking of **Oblation Bread**
- Making of **Holy Myron Oil**

Holy Orders

Deacon

- Chanter (“Epsaltos”)
- Reader (“Oghnostos”)
- Sub-Deacon
- Deacon
- Arch-Deacon



Priest

- Priest
- Arch-Priest (“Hegomen”)



Bishop

- Bishop
- Arch-Bishop (Metropolitan)
- Pope (Patriarch)



Why an Ostrich Egg?

Traditionally hung on the Iconostasis at the front of Coptic Churches to remind us of ...

- **God's Care for us**

Ostriches are known to keep an eye on their egg 24/7 during the incubation period, so this is a symbol to show that the church is like the egg that God never abandons but has His caring eyes on us at all times.

- **The Resurrection**

An egg also reminds us of the Resurrection (when the baby bird breaks out of the egg into life) ... this also the reason why Copts (and other Christians) have Easter eggs. It helps us remain focused, gazing at the altar, as an ostrich gazes and focuses on its egg until it hatches.



Optional (8 minute video) Homework 😊

Fr. Gabriel Wissa explains why Baptism is Essential for Salvation

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fZFgLJhWqA>

