



St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church Pre-Service Training Seminars

The Rites of the Coptic Orthodox Church



Lecture 2

The Sacraments of Eucharist, Unction of the Sick, and Holy Orders (Priesthood)

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

The Rites of the Coptic Church

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St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 2:
*THE SACRAMENTS
OF THE CHURCH*

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

St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church ✠ كنيسة الشهيد العظيم مارمينا العجايبى

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 Unction of the Sick
7. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- Known as: Sacrament of Holy Communion , Sacrament of Thanksgiving, The Lord's Supper , The Mysterious Supper or Sacrament of Community
- The Sacrament of Communion is a Holy Sacrament by which the believer eats the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, presented by the Bread and Wine. This Sacrament has the greatest importance among the Seven Church Sacraments. Sometimes it is called: "The Mystery of Mysteries".
- The Lord Jesus instituted the holy Eucharist on Covenant Thursday, in the Upper Room of Zion.

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- After He celebrated the Rite of Passover of the Jews, He rose and washed the feet of His disciples, as a sign of repentance and preparation, then sat down and instituted the Passover of the New Covenant, which is the Sacrament of Holy Communion:
 - *"He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body', then He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to His disciples saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28)*

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- From these words of Christ we see that the Holy Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ. It is not a symbol. It is truly the body and truly the blood of Christ.
- Also, from the above words of Christ we see that this sacrament was established by Christ "for the forgiveness of sins."
- The main purpose of the sacrament then is the forgiveness of man's sins. Along with the forgiveness, though, come the sanctification and glory, eternal life.

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- When the priest gives Holy Communion, he says to each person: "the Body and Blood of Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and life eternal."
- This proves that the Holy Eucharist is the spiritual nourishment of man. Just as man cannot live without natural nourishment, so neither can he live without spiritual nourishment--the body and blood of Christ--without Holy Eucharist.
- Christ makes this very clear. He says that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John, 6:53-54).

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

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The Sacrament of the Eucharist

❖ Worthiness for partaking of the Sacrament:

- *"He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body" (1 Corinthians 11:29)."*
- Conditions for worthiness:
 - **True Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**
 - **Repentance**
 - **Reconciliation with others**
 - **Feeling unworthy and sinful**
 - **Necessary Physical Purity For Communion**
 - Cleanness of body and clothing
 - The faithful must be fasting (9 hours for adults)
 - Physical readiness

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament: "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper" (Matthew 10:8), and, "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10: 8-9).
- "So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them" (Mark 6:12,13)

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

- "Is any among you sick? Let them call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-5).
- From these words of St. James the purpose of the sacrament is vividly clear. It is bodily healing and forgiveness of sins. And as the priest anoints with Holy Unction, he says that this sacrament is for the "healing of the soul and the body."
- Historically, it is proven that the sacrament of Unction was celebrated in conjunction with the sacrament of Repentance and Confession.

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

- The sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated every time a Christian needs it. The sacrament is not an obligatory, but a voluntary sacrament.
- It is good, though, for all Christians to draw near to this sacrament. This is why our Church has laid down that the sacrament be celebrated in Church on the last Friday of the Holy Lent.
- Holy Unction does not replace Repentance and Confession. In essence, the forgiveness of sins comes through faith in God, sincere repentance, and confession of sins.





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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- When the priest comes to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, he will be accomplishing two Sacraments together; the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession as well as the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick.
- Confession must occur before starting the sacrament of unction of the sick.
- On the table is placed a dish which contains some pure oil (preferably olive oil) with seven pieces of cotton wool shaped like wicks. Each wick is lit at the start of each prayer.





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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The priest stands facing the East, and the sick is seated facing the west. The rest of the family members stand around the priest.
- The priest then starts the **seven** prayers of the Kandeel. The Prayer starts by the Thanksgiving prayer and Psalm 50 (for repentance).
- Each prayer consists of the following:
 - 1- A litany (Oushia)
 - 2- Reading from the Pauline Epistle.
 - 3- The Litany of the Gospel.
 - 4- A reading from the Holy Gospel.
 - 5- A special prayer.
 - 6- The Lord's prayer.





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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The first & last prayers have extra or different prayers to be said...for example: the first prayer has some prayers and supplications that the priest is asking for God's mercy and salvation to the person and the place.
- Also in the first prayer we read the Catholic Epistle from James (5:10-20), instead of the Pauline Epistle
- In the last prayer, there are 4 different prayers to be said by the priest after the gospel reading, then they recite the Orthodox creed with 41 times "Kirialison"
- After that the priest prays the absolutions for the sick person and anoints him with the Holy oil.





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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The order of Prayer of the litanies is the same as those in the Baptismal Rite and Laqqan :
 1. The sick
 2. Travelers
 3. Waters
 4. Leaders
 5. The Departed
 6. Oblations
 7. Catechumens
- Once a year the Church performs this Sacrament in the Church, and it takes place on the last Friday of the holy Lent (that is, the Friday before Passion Week). It is called the 'General Kandeel'.

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The General Kandeel serves the purpose of:
 - Reminding people of the importance and significance of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, for the healing of every believer.
 - Serving all those believers who have not called the priest privately at home.
 - Anointing all the believers prior to Passion Week, for it is not permissible to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick during the Holy Week.
- The Sacrament of Unction of the Sick must be performed for a person who is genuinely sick and in need of this sacrament.

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The priest and the person who accepts the Sacrament must be abstaining from food for certain hours before accomplishing the Sacrament. Hence, performing the Sacrament in the early morning whilst people are still fasting, is the most appropriate time.
- During visits to homes during Holy Lent, there is no need for the priest when doing this to pray part of the prayers of the Unction of the Sick. Instead, he should pray the ritual prayers of 'Blessing the House'; prayers which ask the Lord to dwell within the house and keep the members of the household from all evil.

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The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

❖ Rite of the Sacrament:

- The Prayer for blessing houses:
 - It is different from the Holy Sacrament of Unction, so it can be done at any time in the homes of the believers. It is not a necessary requirement, that the members of the household, and the priest fast, for this rite is not a Church sacrament.
 - This Prayer can be done at any time, and as often as people like.
 - This prayer is not just restricted to those with new homes, but all people, as a source of blessing in the home.

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- This sacrament was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ when He chose the twelve of his followers, and consecrated them for ministry, “He called His disciples to Him, and from them He chose twelve whom He named apostles” (Luke 6:13)
- These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them saying: “Preach saying, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:5-8)
- He gave them the authority of absolution and binding: “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” (Mat.18:18) ¹⁹

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- After His resurrection He appeared to them in the upper room in Zion and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).
- Only for them 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)

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- There are three ranks in Priesthood:
 - The order of Deacons, Deacons are Servants
 - The order of Priests, Priests are teachers
 - The order of Bishops, Bishops are overseers and shepherds
- There is only one archpriest, Christ. The priesthood of Christ is, as it were, made present by all clergy, and especially by the bishop.
- The deacon and the priest derive their priesthood from the bishop, just as the bishop derives his from Christ, and that is why priests and deacons must be in canonical and continuous dependence on the bishop; otherwise their priestly works are not valid.

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ Overview of the Sacrament:

- The bishop has the fullness of the priesthood. This is why he is the only one who can celebrate all seven sacraments.
- The priest celebrates all the sacraments except ordination, while the deacon cannot celebrate any of them on his own.
- The deacon is the helper of the priest and bishop in the celebration of the sacraments and in the execution of the responsibilities and practices that originate from the Priesthood.

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ The order of Deacons:

- 'Deacon', pronounced as such in Greek, is a Syrian word meaning 'servant'. The deacon's responsibility is to help the priest or bishop perform the religious ministry.
- The first church appointed seven deacons who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to help in service, "The twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said: 'Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business'" (Acts 6:2,3).
- "When they were chosen, they set them before the apostles and when they had prayed they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:6).

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ The order of Deacons:

- The apostles stipulated the following three conditions for nominating deacons:
 - They must be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
 - They should be appointed by the apostles through the laying on of hands with prayers.
 - They should carry out certain responsibilities in the church.
- Our teacher St. Paul also specified the requirements of a deacon, in his First Epistle to Timothy (3:8-13): "Likewise deacons must be:
 - Reverent
 - not double tongued
 - not given to too much wine(drunkenness)
 - not greedy for money

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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ The order of Deacons:

- holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience
- ruling their children and their houses well
- should be tested first, and then proved and found blameless, so they can be ordained” (1 Timothy 3:10)

– Although the rank of deacon is the most junior rank of priesthood, St. Paul praises it saying, “For those who served well as deacons, obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13).





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The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

❖ The ranks of the Holy Orders:

- Ranks of Deacons:
 - Epsaltos (hymnist)
 - Ognostis (reader)
 - Epideacon (sub-deacon)
 - Deacon (full deacon)
 - Archdeacon (leader of deacons)
- Ranks of Priests:
 - Priest
 - Hegomen
 - Khoori – Episcopos
- Ranks of Bishops:
 - Bishop, Metropolitan and Patriarch





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SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

Known as : Sacrament of Holy Communion , Sacrament of Thanksgiving The Lord's Supper , The Mysterious Supper or Sacrament of Community

The Meaning of the Eucharist

The Sacrament of Communion is a Holy Sacrament by which the believer eats the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, presented by the Bread and Wine. This Sacrament has the greatest importance among the Seven Church Sacraments. Sometimes it is called: "The Mystery of Mysteries".

Its Institution

The Lord Jesus instituted the holy Eucharist on Covenant Thursday, in the Upper Room of Zion, shortly before His arrest and trial. After He celebrated the Rite of Passover of the Jews, He rose and washed the feet of His disciples, as a sign of repentance and preparation, then sat down and instituted the Passover of the New Covenant, which is the Sacrament of Holy Communion. *"He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body', then He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to His disciples saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'"* (Matthew 26:26-28), and our teacher St Paul repeats the same words in 1 Corinthians (11:23-25).

From these words of Christ we see that the Holy Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ. It is not a symbol. It is truly the body and truly the blood of Christ. Christ did not say that "this symbolizes My body" and "this symbolizes My blood." He said, "this is My body" and "this is My blood." Of course, even after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, all we see with our human eyes is bread and wine. Even the taste on our tongues is that of bread and wine. In reality and in essence, though, that which we see and that which we taste is truly the body and blood of Christ. How does this happen? How does this change occur? No one can say. It is done in a mysterious way with the intervention of the Holy Spirit. As the celebrant says: "And He makes this bread into His Holy Body...and this cup also into the precious Blood of His New Covenant."

Therefore, from the above words of Christ we see that this sacrament was established by Christ "for the forgiveness of sins." The main purpose of the sacrament then is the forgiveness of man's sins. Along with the forgiveness, though, come the sanctification and glory, eternal life. This is why when the

celebrant gives Holy Communion, he says to each person: "the Body and Blood of Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and life eternal."

Beyond the above statements, the very words of Christ reveal that this sacrament has to be repeated "in remembrance" of Christ, of His incarnation, sacrifice on the cross, burial, resurrection, and of His ascension into Heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father, and His second glorious coming. So the word "in remembrance" does not mean "not true Body nor Blood" but it just gives the idea of repeating the Sacrament since Christ Himself testified about the "reality" of His Body and Blood.

In other places in Holy Scripture, Christ has assured us that His Body is "truly food" and His Blood is "truly drink." Moreover, this is shown by the fearsome saying that "whoever does not eat My body and does not drink My blood, has no life in him." This proves that the Holy Eucharist is the spiritual nourishment of man. Just as man cannot live without natural nourishment, so neither can he live without spiritual nourishment--the body and blood of Christ--without Holy Eucharist. Christ makes this very clear. He says that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John, 6:53-54).

How do we view the Eucharist?

For the first thousand years of Christian history, when the Church was visibly one and undivided, the holy gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ were received as just that: His Body and Blood. The Church confessed this was a mystery: The bread is truly His Body, and that which is in the cup is truly His Blood, but one cannot say how they become so.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries brought on the scholastic era, the Age of Reason in the West. The Roman Church, which had become separated from the Orthodox Church in A.D. 1054, was pressed by the rationalists to define how the transformation takes place. They answered with the word transubstantiation, meaning a change of substance. The elements are no longer bread and wine; they are physically changed into flesh and blood. The sacrament, which only faith can comprehend, was subjected to a philosophical definition. This second view of the Eucharist was unknown to the ancient Church.

Not surprisingly, one of the points of disagreement between Rome and the sixteenth-century reformers was the issue of transubstantiation. Unable to accept

this explanation of the sacrament, the radical reformers, who were rationalists themselves, took up the opposite point of view: the gifts are nothing but bread and wine, period. They only represent Christ's Body and Blood; they have no spiritual reality.

What is the meaning of “an unworthy manner”?

“He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body” (1 Corinthians 11:29).

Worthiness has various meanings :

True Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: as the person who approaches the Holy Communion must be a Christian Orthodox believer, baptized in the Orthodox Church, and strongly believes in the transformation of the Bread to the Body of Christ, and the mixture into the Precious Blood of Christ, and that the Communion is the actual Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus.

Repentance: the person coming to Communion must practice repentance and confession regularly with their confession-father. The priest who is the Minister of the Sacrifice, can ask the person if he is not acquainted well with them, if they practice confession? If the person does, then the priest will give them the Communion, if they do not, the priest can forbid them until such time that they do confess. This is for the personal benefit of the person and the priest too, who keeps the commandment of Priesthood carefully, for as St. Paul says: *“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup”* (1 Corinthians 11:24). Self-examination is all about being aware of ones sins and mistakes, and confessing them honestly, as St. John Chrysostom says: *“No one approaches idly or negligently, but let us approach with zeal and fervor and stay alert (ready as the judgment is prepare for those who share in an unworthy manner”.*

Reconciliation with others: anyone who approaches the Communion must be first reconciled with others, for the Lord’s advice is clear: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23,24).

We read in the Canons of St. Basil, that, “If some laymen are hostile and the clergy know about this hostility, they should not receive the Mysteries and offerings until they are reconciled” (Law 97).

Worthiness is feeling unworthy and sinful, and knowing that the Holies are for the holy person, and that no person has reached this holiness but struggles to attain it. Even if the person is contrite, repentant and confesses, he must believe in what our teacher St. Paul said: *“For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this”* (1 Corinthians 4:4).

Necessary Physical Purity For Communion:

As we spoke previously about spiritual conditions necessary for receiving Holy Communion, there are also some necessary physical preparation before receiving the Holy Communion, such as:

- + Control over all physical senses so that no obscure sins may enter the heart.
- + Cleanness of body and clothing; respectable clothes should be worn, as you are going to Church to meet the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- + The faithful must be fasting and eat light food on the eve of Communion.
- + Sexual relations between married couples should not take place either on the eve of Communion, as well as on the day of receiving the sacrament.
- + If a person is in a state of impurity,(having any impure discharge from his (her) body), he(he) must not approach Holy Communion as this is considered breaking the fast. St Severus Bin Moqufaa said, *“Sexual impurity is fast breaking, and who breaks the fast cannot be forbidden from praying, or entry of the Church or attendance of the Mass (after a complete physical cleaning of course), but only forbidden from partaking of the Mysteries.”*
- + Period of abstaining from food must be nine hours for adults, according to the number of hours of suffering of the Lord Christ during His Crucifixion, (from the Third Hour (9 am) until His sentence at the Twelfth Hour (6 pm)). For weaning infants, it is variable but usually the parents like to have some time of abstinence as a matter of honoring the Holy Sacrament (three hours is also the usual time between feeds).
- + Before Communion, it is advisable not to brush your teeth or gargle water right before Communion, in case water may accidentally be swallowed.
- + Women should not partake of the Holy Communion when they are menstruating.

+ After a woman gives birth, she is not to partake of the Holy Communion until after forty days, if she delivered a boy, and eighty days if she delivered a girl. Hence, the first time she receives Holy Communion, after child birth, is on the day of her child's baptism after the priest prays for her the woman's absolution.

Finally, these regulations were made by the Church to keep the reverence of the Holy Mystery, yet we can not ignore that many times there are special cases and considerations for different people and this is why the confession father has the right to give absolutions according to what he sees good or suitable for the benefit of the person.

All the lecture is quoted (with some modifications) from:

- ✠ SACRAMENTAL RITES IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH “
His Grace Bishop Mettaous”

- ✠ ORTHODOX CATECHISM Basic Teachings of the Orthodox Faith
by Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios
A publication of The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada)

- ✠ Orthodox Study Bible.

SACRAMENT OF UNCTION OF THE SICK

It is called the 'Sacrament of Lamps', for the early Christians used to place oil in a lamp, from which hung seven other lamps. Each lamp was lit at the beginning of every prayer. This rite still exists, however, the seven lamps were replaced by seven wicks, made from cotton wool, which sit in a plate of oil. The number seven signifies the seven spirits of God, which are mentioned in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 3:1). The Spirit of God dwells and sanctifies the oil in order to heal those anointed by it. It is advisable that the wicks be placed in the sign of the cross, in the plate of oil.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He said to His disciples: "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper" (Matthew 10:8), and, "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10: 8-9). Our fathers the Apostles practiced it according to the orders of their Master, as the Bible says, "So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them" (Mark 6:12,13).

"Is any among you sick? Let them call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-5). These are the words of St. James and he leaves no doubt that the sacrament of Unction is established by God and this how the Apostles practiced it. Historically, it is proven that the sacrament of Unction was celebrated in conjunction with Repentance and Confession.

From these words of St. James the purpose of the sacrament is vividly clear. It is bodily healing and forgiveness of sins. And as the priest anoints with Holy Unction, he says that this sacrament is for the "healing of the soul and the body."

The sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated every time a Christian needs it. The sacrament is not an obligatory, but a voluntary sacrament. It is good, though, for all Christians to draw near to this sacrament. This is why our Church has laid down that the sacrament be celebrated in Church on the last Friday of the Holy Lent.

Just as with all sacraments, so too here, if we expect to have the proper results we must accept the sacrament with faith. Of course, an ill person is not always healed, because God may have another plan for him.

Holy Unction does not replace Repentance and Confession. In essence, the forgiveness of sins comes through faith in God, sincere repentance, and confession of sins.

RITE OF THE SACRAMENT OF UNCTION OF THE SICK

When the priest comes to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, he must wear an Epitrachelion (priestly vestment), as he will be accomplishing two Sacraments together; the Sacrament of Confession and the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick.

During confession, which must take place before the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, the sick person confesses honestly and with true repentance, promising to walk with God after his recovery, and striving never to return to sin. Then the priest reads the absolution for him, after giving him advice, guidance and spiritual exercises which may be needed for his spiritual growth. The priest then advises him to receive the Holy Communion as soon as possible after the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.. If he is too sick to go to Church, the priest can bring him the Holy Communion at home.

On the table is placed a dish which contains some pure oil (preferably olive oil) with seven pieces of cotton wool shaped like wicks. Each wick is lit at the start of each prayer. The priest stands facing the East, and the sick is seated before him in reverence, facing the west. The rest of the family members stand around the priest.

The priest then starts the seven prayers of the Kandeel.

The Prayer starts by the Thanksgiving prayer and Psalm 50 (for repentance). Each prayer consists of the following :

- 1- A litany (Oushia)
- 2- Reading from the Pauline Epistle.
- 3- The Litany of the Gospel.
- 4- A reading from the Holy Gospel.
- 5- A special prayer.
- 6- The Lord's prayer.

Except for the first & last prayers which both have extra or different prayers to be said...for example: the first prayer has some prayers and supplications that the priest is asking for God's mercy and salvation to the person and the place.

Also in the first prayer we read the Catholic Epistle from James (5:10-20), instead of Pauline Epistle reading.

In the last prayer, there are 4 different prayers to be said by the priest after the gospel reading, then they recite the Orthodox creed with 41 times "Kirialison"

After that the priest prays the absolutions for the sick person and anoints him with the Holy oil.

In the church books, it is said that the sick person is to receive anointing for 7 days.

Also in some old church books, there are 7 prayers to be said while putting off the wicks.

The order of Prayer of the litanies is the same as those in the Baptismal Rite and Laqqan :

1. The sick
2. Travelers
3. Waters
4. Leaders
5. The Departed
6. Oblations
7. Catechumens

Notes:

+No unbeliever should be anointed by the oil of Unction of the Sick, as it is holy sacramental oil given only to the baptized. If a non-believer asks to be anointed, a common oil is brought and the priest makes the sign of the cross on it three times, prays the Litany of the Sick, and then anoints the sick person.

+No one should be anointed directly after Holy Communion, as Holy Communion is the perfection and seal of all Sacraments.

General Kandeel on the last Friday of Lent

It is a known fact that all sacraments are accomplished in the Church, with the exception of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick as the sick may be too weak to come to church so the priest officiates it in the home. However, once a year the Church performs this Sacrament in the Church, and it takes place on the last

Friday of the holy Lent (that is, the Friday before Passion Week). It is called the 'General Kandeel'. The General Kandeel serves the purpose of :

- ✠. Reminding people of the importance and significance of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick, for the healing of every believer.
- ✠. Serving all those believers who have not called the priest privately at home.
- ✠. Anointing all the believers prior to Passion Week, for it is not permissible to perform the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick during the Holy Week, because the Church cares for the prayers of this great week and concentrates its prayers and contemplations on the passion of Christ and the blessings of the mystery of redemption and act of salvation. Hence, the General Kandeel must take place before the holy Passion week, just as in the same way the General Funeral takes place following the Palm Sunday Mass and prior to the Pascha prayers. As no funeral rites are allowed to take place during Passion Week.

Officiating the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick in homes during Holy Lent

+ Some believers are accustomed to asking the priest, during the Holy Lent, to perform the Sacrament in their homes, as a means of blessing, even though they may not have a family member sick and in need of the Sacrament of Unction of the Sick. Because so many people request this, the priests are obliged to visit the homes, but because of time constraints, are unable to perform all seven prayers. Therefore they only end up praying one or two of the prayers in each home. They are also obliged to perform the Sacrament any time of the day or night, even if people are not abstaining from food. All these practices are incorrect, and must be stopped because:

- ✠ The Sacrament of Unction of the Sick must be performed for a person who is genuinely sick and in need of this sacrament.
- ✠ The priest and the person who accepts the Sacrament must be abstaining from food for certain hours before accomplishing the Sacrament. Hence, performing the Sacrament in the early morning whilst people are still fasting, is the most appropriate time.
- ✠ Many people consider that the priest coming to the house is a blessing, especially during the period of Lent, which is a time of spiritual revival.

They consider that the priest visiting the house is a way to encourage the household to continue in praying and fasting, and always practice the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession. There is no objection to the priest visiting and blessing homes, but there is no need for him when doing this to pray part of the prayers of the Unction of the Sick. Instead, he should pray the ritual prayers of 'Blessing the House'; prayers which ask the Lord to dwell within the house and keep the members of the household from all evil.

Prayer for blessing houses:

It is different from the Holy Sacrament of Unction, so it can be done at any time in the homes of the believers. It is not a necessary requirement, however, that the members of the household, and the priest fast, for this rite is not a Church sacrament. This Prayer can be done at any time, and as often as people like. This prayer is not just restricted to those with new homes, but all people, as a source of blessing in the home.

All the lecture is quoted (with some modifications) from:

- ✠ SACRAMENTAL RITES IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH “
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- ✠ ORTHODOX CATECHISM Basic Teachings of the Orthodox Faith
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THE SACRAMENT OF PRIESTHOOD

This sacrament was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ when He chose the twelve of his followers, and consecrated them for ministry, “He called His disciples to Him, and from them He chose twelve whom He named apostles” (Luke 6:13)

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them saying: “Preach saying, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:5-8)

He gave them the authority of absolution and binding: “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).

After His resurrection He appeared to them in the upper room in Zion and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).

Only for them 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)

There are three ranks in Priesthood:

- The order of Deacons
- The order of Priests
- The order of Bishops

Deacons are servants,

Priests are teachers,

Bishops are overseers, and shepherds.

The Priesthood is celebrated and is active here on earth. It has, however, a divine origin and works upon divine things. In essence, there is only one archpriest, Christ. The priesthood of Christ is, as it were, made present by all clergy, and especially by the bishop. The deacon and priest derive their priesthood from the bishop, just as the bishop derives his from Christ.

Priesthood does not exist when there is no canonical apostolic succession. Every priesthood that does not draw its source from the Apostles, and as a result from Christ, is not a true and genuine priesthood, but rather counterfeit. It is a false priesthood. It does not have grace and cannot give grace. It cannot sanctify and save. It is a pity and crime. False priests blaspheme the Holy Spirit and condemn their own selves and bring the naive to damnation.

Here we must repeat that the bishop has the fullness of the priesthood. This is why he is the only one who can celebrate all seven sacraments. The deacon and the priest derive their priesthood from the bishop and that is why they must be in canonical and continuous dependence on the bishop; otherwise their priestly works are not valid. The priest celebrates all the sacraments except ordination, while the deacon cannot celebrate any of them on his own. The deacon is the helper of the priest and bishop in the celebration of the sacraments and in the execution of the responsibilities and practices that originate from the Priesthood.

The order of Deacons

‘Deacon’, pronounced as such in Greek, is a Syrian word meaning ‘servant’. The deacon’s responsibility is to help the priest or bishop perform the religious ministry. The first church appointed seven deacons who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to help in service, “The twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said: ‘Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business’” (Acts 6:2,3).

“When they were chosen, they set them before the apostles and when they had prayed they laid hands on them” (Acts 6:6).

The apostles stipulated the following three conditions for nominating deacons:

They must be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

They should be appointed by the apostles through the laying on of hands with prayers.

They should carry out certain responsibilities in the church.

Our teacher St. Paul also specified the requirements of a deacon, in his First Epistle to Timothy (3:8-13): “Likewise deacons must be:

- reverent

- not double tongued
- not given to too much wine(drunkenness)
- not greedy for money
- holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience
- ruling their children and their houses well
- should be tested first, and then proved and found blameless, so they can be ordained” (1 Timothy 3:10)
- Although the rank of deacon is the most junior rank of priesthood, St. Paul praises it saying, “For those who served well as deacons, obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13).

In our Coptic Church, there are five ranks of deacons. In ascending order, they are:

Epsaltos (hymnist):

‘Epsaltos’ is derived from the Coptic word ‘Epsalmos’ meaning Psalm or hymn. Hence, ‘Epsaltos’ means ‘hymnist’.

According to his title, his responsibilities include learning and singing the hymns and praises of the church. This rank is mentioned in some of the early Church Canons, “Hymnists also must be blessed by the bishop.”

The Epsaltos is permitted to wear the tunic without the stole.

Ognostis (reader):

‘Ognostis’ is Greek word derived from two words : ‘Anagnosma’, meaning ‘reading’, and ‘Tis’, meaning ‘related to’. Thus ‘Ognostis’ means ‘the reader’.

He must be fluent (English, Arabic and Coptic) in knowing by heart the responses said before and after the Epistle readings, and read the daily readings. He must read clearly and without mistakes to enable the congregation to hear and understand. The Ognostis wears a white tunic with the stole. He wears the stole

crossing over the left shoulder and around his waist as a belt, and the ends of the stole hang from his shoulders. ('Stole' is a Greek word (Patrachelion) meaning 'grace', the rank of deacon is a grace which is taken by an individual and carried on his shoulders.). It hangs on the back like a cross to symbolize that he is sharing in carrying the cross, for the Lord says: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). The stole comes around the waist like a belt, as proof of preparation and readiness for service, like John the Baptist who wore a leather belt around his waist.

Epideacon (subdeacon) : Epideacon is a Greek word composed of two parts: 'Epi' meaning 'assistant', and 'Diacon' meaning 'deacon'. Hence, 'Epideacon' means 'Assistant Deacon'.

His Responsibilities :

He must keep watch of the church doors to forbid the entry of heretics and false teachers.

He is responsible for organizing the seating in the church, that is, the place allocated for men, women, nuns, and so on.

He is responsible for lighting the church lamps.

He is responsible for keeping in order, the church books, and the priestly and servants vestments.

He is responsible for preparing the censors

He is responsible for helping the other deacons, and replacing them if necessary.

Deacon (full deacon): 'Deacon' in Syrian, or 'Diakon' in Greek and Coptic, mean 'servant'.

The Responsibilities of a Deacon

He is responsible for saying the responses of the litanies prayed by the priest during the raising of incense and Liturgy.

He is responsible for maintaining order and quiet in the church, to ensure that the congregation stands with reverence and respect.

He is responsible for helping the priest in visiting the church's congregation.

He is responsible for recording the names of the people who have offered gifts and oblations to the church, so that the priest can remember them during the Litany of oblations. In the Apostolic Canons (Diaskolia), it is written : "The deacons write every day the names of those who have given offerings, whether they are alive or departed, so that they may be remembered during the readings and prayers" (Diaskolia 35)

In the old days, there would be a private room located at the western door of the church called the 'deacon's room', where the deacon sits and receives the gifts and offerings of the congregation in private, before they enter the church. He would write the names of those who offered gifts, including the names of those who have departed in whom the gifts are being offered, and the deacon would then give these names to the priest, who would mentioned them, silently, one by one after the Litany of Oblations during the divine Liturgy.

He is responsible for cleaning the altar and putting in order the tabernacle. He must ensure the cleanliness of the altar and its coverings, before the priest comes.

He is permitted to read the Holy Gospel of the divine Liturgy. During the deacon's ordination, the bishop says: "... he is honored to read the Gospel."

He is permitted, when necessary, to carry the chalice and give the congregation the Precious Blood, by permission from the priest.

Archdeacon (leader of deacons): Archdeacon' is a Greek word composed of two parts : 'Arch' meaning 'leader', and 'Diakon' meaning 'deacon'. Hence, 'archdeacon' mean 'the leader of deacons'.

His responsibilities: Same as the Deacon.

RANKS OF PRIESTHOOD

There are three ranks of priesthood:

Priest

Archpriest (hegomen)

Khoori Episcopos

The Priest

This is the first and essential priestly rank.

Priest means elder and also an intercessor in the holies of God for the congregation.

He is a presbyter who has the right to administer all the church sacraments except the laying on of hands and appointing priestly ranks, which is the right of a bishop or overseer or someone above him.

He is a teacher who teaches the people the word of God and leads them to the way of God, virtues, mysteries of the religion, and explains the dogmas and rites and details the word of truth, "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7).

He is a father who pastors his children compassionately, visits them with tender care and love as he is zealous for the salvation of the souls of his people and leading them to Christ, as his salvation is related to their salvation, "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8). He humbly serves them as a servant to a master as Lord Christ washed the feet of His disciples, so his service is successful and acceptable before God and people too.

The Hegomen

The word 'Hegomen' or 'Egomenos' is derived from the Greek word meaning 'provider' or 'presenter', and the 'Egomenos' is the 'senior' or 'leader' priest in church. Hegomen is only a promotional rank from a priest to a hegomen, within the rank of priesthood, and is not considered as a new ordination.

Khoori - Episcopos

KHOORI-EPISCOPOS is a Greek word meaning 'bishop' of 'villages' or 'fields'. He helps the bishop or metropolitan of the diocese in the service and visitation of the villages.

The rank of Khoori-episcopos (or the bishop or overseer) came to existence by the end of the third century AD in Asia Minor when the dioceses extended and their division was not preferred, so there existed an utmost need for the presence for the bishop to visit and care for them.

RANK OF BISHOP:

It includes: Bishop, Metropolitan and Patriarch

This is the highest rank of priesthood and its owner has the perfection of priesthood and leadership of priesthood.

The word EPISCOPOS is a Greek word that means overseer or looking from above. The Bishops are chosen among celibates who were not previously married. The bishop is distinguished from the priest by having the perfection of priesthood, and the authority of laying on of hands and ordination of all the ranks of deacons and priesthood in his diocese.

Some duties or responsibilities of the bishop:

Must not lay hands on anyone hastily but carefully after his goodness is testified.

Does not accept any complaint about a priest or a deacon except from two or three witnesses.

Judges rightly among his congregation without hypocrisy.

May reward or punish any deacon or priest in his diocese after he assures his deeds and attitude and service, and after hearing the witnesses and giving him a chance to defend himself.

Does not absent himself from his diocese except by a permission from the Patriarch and for a period no more than six months.

Does not move from his diocese because it is small or due to poverty, draught or small number of congregation, to another richer or larger diocese.

The bishop does not occupy himself with any worldly work like trade or industry so that he is free to shepherd his congregation.

Metropolitan:

Whatever applies on the bishop from rules, specifications and responsibilities, it also applies on the metropolitans as they have the same bishopric rank. "Metropolitan" is derived from the Greek word: Metropolitans which means the mother city or the major city of the diocese. So Metropolitan is the bishop of the progressing Mother City.

Metropolitan is progressing the bishops in all Church Rites.

Rank of metropolitan is only a promotion from bishop to metropolitan on the same diocese with the same name.

THE POPE: PATRIARCH

Patriarch is a word derived from Greek word “Patriarchies”, composed of two parts: Patria: the tribe & Arches: ruler, so it means ruler of the tribe.

+ But the word ‘Pope’ is said to be derived from Greek word Papas, which means father. Others say it is a compound word from father of fathers, then simplified to Pope for ease of pronunciation. It is historically known that this surname is specified for the Pope of Alexandria first, since Pope Yarokloos (the thirteenth Pope) and from Alexandria it conveyed to Rome.

The Patriarch is the highest rank in the bishopric level and has the highest or greatest ruling of priesthood.

Patriarch is the leader of the Church, bishops and all metropolitans.

Patriarch is the successor of the Apostles and first father of the Church.

Patriarch is entrusted by Christ for all the congregation and the souls of the flock in his ordination. The archbishop says to him, after he places the rod of pastorate on the altar: “Receive the rod of pastorate from the hand of the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ, the Ever Living Son of God, to shepherd the flock, nourish it by living doctrine as He entrusted you on the soul of His flock, and from your hands their blood will be asked.” So it is a great and difficult responsibility, and needs its carrier to pray a great deal for God to help him to carry it and accomplish its many serious duties.

The Patriarch is distinguished from the bishop or metropolitan by these two rights: right of ordination of bishops and their promotion, and the right of making the Holy Myron for the whole Church.

The Great Cathedral is the location of the Patriarchal See where bishops are ordained and promoted by the Patriarch.

Patriarch must be chosen from among scholar, spiritual, capable monks for leadership and rightly defining the word of truth, or from among common bishops who have no dioceses, as the Church Canon forbids transfer of bishop from one diocese to another for whatever reason. His age must not be less than forty years upon his ordination.

Generally, all the ordinations of the deacons & priests are performed in the Holy Liturgy right after the prayer of Reconciliation since their ministry is like ambassadors of Christ calling people to reconcile with God while the ordination of the Bishops (Metropolitan & Patriarch) is performed after the reading of the Acts of the Apostles as the church consider them to be the successors of the Apostles, and their ministry is the continuation of that of the Apostles.

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