



IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD AMEN

COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
**ST. MARY AND ST. JOSEPH**  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

**Introduction**

- + Deaconism is a deep, holy, and reverent service.
- + Your job as a deacon isn't just to say responses, it is to keep the church in perfect order at all times.
- + God will remember every small thing you do, and will reward and bless you for it.
- + Instead of learning individually, we learn together as a group so that we all do the same thing with one spirit without any conflict.
- + Everything you do as deacon, you do not do it as a duty, but as a blessing.
  - + When we do something small, like put a book in its place, this is a blessing like picking up a piece of gold. The difference is the piece of gold we might lose it but the blessing will stay forever with you, eternally with God, not a materialistic piece of Gold.
  - + We are here to collect as many blessings as we can and whatever we do, we should do it with eagerness and enthusiasm.
- + During these coming meetings, we will do exactly as if we are in a Divine Liturgy same as a regular liturgy, and look at every part in detail.
- + If you don't attend these meetings, you don't learn, and therefore you won't be allowed to serve. But it's an open door now to learn, later this door will be closed and only deacons who know how to serve will be entering the altar. It's better to learn altogether here in these meetings rather than being embarrassed during the Divine Liturgy.

**Rites / Traditions**

- + Rites are customs and traditions that we used to do, something that the church has established on how to do things.

**There are three levels/categories of rites/traditions as following :**

**+ First Level of Tradition - Our Core Belief :**

- + For example, when we pray the Divine Liturgy, we use red wine, and if we can't find any red wine, there will not be a liturgy. Here, the tradition is so related to our belief, and then it can't be changed under any circumstances.
- + Under any circumstances, this tradition will never ever be changed or removed.

**+ Second Level of Tradition - Core Belief with Exceptions :**

- + These rites do not change regularly, as we believe that baptism in the Coptic Orthodox Church is done by complete immersion under most circumstances by immersion in the water (like Christ Who was buried) but this can be changed only in case of an extreme emergency case.

+ For example, if there is a newborn baby who is about to die, he is connected to different tubes and machines at the hospital. Obviously, this child cannot be immersed in water, and in this case Abouna is allowed to baptize this baby by just wiping his body with some water. This is only because it is an EMERGENCY case;

+ There are other emergency cases, like if there is no priest around and a child is about to die, and here it's the story that happened in the old days; A mother and her child were in a ship and a storm was so strong; the mother prayed to God and she cut her skin to bleed and then baptized her child with her blood. When the storm calmed down and she reached the home land, she went to the priest who tried to baptize the child but the water gets frozen every time the priest is trying to immerse the child. Then the mother told him about what she did; and it was confirmed what she has done was right to baptize the child in this emergency situation.

#### **+ Third Level of Tradition - Church Traditions:**

+ These are traditions that we might be able to change without really breaking the church's rules or without it being a major change in the church's rules.

+ Those traditions which you might notice a change in different churches, and you might do some things a bit different and they are dictated or regulated by the bishop of the area of the priest of the church.

+ For example, the Rite of the Stole (the way the budrasheen is worn).

+ Some churches allow psaltos to wear it in a certain way, and other churches do not allow psaltos to wear it. This is not a fatal or major change in the tradition. Some churches have Aghnostos wear it with an X on the back, others over the left shoulder. NOTE: in our church, Psaltos does not wear it, Aghnostos wears it with an X on the back, and anything higher wears it on the left shoulder.

+ Another example is deciding who serves in the altar. Some churches don't allow kids to serve in the altar at all, and others allow kids to serve in order to learn.

+ It is important not to get in an argument over these things because it's not that one church made a mistake or the other is right, it is just done differently and it is fine. We should accept these changes.

+ In the third category, there are things that can differ between churches, but the first and second levels are observed everywhere.

+ Different places and different cultures use different methods to praise God. For example, in South Africa they might use drums during the Divine Liturgy. That is their way, and it is acceptable for them, but it is not for us. It doesn't make them wrong or make us right.

#### **Spirituality of a Deacon**

+ Being a deacon is not something volatile; you can't be a deacon on some days and not a deacon on other days, when you are ordained as a deacon you become committed to deaconism.

+ Once you are ordained as Psaltos or Aghnostos, you are ordained by a bishop and you become different. Before it, you may have freedom to do things but after, things are changed. You were called to be a servant of God, and you become role model for other people will look to you. So we have to be careful not to be offence to other people.

+ You are a deacon all the time, whether inside the church or outside the church. You must behave accordingly everywhere, in the school, at home, ... etc.

+ Your behavior should reflect your spirituality. A deacon must have a father of confession and a spiritual guide.

+ The deacons are not putting on a show - it is real worship and real praise, a reflection on our spiritual lives.

+ A deacon must look after his spiritual life by reading the Agpeya and the Bible and learning church sciences.

- + For example, an Aghnostos (Reader), in church tradition, he should be able to read, understand, and even teach the Bible to people in the Church. The sermon should be the Aghnostos job.
- + **No deacon is allowed to read the church readings unless he knows how to read properly.**
- + The schedule is prepared ahead of time so you know when you are reading, practice and understand your reading so that you can read it properly.
- + When you read, you have to make sure that people can hear you clearly and understand exactly what you are saying.
- + If you are reading something in tune, the words are more important than the tune, it is more important to be clear than to sound nice.
- + Read with a proper speed so that every single word comes out so clearly. If you are too fast, no one will understand, or too slow it will be very bad.
- + People come to church to learn and grow, and that is why the readings are very important - if the deacon is unclear, then people are not learning anything and it is a waste.

### **Practices of the Deacon**

- + Deacons must come very early to get the full benefit of the liturgy.
- + **If you are scheduled to serve in the altar, you must be at the church between 8:15 to 8:30 AM to prepare everything in the altar before Abouna comes, because it's the responsibility of the deacon to prepare the altar.**
- + When a deacon (or layman) comes to the church, the first thing they should do before greeting anyone is to enter the church and say a prayer to God.
  - + Enter the church and walk down the centre (or side if the service has already begun), saying a prayer in your heart. (For example, **Psalm 5:7, "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple"**).
  - + Bow in front of the center altar (or side altar if service has already begun), doing the sign of the cross three times while saying "I worship you O Christ, with your Good Father and the Holy Spirit."
  - + Then stand up and silently pray the Lord's Prayer (Our Father who art in heavens ... ) in front of the altar.
  - + Go to the relics of the saints and say a prayer, praising the saint and asking for their blessings.
  - + Then after we pray to God, we begin our service; for example go to the altar to prepare it or go stand in the pews.
- + If people come and try to talk to you during the time of the service, you must try not to talk but at the same time you cannot be rude, but at least minimize it as you can.
- + Prevent this situation from occurring, do not go to greet someone during the time of prayer, and just wait until the end of the service.
- + You can do a slight bow to acknowledge that you see someone instead of having a conversation.
- + If someone comes to greet you, do not be rude just quickly greet him/her and then try to end the conversation politely.
- + Inside the nave (main part of church), God is always the focus, so everything we do in here should revolve around Christ - we can socialize in the basement.
- + When we are in the House of God, we stand with the utmost fear and respect, so we do not talk or joke around. When you enter a theatre you are prohibited from talking, why is it any different in the House of God?
- + We are at the Church first and foremost to serve God and to pray to Him, everything else is secondary.
- + If we see someone is doing something wrong, we do not condemn or judge him/her - we focus on ourselves only.

- + When a deacon is at the church any day, at any time of the day, there is always a service to do, even if it is something small.
- + For example if you see a piece of paper somewhere you pick it up, or if you see a book on the bench you put it in the right place. Agpyias are to be put in the black box right beside the north chorus.

## In The Altar ...

### The Altar

- + The Altar is not just a table but very special table;
- + To pray the Divine Liturgy we have to have something underneath consecrated which means it's dedicated only for the sole use of the Divine Liturgy. It's either a piece of wood, or the whole altar is being consecrated by the Holy Myron by the hands of the bishop or the pope.
- + The consecrated churches took the blessings of the bishop or the pope by coming and using the same oil that we use for Chrismation (Holy Myron) and put it on the whole altar and then it's consecrated. If the altar is not consecrated yet, abouna goes to the pope who consecrates a piece of wood, to be put on the altar for the Divine Liturgy prayers. By having it on the altar, the place becomes all sacred. That's why we take off our shoes and no ladies or women can enter the place. For construction purposes, abouna takes the board away to allow people to enter and women to clean inside.
- + During the conventions, abouna is praying the liturgy on any table using the consecrated board, and again the area becomes sacred.
- + The Altar has either been consecrated by the Pope or a bishop or it's consecrated by the Holy Board on it, which is what is used during trips to turn any table into an Altar.
- + Abouna is the only one who is holding the consecrated board; no one is ever allowed to touch it with bare hands but abouna. This is not for the board only but for any of the vessels (such as the Paten or Chalice, ...) which have been consecrated by the Holy Myron. That's why deacons carry them using a towel or cloth. But the other things (like: censer or incense box, ....) are consecrated by prayers not by the Holy Myron.
- + When a deacon enters the altar, it is always through the side entrances. First thing you do is to bow down, and go to kiss the altar, then do your service.
- + NOTE: When we kiss the altar, or the relics, or anything, we are kissing it to get the blessing of the Holy Spirit Who consecrated it.
- + The Altar is very holy object in the entire church, and we must not lean on it like a regular table.

### Entering and Exiting the Altar

- + Only Abouna and deacons who are scheduled to serve inside the altar are allowed to be in the altar. Women, men and other deacons are not allowed to go inside the altar, but deacons who have service only. However, Abouna sometimes can let people (like other deacons for example) come into the altar during communion.
- + **Entering and Exiting the altar has different ways in different times:**
  - + After the Litany of the Gospel, the deacon entering the altar should first do the sign of the cross, bow down then enter with his right foot to the Royal Entrance.
  - + At all other times, the side entrances must be used, and the same way is applied, bow down right before the entrance and kiss the holy ground, and then calmly enter.
  - + Exiting the altar for the Litany of the Gospel: deacon is to turn around so he doesn't give his back to the altar. Step outside the altar with his left foot, bow down, and then turn around again.
  - + During the procession, when deacon enter the altar, he shouldn't enter the altar with his back, but he should face the altar, bow down then enter the altar with his right foot.

- +When carrying a picture and entering the altar, turn your back to Abouna when you are one step away and enter the altar face first.
- + When exiting the altar during the procession, deacon should turn around to face the altar so he doesn't give his back to the altar, step out with his left foot first, and then turn around again.

**Standing in the Altar**

- + When we stand in the altar, we are standing as soldiers in the Army of God.
- + God understands mistakes, but He will not tolerate blatant disrespect.
- + After the Orthodox Creed, the deacons in the altar should not move at all except to bring the censer, light a candle, etc.
- + Deacons are not allowed to move after the creed as we start the Divine Liturgy, so everybody needs to pay attention, even the deacons responses indicate that (you who are seated stand, look towards the east, let's attend ...)
- + The deacon standing immediately to the right of Abouna should be the deacon who brings the censer and takes care of it.

**God willing, we will continue with service in the altar at our next meeting.**  
**Glory be to God forever, Amen.**

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In the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God Amen.

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
St. Mary and St. Joseph  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

- + The deacon's meeting is about learning the rites and services of deaconism. It helps the growth of our spirituality. We serve God out of love because He has given us the same opportunity as His angels to worship His holy name and glorify Him.
- + **All notes from last meeting are available to print and review, however a short recap of what was discussed:**
  - The different types of rites and traditions in the church, for example some things change between churches and some things don't.
  - Being a deacon is a great responsibility and we must maintain a certain level of spirituality to be able to serve.
  - We are deacons wherever we go, not just at church, but also at home, school, work, etc.
  - Practices of the deacon, like: Coming to the Church, entering/exiting the Altar, standing in the Altar ... etc.

**Preparations before Raising of Incense**

**Preparing Ourselves:**

- + Deacons serving in the altar should be present and ready to help.
- + The Vespers & Matins prayers take place outside the altar; they are considered to be preparation prayers for the Divine Liturgy, to prepare us spiritually to enter into a very sacred relationship with God through the Holy Communion.
- + The Liturgy prayers take place inside the altar, it's all about relationship with God, and the crowning of the Liturgy happens at the end when taking the Holy Communion, which makes us one with God.
  - + God considers us worthy to take Communion, although we are not, and as such we must be thankful and show our thankfulness in our actions, and we should prepare ourselves for this important moment.
- + If someone told you that you had an appointment with our Lord Jesus Christ, in a certain time, I believe you would lose sleep, preparing yourself from now to be ready when He comes.
  - + In the same way, our Lord comes in every single liturgy to be with us, so we should always be prepared. The prayers we say are not a waste of time, they are meant to prepare us spiritually for this unique holy moment.
- + The preparation starts in the night before the Liturgy, through the vespers. And from the vespers until the communion we are in a period of preparation.

- + We shouldn't pray the vespers and attend tasbeha, then go home and have a big fight with our parents/brothers/sisters or spend the night watching television. By doing this, we lose the blessings of the vespers and tasbeha. Instead, we should live this night in a very holy and peaceful environment.

### Preparing the Altar Area:

- + All deacons are responsible for the deacon's area and the altar, preparing it in every single way for the great coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - + For example, we can do small things such as: pick up pieces of paper, put the books in order, and make sure everything is clean.

### **There are two garbages:**

- + A normal garbage can, for things such as: wrappers, old candles, pieces of paper, etc.
  - Do not put hot charcoal*** in this container.
- + A special garbage can, that says "***hot charcoal only***" on it. This garbage contains a special layer but the normal one doesn't, which allows it to handle the heat of the hot coals. If you put paper in this container, then it will catch fire.

Do not put anything to keep the garbage open, because this will create a bad smell in the altar.



**In the black box on the wooden table near the censer, there is a lighter, charcoal, and some candles.**

### **Dealing with the Candles**

- + If the deacon finds little candles, they are to be thrown out, not used. This is because if a small candle is used eventually the fire will come to the deacon's fingers without them noticing, and they will either burn themselves or drop the candle, burning the carpet.
- + Light a candle with the lighter, and then use this lit candle to light the others. Return the lighter back to the box; never light each candle with the lighter.
- + Light each candle with the candle that you lit initially.
  - There are several candles that need to be lit: the two over the main altar, the one in front of the large painting at the back of the altar (The Bosom of the Father), the two at the entrance of the main altar, the two in front of saints' displays, and any other picture for a special occasion.**



- + When you light a candle, take the cap off first and put it in a place where it will be easily found later.

### Dealing with the Censer (Shorya)

- + Every church has many marks on the carpet from where the charcoal fell and burnt it, but this can all be avoided by simply following some basic rules.
- + Firstly, take the charcoal and hold it with the tongs inside the censer. This way, if the charcoal falls, there is no problem because it falls in the censer.
- + Secondly, use a candle to light the piece of coal inside the censer, and drop the coal in the censer when it lights. If you want to add another charcoal, repeat the same process until the other one lights fully (don't just drop the other coal in), never ever use the lighter directly on the piece of coal.
- + Always put the charcoal with the slightly indented (concaved) side facing up. Once again, never ever use the lighter directly on the piece of coal.



- + If you put the charcoal with the flat side facing up, the incense will fall and won't stay on the charcoal or be burnt. However, if you put the charcoal with the indented (concaved) side facing up, then the incense will stay on the charcoal and burn.
- + **Symbols in the Censer:** The censer is a beautiful part of our church which has a very deep meaning.
- + The entire censer represents St. Mary.
  - + The charcoal represents our Lord Jesus Christ's humanity and the fire His divinity.
    - + When these two are united, they raise up our prayers of reconciliation to the Father. Together they represent our Lord's incarnation and His saving of our sins. That is why it is essential that all the incense lands on the charcoal and is burned.
  - + The 24 priests in the Book of Revelation carried golden censers and gave praise to God, showing that incense is our prayers being carried up to God.
  - + Our church is filled with many beautiful things, for example: the censer tells the story of incarnation and forgiveness / it also represents the sacrifices in the Old Testament that were offered to God for the forgiveness of sins. Now, we offer the true Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- + The censer must be handled very carefully when presented to Abouna so that he can put incense in it without dropping any on the floor, or even worse, without the entire censer falling on the floor.
- + You should hold the censer from the top hook as well as from the bottom using the heat-resistant mat.
- + Never ever hold the bottom of the censer without the mat, as it will get very hot suddenly and by nature you will let go of the censer, causing it to fall.

**+ Some things should not be done under any circumstances by the deacons:**

- + Never swing the censer around, this is only for Abouna.
- + Never blow in the censer to try to revive the coal or to direct the smoke.
- + Never shake the censer to revive the coal or for any reason.
- + If the coal in the censer is dead, then just put a new one - don't try to revive the old one by blowing on it / shaking it / poking it.
- + When taking the censer to Abouna, hold it firmly from both ends then slowly pull the top part back to reveal the coal to Abouna so that he may put incense on it. Make sure that the chains are not in the way of the spoon, and make sure the chains are never below the censer.
- + When Abouna is done putting incense, either return the censer to its location or hand it to him, making sure to let go only when Abouna has a clear hold of it.

**+ Common Mistakes in handling the Censer:**

A fatal mistake is when the deacon simply holds the censer up to the priest to put the incense in; several things may happen:

- + The censer is being hold only from the hook, and it will slowly swing from the momentum of walking, so when Abouna tries to dump the incense the censer will move and the incense will fall on the ground.
- + The chains get in the way and Abouna cannot get the spoon inside the censer.
- + The censer is not being held firmly from bottom, so it slips and moves when Abouna puts the censer in it.



- + After giving the censer to Abouna, never leave the dirty mat on the altar, as this is simply disrespectful to the altar.
- + At the end of the service, the censer should be cleaned by the deacons who were serving in the altar. To clean the censer, take it and dump its contents in the correct garbage. Then scrape any residue with the tongs, and dump the contents again. Repeat until it is clean, and then put it back on the stand for the next service.

## Raising of Incense

### The Prayer of Thanksgiving

- + When Abouna starts praying the vespers prayer, he stands outside the altar. As such, the deacons serving should also stand outside the altar since the vespers and raising of incense is preparation for the Divine Liturgy.
- + Abouna starts with “*Our father...*”, “*Eshlil*”, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving.
- + When you say a response, remember that you must have the microphone. The microphone has an indicator light on it: green means on, orange means standby. Do not turn the microphone off, because the person after you, will assume it’s on and may forget to turn it off.
  - + We do not say responses just for the sake of saying them, however, we say them so people can hear them and pray. Our liturgical services are being broadcasted on the internet, so it is extremely unfair for the people who watch to not be able to hear what is going on. The liturgy is not a performance, it is a prayer, and it must be treated as such.
- + Next is the short response of “*epros evexaste*”. If you do not know a response, politely decline to say it, do not be shy in this regard. No one knows all of the responses, each one of us is still learning.
- + Next is the long response of “*Pray that God...*” or “*Tov hina*”. It is wrong to just read the response, it must be sung with tune. You either know how to say it or you do not. It is more embarrassing to say something you do not know than to admit you don’t know it.

### The Verses of the Cymbals

- + After the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the deacons begin to sing the Verses of the Cymbals.
- + As soon as the deacon who is standing outside finishes this response, the serving deacon is to go in the altar to get ready for the incense circuit.
  - + After the censer is brought to Abouna, he will put five spoons of incense. On the first three only, the deacon is to respond with “*Amen.*” and for the other two he is to remain silent.
  - + While Abouna is putting the incense, he is saying (deacon response bold):
    - + Blessed be God the Father the Almighty. *Amen*
    - + Blessed be His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*
    - + Blessed be the Holy Spirit the comforter (Paraclete). *Amen*
    - + Honour and Glory and Glory and Honour to God.
- + While Abouna is going around the altar, he is inaudibly praying and the deacons are expected to inaudibly respond as well.
  - + **Litany for the Peace:**
    - + Pray for the peace of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Orthodox Church of God.
  - + **Litany for the Pope:**
    - + Pray for our high priest, Papa Abba (Shenouda), pope and patriarch and archbishop of the great city of Alexandria, and for our orthodox bishops.
  - + **Prayer for the Assemblies:**
    - + Pray for this holy church and for our assemblies.

- + Abouna swings the censer three times to symbolize the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and then swings once around for One God.
- + The deacon(s) should say the 1<sup>st</sup> response (Litany for Peace) and continue walking around the altar to the right hand side, then say the 2<sup>nd</sup> response (Litany for pope) - the deacon(s) is/are now towards the Royal Entrance and here is **one complete round**. And deacon(s) is/are to continue walking around, then say the 3<sup>rd</sup> response (Litany for the Assemblies) and continue walking around to be towards the Royal Entrance, there is no response here and it's the **second complete round**. The **third complete round** is also without responses,
- + The priest and deacon(s) make three complete rounds around the altar. On the last round, when the deacons are facing the east (the large painting of Our Lord Jesus Christ – The bosom of the Father), they are to step out of the altar to the right side and hold the Cross and Gospel there.
- + The priest will come to the front of the altar, bow and then continue to pray inaudibly. When he is done, the deacons should be ready to continue.

### The Litanies

- + During the Vespers prayers on Saturday evening, **the Litany of the Departed** is prayed.
  - + During this Litany the deacon is to bring the incense box to Abouna when is saying **“Graciously accord O Lord to repose and forgive them ... from the east to the west and from the north to the south”**, because he has to face the congregation when he says **“from the north to the south ...”** Therefore, there is a time when the deacon needs to be ready, mainly when Abouna begins to say **“O God, even if any negligence ...”** the deacon should start to get the incense box and present it to Abouna.
- + The deacons should always be attentive to the needs of the church and of Abouna.
  - + For example, if a candle goes out and Abouna simply looks at you then at the candle, you should be able to figure out that you need to light the candle.
  - + Another example during the Litany of the Departed, Abouna doesn't memorize it in English, and then the deacon should be ready with the bookstand, and the book to be opened to the right page for Abouna.
- + After the Litany of the Departed, Abouna enters the altar and places incense in the censer. He goes around the altar once, and then outside the altar. Then, he will come in the altar again and put incense, and then he will go around the altar once more and around the church as well. Then there should be a deacon ready to take the censer from him.



### The Doxologies

- + During this time, the deacons and congregation are singing the Doxologies, which give honour to St Mary, Arcangels, angels, martyrs, saints ...etc.
- + Whenever there is smoke coming out of the censer, there is direct or indirect reference to the saints, ie. The Doxologies in Raising of incense and Hitens, Shere ne Maria, after the commemoration of saints in the Divine Liturgy.

### The Creed

- + After the Doxologies, the deacons outside the altar will say the Orthodox Creed. While the Creed is recited, the deacon serving in the altar should be lighting the three candles.
- + You should start lighting the candles early on, so that you won't have to make Abouna and the entire church wait as you rush to light the candles at the last time. Present the three candles to Abouna separated from one another.
- + It should be noted that brand new candles take longer to light than used candles.
- + Abouna then will pray Efnouti Nai Nan.



### The Litany of the Gospel

- + After Efnouti Nai Nan, Abouna will come in the altar to get the censer for the Litany of the Gospel. Deacon serving is to be ready with the censer at this time so that Abouna does not have to wait.
- + During the Litany of the Gospel, there should be one or two deacons standing behind Abouna holding the Cross and Gospel.
  - + If there are two deacons, the Cross should always be on the right side. The Gospel should be held with the picture of St. Mary side facing you.
  - + If it is only one deacon holding both, the Cross should be held closer to you and the Gospel in front of it.

### **If there is one deacon,**

- + The deacon will hold the Cross and the Gospel then he should get the microphone and go outside the altar to say the response "**Pray for the Holy Gospel**".
- + Before Abouna completely finishes the prayer, the deacon should come inside the altar (at the right side of the royal entrance) bowing down, and then enter the altar to get ready before Abouna finishes the prayer.
- + The deacon then should flip the cross over the Gospel so that the picture of St Mary is facing Abouna and the cross is over the Gospel. The Gospel should be upside down for you and on the right way for Abouna.
- + Abouna will lightly hold the Gospel and together – Abouna and the deacon - will walk around the altar, with the deacon walking backwards. At the third corner of the Altar (east north corner), the deacon is to bow and kiss the Gospel, but continue walking with Abouna until he fully takes the Gospel from the deacon, leaving him with the Cross in the deacon's right hand. Then the deacon is to go to the other corner facing the congregation and say the response "**Stand up in the fear...**" or "**Istathete**".



**If there are two deacons,**

- + One deacon holds the Cross (on the right side) and the other one holds the Gospel (on the left side), the one holding the Gospel is to get the microphone to say the response **“Pray for the Holy Gospel”** then give it to the other deacon.
- + Before Abouna completely finishes the prayer, deacons should come inside the altar (at the right side of the royal entrance) bowing down, and enter the altar to get ready.
- + The deacon holding the cross should stand at the corner facing the congregation and say the response **“Stand up in the fear...”** or **“Istathete”**.
- + The deacon holding the Gospel, should flip the Gospel so that the picture of St Mary is facing Abouna. The Gospel should be upside down for you and on the right way for Abouna.
- + Abouna will lightly hold the Gospel and together – Abouna and the deacon - will walk around the altar, with the deacon walking backwards. At the third corner of the Altar (east north corner), the deacon is to bow and kiss the Gospel, but continue walking with Abouna until he fully takes the Gospel from the deacon.



**+ There are common for mistakes this part:**

- + Let go of the Gospel early then walk back past Abouna. This is wrong and negates the symbolic effects of walking backwards in the first place.
- + Let go of the Gospel then turn around, giving your back to Abouna and walking to the corner or outside of the altar.
- + If the deacon leading outside happens to finish the Psalm Response quickly, deacons serving can begin saying **“Stand up in the fear...”** even before he reaches the corner.
- + At our church, we say **“Istathete meta vovo”** not “fobo” or “vobo”.
- + We must plan out exactly what we will do so that we can do it confidently without making mistakes.

**Notes on the Tonyas**

- + According to church tradition, we are supposed to be wearing our vestments (tonyas) whenever there is a service in the church. However, people always forget their tonyas or leave them at church and make a mess, so people are allowed to serve in the altar during the Raising of Incense without tonyas, just wearing their normal clothes.
- + Thus, we should take extra caution to wear appropriate clothes:
  - + We do not wear any gym clothes, ie. track pants, shorts, etc. during the service.
  - + During the summer it is acceptable to wear the formal jean shorts.
  - + Use your common sense, if you are not sure about something then, don't wear it. It is simply unacceptable to stand in the House of God with indecent clothing.

**God willing, we will continue at the next meeting in December. Glory be to God forever, Amen.**

+++++



In the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God Amen.

**Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate**  
**St. Mary and St. Joseph**  
**COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Test**

+ We began with a review of the last meetings' notes and a short oral quiz as following:  
[Correct answer is shown (in red)]:

- 1- All candles in the church should be lit using the lighter. (TRUE or FALSE) **(FALSE)**
- 2- The coal should be put in the censer with which side facing up? **(b)**
  - a. The completely flat side.
  - b. The concave or indented side.
- 3- In regards to the censer, which of the following should never be done? **(d)**
  - a. Swing the censer around to activate the coal.
  - b. Blow in the censer to activate the coal.
  - c. Shake the censer to activate the coal.
  - d. All of the above.
- 4- During the Raising of Incense, the altar deacons should be standing: **(b)**
  - a. Inside the main altar.
  - b. Outside the altar completely.
  - c. In the altar, men's area.
  - d. In the altar, women's area.
- 5- During the Incense Circuit after the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the priest will put how many spoons of incense in the censer: **(c)**
  - a. 3
  - b. 4
  - c. 5
  - d. 6
- 6- During which Litany in the Vespers Raising of Incense, should the incense box be presented to the priest? **(b)**
  - a. Litany of the Sick
  - b. Litany of the Departed
  - c. Litany of the Travelers
  - d. Litany of the Sacrifices
- 7- During the Litany of the Gospel, the deacon holding the cross should be on the right side, when facing the Lord Jesus Christ picture (the bosom of the Father).(TRUE or FALSE) **(TRUE)**
- 8- The deacon holding the Gospel during the Litany of the Gospel should: **(b)**
  - a. Let go of the gospel and walking backwards to the corner of the altar.
  - b. Bow and kiss the Gospel at the east north corner of the altar without letting go of the Gospel.
  - c. Let go of the Gospel early and then walking back past the priest.
  - d. Lit two candles after fully saying the responses.
- 9- At our church, we say the following for "Istathete": **(a)**
  - a. meta vovo
  - b. meta fobo
  - c. meta vobo
  - d. meta fofa
- 10- It is unacceptable to wear ONLY the following item(s) of clothing when serving: **(d)**
  - a. track pants
  - b. gym clothes
  - c. sports clothes
  - d. all of the above

## Review on the Litany of the Gospel

+ Three different deacons demonstrated the Litany of the Gospel and they were critiqued.

### Some mistakes that were made as following:

1- Using Tunia's sleeve to hold the censer.

Correct: Use the mat to hold the censer from the bottom.

2- The response is not in tune.

Correct: If you do not know a response in tune, then do not say it.

3- Left the Gospel incorrectly on the wrong side.

Correct: The deacons should leave from the side altar, or if that is not possible, then from the north side (left side when facing the paint of Our Lord Jesus Christ – The Bosom of the Father).

4- Didn't enter the altar earlier to get ready.

Correct: When the priest begins to say:

"For You are the life of us all, the salvation of us all, the hope of us all..."

the deacon(s) should enter the altar and be prepared for Abouna.

5- Let go of the Gospel too early.

Correct: Do not let go of the Gospel until the priest takes it from you, which is generally when you are almost one full turn around the altar.

6- Didn't kiss the Gospel before let go.

Correct: You must bow and kiss the Gospel at the third corner (east north corner).

7- Let go of the Gospel and walk past Abouna.

Correct: When you let go of the Gospel, do not walk back around the altar, but continue so that you don't walk past the priest.

8- Held the Cross under the Gospel.

Correct: The Cross should be held on top of the Gospel, in a manner so that the handle of the Cross is towards you while the Gospel is towards Abouna.

9- Held the censer incorrectly that made it flipped.

Correct: Hold the censer firmly from the bottom with the mat so that it doesn't move around.

We have done this many times but we still do it wrong. We must practice doing these scenarios at home with our parents or by ourselves.

## Reading the Gospel

- + No one should read the Gospel unless he is well trained in reading it. Thus, the deacon who is reading the Gospel should be ranked at least an Aghnostos (Reader).
- + The Gospel is very important to the congregation, and so when it is read, people must be able to hear and understand it.
- + The Gospel is the Word of God, and such it is supposed to be read by the Priest or Bishop. It is an exception to let the deacon read it, so the deacon must be very well prepared for this honour.
- + Making a mistake in Church is not a problem, because we are all learning, however, the problem is when we make careless mistakes, and then we don't even try to learn how to correct ourselves. If you are trying to learn and make a mistake it is okay, but making mistakes out of plain carelessness is unacceptable.

## Holding the Candles:

- + During the reading of the Gospel, there are two deacons holding the candles. These candles have significance, and are not meant as a decoration. The Gospel is the Light of the World, as in it, is the true Word of God. God is sending words to the mankind to light the world.

## **Knowing this, is it then acceptable to play with the candles and make a game out of it?**

- + It's certainly not; Abouna doesn't want to embarrass anyone and take away the candle, but he will do so, if the deacon holding the candles is being disrespectful to the Gospel.
- + It is unacceptable to stand leaning on the rail or with your hands in your pockets. You must respectfully stand like a soldier in the Army of God.
- + When the deacon is playing with the candle the people lose focus and get no benefit from the reading. You then become responsible for taking people away from hearing the Word of God.

**For those deacons who want to become Aghnostos, it is a good opportunity to hold the candle and at the same time listen and learn the tune.**

- + To hold the candle during the reading of the Gospel, the deacon must be at least of school age.
- + Hold the candle with your right hand at the end of the stand (mangaliya), and do not rest your hand on the stand. Once again, you must stand as a soldier in the Army of God. (Generally in the church we hold things with our right hands.)
- + If your hand is very tired and you can't hold anymore, call one of the older deacons to hold it for you.



## **The Absolution and the End**

+ After reading the Gospel, Abouna is praying “Our Father...” then, the chorus lead deacon says “Khen Pikhristos ...” to which the deacon holding the silver Gospel replies “Tas ke valas ...” then the chorus lead deacon replies “Eno pion ...”, to which the deacon holding the silver Gospel replies “Pros khomen ...”

+ The deacon who just read the Gospel should be holding the silver Gospel while bowing.

+ After that, Abouna prays the Absolution, while the congregation bowing.

+ Then after the absolution, deacons are saying “Amen Alleulia Doxapatri ...”

+ Whenever you carry the silver Gospel, St. Mary’s picture should be facing you. Also, when you are reading the Gospel and holding the silver Gospel, St. Mary’s picture should be facing you.



**As a side note, inside the silver gospel, there are copies of the four Gospels. As such, no one is allowed to open the silver Gospel, and you should be so careful holding it, and avoid dropping it, especially during the Litany of the Gospel when you are walking with Abouna.**

+ After the absolution, the deacon who held the Gospel while bowing down now brings the Gospel to Abouna and gives it to him. At the point of the meeting, deacon should avoid situations where things fall, so it is important to keep these things in mind.

+ Then the deacons line up and kiss the Gospel, and kiss Abouna’s hand (if you want to).

After you kiss the Gospel, make a U-turn and return to your seat. Do not just kiss the Gospel and walk straight back, because then you will crash into the person behind you.



## **General Notes**

+ You can make mistakes during these meetings, and correct them. However, during the Vespers, when you bump into people behind you and drop things, you will be embarrassed.

+ Do not put your coats just on the benches; If you do not put your shoes under the bench or your coat in the coat room, then it will be taken away in order to keep the church clean.

+ After the Vesper Prayers, if you want to leave then make sure you do so quietly because there is still prayer occurring in the Church. Do not leave your benches until Abouna dismisses you by saying “the Peace of the Lord with you.”

+ During the Divine Liturgy, the altar group leader will assign the responses and responsibilities to the other members of the group. The person who is assigned to the censer is the one who will be in charge of making sure that it is always ready when Abouna needs it.

+ Generally, adults are the only ones who are allowed to hold and handle the censer. However, if a younger child proves he can handle it then he can be permitted to do so.

+ Recall from previous meetings notes, the things that you shouldn’t do to the censer, ie. blow in it, swing it, ...

+ At the beginning of the service, two coals are to be put in the censer, not one or three. It is not a dogmatic reason, but it is just because two coals provide good heat and will allow the censer to survive the entire vespers.

+ During the liturgy, the times when coal need to be put in the censer, will be highlighted in a later meeting.



In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
**St. Mary and St. Joseph**  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010**

**Test**

+ We began with a review of the last meetings' notes and a short oral quiz as following:  
[Correct answer is shown (in red)]:

1. To read the Gospel, your rank must be at least: **(b)**
  - a. Psaltos
  - b. Aghnostos
  - c. Epi-Deacon
  - d. Deacon
  
2. When holding a candle during the reading of the Gospel, it is unacceptable to: **(d)**
  - a. Lean on the railing.
  - b. Play with the candle.
  - c. Put your hands in your pockets.
  - d. All of the above.
  
3. To hold a candle during the reading of the Gospel, you must be at least how old? **(c)**
  - a. 10 Years
  - b. 16 Years
  - c. School Age
  - d. 25 Years
  
4. TRUE or FALSE: The candle during the reading of the Gospel should be held in your right hand. **(TRUE)**
  
5. Who should respond to the lead deacon when he says "Khen Pikhristos"? **(b)**
  - a. A random deacon who happens to be near the lead deacon.
  - b. The deacon who just read the Gospel who is holding the silver Gospel.
  - c. A deacon serving in the altar.
  - d. None of the above.
  
6. TRUE or FALSE: When holding the silver Gospel, you should be facing St. Mary. **(TRUE)**
  
7. Inside the silver Gospel, there is a copy of: **(e)**

- a. The Gospel According to St. Mathew
  - b. The Gospel According to St. Mark
  - c. The Gospel According to St. Luke
  - d. The Gospel According to St. John
  - e. All Four Gospels
8. After you kiss the silver Gospel and Abouna's cross / hand, you should: **(c)**
- a. Walk backwards to your seat, crashing into the people behind you.
  - b. Go put on your shoes and get ready to leave the church.
  - c. Make a U-turn and return to your seat.
  - d. None of the above.
9. TRUE or FALSE: If you leave your coats or shoes in a mess on the benches, they will be taken away in order to keep the church clean. **(TRUE)**
10. How many coals should be put in the censer at the beginning of the Vesper Prayers? **(2)**
- a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4

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### The Matins Prayers

- The Matins Prayers are very similar to the Vesper Prayers in what should be done.
- The Doxologies sung by the deacons should be minimized in order to save that extra time for the Divine Liturgy.
  - Only the doxology of the season should be sung (for example, the Nativity Doxology.)
  - If there is no special season, only the doxologies of St. Mary and St. Joseph should be sung.
- **Do not read the Gospel unless you know how to AND have practiced the reading.**
  - The schedule for Gospel readings is very detailed and tells you exactly what you will be reading, so you should be practicing at home.
  - Make sure you are using the right translation when you practice so when you read from the Katamaros you will not be confused.
  - If you are not experienced in reading the Gospel, sit down with an older deacon or Abouna and practice.
- The readings are not there to waste time, they are to teach the congregation and convey the spiritual theme of the day or month.
  - For example, during Kiakh, there are certain readings we read that all revolve around the idea of incarnation.

- Another example: during Hatour, the theme of the month links all the readings together around a central reading.
- For each individual liturgy, there is a theme that connects the readings of the day.
- There are two books we read from: the Katamaros of the days, and the Katamaros of the Sundays.
  - The word “katamaros” comes from “kara”, meaning “as per”, and “maros”, meaning “the day.”
  - The day takes the theme of the readings according to or “as per” the Synaxarium. For example, if today is the martyrdom of St. Mina, we will find the readings of the day revolve around the theme of martyrdom.
- The Katamaros of the Sundays is based on the theme of the month. The Sunday reading takes precedence over the reading of the day.
  - For example, if the departure of St. Anthony falls on a Sunday in Kiakh, we don’t follow the reading of the day that talks about monasticism, but we follow the reading of the day that celebrates the month of Kiakh.
- All readings are available online for anyone to look at:
  - <http://www.copticchurch.net/classes/getLectionary.php>
  - This link and many other resources are available on the church website in the Deacon’s Corner, under Group Pages.
- The point of the reading is to convey the message to the congregation. Thus, the reader must have very good pronunciation. The most important thing is to understand the sentence you are reading so you can emphasize the right words and pause at the right parts.
  - Some mistakes people make are linking words that should not be linked, and mispronouncing words. We can fix these mistakes by practicing so we can be familiar with the reading and it’s message so we know where to pause, which words to connect, etc.
  - Do not be shy or intimidated by the congregation, causing you to speak in quiet voice. You must read the Word of God in a powerful voice.
- The deacon reading the Gospel should know how to read it in the right tune (ie. joyful tune, sad tune, etc.) If you do not know the tune, it is better to read it without tune at all rather than read it wrong, disrespecting God and the congregation who must stand and listen to the Gospel being read in a very poor manner.
  - If you’re not sure if you’re doing it right, speak to Abouna or one of the older deacons.

## The Divine Liturgy

### Preparation for the Divine Liturgy

- After the matins, we begin to wear our tonyas. We must wear a tonya that is clean and the right size. At our church we have a recycling program because people are outgrowing their tonyas all the time. For example, if a child has a tonya and then in one year outgrows it, he can bring his old tonya to the bookstore and exchange it with a similar tonya that fits him better.
  - To exchange a tonya, it must obviously be in good shape so that someone else can use it.
- The condition of your tonya indicates your respect for God. If your tonya is filthy, crumpled, not your size, etc., it is a great sign of disrespect to God.
  - You cannot go to a wedding wearing indecent clothes. A divine liturgy is even more important than a wedding, so our tonya must be in very good shape. We serve the altar of God, representing angels, and so our tonyas must be clean.
  - We can't only be pure and clean on the outside, we must be pure and clean on the inside as well. The tonya is white because it represents the angels, and white is generally the colour used to represent purity.
- Deaconism is the first rank of priesthood. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He chose His disciples, appointed them as priests, and He only chose men. He only chose men because priesthood in the New Testament is symbolic of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who chose to be incarnate as a man. Thus, women cannot symbolize Jesus Christ. It is not a sign of disrespect to women, we value woman greatly, for example the greatest saint of our church is St. Mary.
- In the Old Testament, only men became priests, but women still had an important role as judges and prophets.
- Men and women have different jobs in the church. For example, women give birth to children physically, and then men (priests) give birth to children spiritually through the sacrament of baptism.
- We are supposed to wear our tonyas during any liturgical service, but the church tries to make it easier on the deacons by letting them not wear it.
  - However, some churches do require the deacons to always wear their tonyas, and this is a future possibility. For example, in the Los Angeles diocese the deacons always wear them.
- Ranks of Deaconhood:
  - Psaltos: This deacon is just a singer, the Church allows him to wear a tonya but not the budrashal. This is not a rank of priesthood.
  - Aghnostos: This is the first rank of priesthood. This word means "reader," allows you to read the Gospel.
    - Sometimes we make the exception for some Psaltos to read the Gospel in preparation of them becoming Aghnostos.
  - Epideacon: The subdeacon, who is there to help the deacon in his duties.

- Note that this use of deacon is the rank of “deacon”, not the general term.
- Deacon: A man who is dedicated to the service of the church, wears black like an Abouna and has no job outside the church.
- Archdeacon: Leads all the deacons in a certain area.
- Ranks of Priesthood:
  - Priest
  - Hegumen
- Ranks of Bishops
  - Bishop
  - Metropolitan
  - Archbishop (pope)

### Altar Preparation for the Divine Liturgy

- We take our shoes off whenever we enter the altar. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He told Moses to take off his shoes because he was standing in a sacred place. Just as God commanded Moses to take off his shoes in the holy place, so do we.
- It is very important then for each deacon to take care of his tonya. If it is very unclean and not ready to be worn, Abouna will have to ask you to take off your tonya.
  - Abouna does not want this situation to arise because he will be in an awkward position. Either he will upset you, or he will upset God. He cannot upset God, because he is God’s servant.
  - When Abouna sees something inappropriate he must speak up and correct it, but at the same time he hates to upset any deacon. If Abouna has to tell someone to take off their tonya, he will be very upset, but Abouna must do it because he works for God.
  - We can help Abouna in this issue by avoiding the possibility of this situation happening. When you take off your tonya at the end of the liturgy, put it neatly in your bag so next time it is still clean and fresh.
  - Do not leave your tonya at church. If you do, then it will become part of the tonya recycling program.
- The deacons serving in the altar during matins should be the ones who have scheduled to serve the entire liturgy. During matins, saying responses is only one of the altar deacons’ jobs. They must also help Abouna with setting up the altar and all the things for the liturgy.
- In the altar, there are two glass bottles, two pitchers, and a wooden basin.
  - Firstly, the wooden basin must be cleaned by simply pouring some water on it and cleaning it lightly with a tissue. Everything should be very clean.
  - Secondly, there are two glass bottles we use on Sunday for the wine and water. Pour the wine using the funnel into one of the glass bottles, holding the glass bottle over the wooden basin just in case some of it may fall. On Sundays, the wine bottle must be filled all the way to the top.



If you accidentally spill some water on the bottle, pour a couple of drops of water on the bottle to clean it. Make sure you do not pour the water into the wine bottle.

- After you fill the wine and water bottles, put them on the communion table and cover them with two cloths ("lafafa"). Make sure you put them in a way so they do not fall.



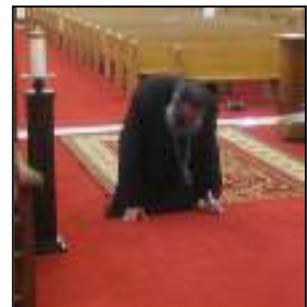
On the actual altar, Abouna will be unwrapping the cloths and instruments used. A deacon must stand by him to take things from him and help him with anything that might come happen. Be ready to take the bags that the instruments were in and any extra cloths.

### **The Prayers of the Agpeya**



- After the Matins, there are the Prayers of the Agpeya. The deacons should put on their tonyas and then quickly go to their seats. Each deacon is expected to have an agpeya in their hand, and to be quietly praying the psalms in their head.
- When the older deacon tells you that you will be reading the Gospel, be ready to do so. When it comes time to read, go stand in the middle of the two sides, in front of the altar. Read slowly and clearly. The congregation must be able to hear what you are saying so they can follow along, praying in their hearts.

- After you read the Gospel, bow down before the altar and then go kiss Abouna's hands for a blessing. Then, quietly return to your seat.



Remember,  
Never turn the microphone on or off. Leave it as it is "ON" all the time.

**We will continue next month with the rites of the Divine Liturgy.**  
**Glory be to God forever. Amen.**



In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
**St. Mary and St. Joseph**  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Test**

+ We began with a review of the last meetings' notes and a short oral quiz as following:

[Correct answer is shown (in red)]:

- 1- When presenting to Abouna the censer during the prayer of Thanksgiving, you are to say: **(b)**
  - a. Holy, Holy, Holy
  - b. Amen, Amen, Amen**
  - c. Yes, Yes, Yes
  - d. Nothing, stay silent.
  
- 2- When holding a candle during the reading of the Gospel, it is unacceptable to: **(d)**
  - a. Lean on the railing.
  - b. Play with the candle.
  - c. Put your hands in your pockets.
  - d. All of the above.**
  
3. To hold a candle during the reading of the Gospel, you must be at least how old? **(c)**
  - a. 10 Years
  - b. 16 Years
  - c. School Age**
  - d. 25 Years
  
4. **TRUE** or FALSE: The candle during the reading of the Gospel should be held in your right hand. **(True)**
  
5. Who should respond to the lead deacon when he says "Khen Pikhristos"? **(b)**
  - a. A random deacon who happens to be near the lead deacon.
  - b. The deacon who just read the Gospel who is holding the silver Gospel.**
  - c. A deacon serving in the altar.
  - d. None of the above.
  
6. **TRUE** or FALSE: When holding the silver Gospel, you should be facing St. Mary. **(True)**
  
7. Inside the silver Gospel, there is a copy of: **(e)**
  - a. The Gospel According to St. Matthew

- b. The Gospel According to St. Mark
  - c. The Gospel According to St. Luke
  - d. The Gospel According to St. John
  - e. **All Four Gospels**
8. After you kiss the silver Gospel and Abouna's cross / hand, you should: **(c)**
- a. Walk backwards to your seat, crashing into the people behind you.
  - b. Go put on your shoes and get ready to leave the church.
  - c. **Make a U-turn and return to your seat.**
  - d. None of the above.
9. **TRUE** or FALSE: If you leave your coats or shoes in a mess on the benches, they will be taken away in order to keep the church clean. **(True)**
10. How many coals should be put in the censer at the beginning of the Vesper prayers? **(b)**
- a. 1
  - b. **2**
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
- 

### **The Agpeya Prayers**

- The priest(s) stand(s) at the door of the altar, facing the congregation to recognize God's presence in the midst of the church.
- On regular Sundays, we pray the 3rd and 6th hour from the Agpeya. On other occasions we may pray less or more.
- All deacons should have an Agpeya and should be reading psalms and praying. It is not a time to socialize with your friends.
- The older deacon ushers should assign the psalms and readings from the Agpeya. As soon as he is informed, the deacon reading the Gospel should get ready.
  - The deacon reading the Gospel should stand directly in the middle facing the Altar, and should have a microphone ready to go.
  - After reading the Gospel, the deacon is to bow down in front of the altar then enter and kiss the Abouna's hands. If there are two priests serving, then the deacon should go to both.
- After the priests have prayed the litanies of the the 6th hour, they will go to the north side of the altar.

### **Blessing of the Tonyas**

- After the priests have prayed the litanies and before they wash their hands, they will bless the deacons' tonyas one more time. These deacons should be ready and waiting.
- The deacons should **never, ever** under any circumstances take a tonya from the bookstore with the intent of "borrowing" it for one liturgy.

- It is the responsibility of each deacon to write their name on the inside of their tonya using a permanent marker.

### **Washing of the Hands**

- The deacon's serving in the altar should be ready as soon as the Agpeya is done to wash Abouna's hands.
- Abouna washes his hands twice during each divine liturgy. In the first time after the Agpeya readings, the deacons should be close by him as we will simply wash his hands then dry them.
  - The second time Abouna washes his hands is during the Orthodox Creed after the Gospel, and this time Abouna will wash his hands then go to the door of the altar. The deacon with the towel should follow close by so that when Abouna turns around the deacon is ready to hand him a towel.

### **Choosing the Lamb**

- Abouna has just spent several minutes blessing deacons' tonyas and washing his hands. By this point, the Altar deacons should be ready with the wine and water, as well as the deacon is ready carrying the oblations or ready to hand it to Abouna.
- It is very frustrating for Abouna to be ready and the deacons are not ready. The deacons should always be one step ahead of Abouna so that there is no waiting.
- As usual, the deacon should carry the bottle (wine or water) with his right hand, and a lit candle in his left hand.
- If some wine is dropped on the bottle when it is being filled, then make sure it is cleaned. This bottle is carrying the wine that will become the Blood of Christ, so it must be crystal clean.
- In general, all the utensils of the Altar should be perfectly clean. This includes the wooden basin, the bottles, the actual altar top, etc. These are the true duties of the deacons, to keep the church in perfect order. The duty of the deacons is not to just sing hymns and say responses, because a tape recorder can do these things.



- The deacons holding the bottles should be holding them with cloths (lafafas). We do this out of respect for what we are carrying, but they are not anointed instruments like the chalice or paten.
- The deacon holding the wine should be on Abouna's right hand side. He should have his right hand, carrying the wine, crossed over his left hand, carrying a candle.
- Practically, this is so that when Abouna reaches for the wine bottle, he does not burn himself on the candle.
- Spiritually, the deacon crosses his hands as a reference to the biblical story of Jacob when we went to bless

Joseph's sons. He crosses his hands, thereby blessing the younger son instead of the older son, which is a symbol of the coming of Jesus Christ.

- When Abouna picks up the bottle of wine, he will ask the other deacons or priest(s) standing to smell it. The deacons or priest(s) should say **“it is good and well.”**

- We do this in our church because a long time ago, when the congregation brought the offerings, there would be enemies of the church who would try to trick the priest into using red vinegar instead of wine. As such, the priest would ask the deacon to make sure that it was



- indeed wine, and not vinegar. We continue this tradition in our church to this very day.

- The deacon carrying the bottle of water should stand next to Abouna on the other side, and should not have his hands crossed.
- Abouna selects the Lamb at the door of the Altar, just as in the Old Testament God commanded the people to offer their sacrifices at the door of the Altar. Abouna inspects each potential Lamb and selects the one that is closest to being perfect, just as our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect.
  - The basket contains an odd number of offerings, and when Abouna takes one out it is the one that is unique from the others, and as such this one special Lamb is allowed to enter the altar to be offered as a sacrifice.

### **Blessing of the Lamb**

- After Abouna chooses the lamb, he will go back to altar. The deacon carrying the bottle of the water should be standing there, ready to pour some water into Abouna’s hands. Abouna touches the lamb with some water as a symbol of the spices that were put on the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ before they buried him.



- A common issue is that the deacon carrying the water tries to cross his hands and pour some water, which does not work at all. That is why his hands should be uncrossed.

- In the Divine Liturgy, we celebrate the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The cloth (lafafa) on the Lamb is a symbol of the cloth that was placed on the Body of Christ after He was taken down from the cross and carried to His tomb.



- When Abouna carries this “buried Lamb” who is covered with spices around the altar, it is like he is moving Christ from the place of slaughtering to the tomb. While he is walking, Abouna says a prayer starting with “Glory and Honour...”
  - The deacons should carry the wine and water above their heads as they bow and walk around the altar. The deacon carrying the wine may choose to keep his hands crossed or no.



In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

**Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate**  
**St. Mary and St. Joseph**  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Deacons Meeting – Saturday, March 06<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Test**

+ We began with a review of the last meetings' notes and a short oral quiz as following:

[Correct answer is shown (in red)]:

1. On a regular Sunday, we pray the following hours from the Agpeya: **(b)**
  - a. 1st and 3rd
  - b. 3rd and 6th**
  - c. 6th and 9th
  - d. 9th and 12th
  
2. TRUE or **FALSE**: It is okay once in a while to borrow a tonya from the bookstore. **(False)**
  
3. TRUE or **FALSE**: Abouna washes his hands three times during the Divine Liturgy. **(False)**
  
4. After Abouna has washed his hands for the first time, the deacons should: **(a)**
  - a. Be ready right away with a towel.**
  - b. Be ready right away with a lafafa.
  - c. Be ready at the front of the altar because that is where Abouna is going.
  - d. Get out of the way, because Abouna will just dry his hands on his tonya.
  
5. **TRUE** or FALSE: The deacon carrying the wine should have the candle in his left hand and the bottle in his right hand, and they should be crossed over each other. **(True)**
  
6. The reasons that the deacon crosses his hands are: **(b)**
  - a. To make sure that he doesn't drop anything.
  - b. So Abouna doesn't get burnt and to remember Joseph's blessing.**
  - c. So Abouna doesn't get burnt and to remember crossing the Red Sea.
  - d. So Abouna doesn't get burnt and to remember Jonah and the Whale.
  
7. If the deacons getting everything ready notice that the wine bottle is a bit sticky or dirty, they should: **(b)**
  - a. Take note and remember to clean it after the liturgy.
  - b. Clean it immediately and before putting anything in it.**
  - c. Use a different bottle instead of cleaning the dirty one.
  - d. None of the above.

8. When Abouna asks you to smell the bottle of wine, you should respond by saying: **(d)**
    - a. "Good."
    - b. "Smells fine to me."
    - c. "It's perfect."
    - d. "It is good and well."**
  
  9. The deacon carrying the bottle of water should be ready to: **(b)**
    - a. Say the response for the Litany of the Sacrifices.
    - b. Pour some water in Abouna's hand.**
    - c. Put a coal in the censer.
    - d. Get the prosphering ready for Abouna.
  
  10. TRUE or **FALSE**: The deacon carrying the bottle of water should have his hands crossed.  
**(False)**
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## The Divine Liturgy (cont'd)

### Preparing the Altar

- The deacon who is serving in the altar helps abouna to take the lafaef away.



- Also, he can take the prosphering folded or can spread it on the altar.

**Unfolding the prospherine:**



**Folding the Prospherine:**





In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
**St. Mary and St. Joseph**  
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**Deacons Test Review**

Please review the following topics from the posted minutes of meetings and make sure you are able to do all of them as a preparation for your final test.

(Note: Children up to Grade 12 are required to take the test)

**1. The Tonya**

The first step of the test is to present your tonya to show that it is the correct size for you, as well as demonstrate presenting it, wearing it, taking it off and folding it properly.

**2. The Incense Circuit**

Review how many times to go around the altar, as well as the responses to be said silently as you do so.

**3. The Gospel Circuit**

Review the proper position of the Cross and the Gospel, as well as the proper way to give the Gospel to Abouna when you are walking backwards around the altar.

**4. Entering & Exiting the Altar**

Review the rules and proper ways to enter and exit the altar.

**5. The Candles**

Review the rules of handling the candles properly and what not to do when holding them.

**6. Procession of the Lamb**

Review the process of presenting the wine and water to Abouna during the Divine Liturgy, and specifically where to stand and when to present the wine / water.

**7. The Prospherine**

Review the proper way / time to fold the prospherine on the altar, as well as the proper way / time to fold it again.

**8. The Censer**

Review the proper way to handle the censer, including preparing it by lighting charcoals as well as presenting it to Abouna.

**9. Washing Abouna's Hands**

Review when exactly Abouna washes his hands during the liturgy as well as what the deacon is expected to do.

**10. The Microphone**

Review the proper way to hold the microphone (distance and angle) and the rules of handling it properly.

**11. The Communion**

Review the proper routine to follow during communion, including folding the cloths, and where to stand with the candle, etc.

**12. Readings**

Practice the correct way to read the Agpeya gospels (for Psaltos/Oghnostos), the proper reading of Pauline, Catholic Epistles, Praxis and the proper tune of the Gospel.

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