



St. Mary Monastery  
(El Sourian)



**DEACONS  
AND  
DEACONESSSES**



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(El Sourian)*



Through the intercession of our pure mother St. Mary and the prayers of St. Stephen archdeacon and first martyr, and the two deaconesses, Saint Phoebe and Saint Tekla, and the active fruitful Bishop of the youth, who directed us to write this book. Glory be to our God in His church, forever, Amen.

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

## FOREWORD

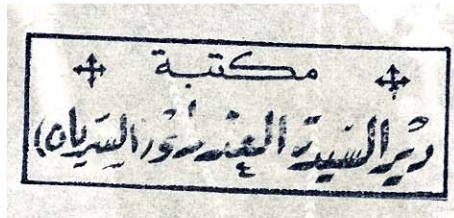
*The rank of a deacon is very important in our church, it forms one side of the priesthood triangle which is:*

**Deacons - Priests - Bishops**

*It is the rank of the service and spiritual struggle, which St. Paul praised by saying, "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1Tim. 3:13).*

We present this book to all the youth of the church, deacons and deaconesses, it states the conditions, laws, duties and rituals of ordaining each rank of the diaconate. It also declares the service of the deaconesses and deacons in the church, which is a service as old as the time of the apostles. It also presents the fields of service for deaconesses in the church, especially the consecrated ones.

We ask God, to make this book a source of blessing and spiritual benefit to whoever reads it, of the youth and servants.





Through the intercessions of our pure mother St. Mary, and the prayers of St. Stephen the archdeacon and first martyr, and the two deaconesses Saint Phoebe and Saint Tekla, and the prayers of our honorable father, the Archpriest Pope Shenouda III and his brother in the apostolic ministry Bishop Moussa, the active fruitful Bishop of the youth, who directed us to write this book. *Glory be to our God in His church, forever, Amen.*

FOREWORD

*Anba Mettaous*

Abbot of El Sourian Monastery

## THE MYSTERY OF PRIESTHOOD

*The mystery of the Priesthood is a holy mystery, by which the Bishop puts his hand on the head of the chosen person, and asks for him, so the Holy Spirit is poured upon him, then he grants him a priesthood rank, thus he is allowed to practice the church's services...*

The word 'Priest' is said about the religious man who serves the people, and this is known in Christianity about a 'Priest', while in the Jewish religion a priest offers burnings and offerings.

'Priest' in Coptic is "Ⲡⲩⲏⲃ", which is derived from "Ⲭⲉⲟⲟⲣⲁⲃ", which means "saint" or "pure". So a priest should be holy and pure in all his life.

In Greek, Priesthood is "ἱερατεῖον", and Priest, "ἱερεὺς" which means, "those who pray and serve the people".

It is also called "**the mystery of the laying the hands**" i.e. granting the seal of the Holy Spirit to the consecrated person.

### Establishing Priesthood:

*Lord Jesus established it when He chose the 12 disciples, and consecrated them for service: "He called His disciples to Himself, and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles" (Luke 6:13).*

*- He sent those 12 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" (Matt 10:7-8).*

*- He gave them the authority to bind and loose, "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” (Matt. 18:18).*

*- After His resurrection, He appeared to them in the upper room of Zion, gave them peace and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”.*

*( John 20:22, 23)*

*- To them only He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).*

*- To them only, He handed the mystery of His Holy Body and Blood: “And when the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve disciples with Him... Then He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me”. Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:14-20).*

## **The Honor of Priesthood:**

Priesthood is a great honour, as it is a consecration to work with God, for the sake of the people’s salvation.

### **1- Priesthood... a Divine Invitation**

*“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send Him out to preach, and to have power to heal sickness and to cast out demons” (Mark 3:13-15).*

### **2- Priesthood... a Divine Choice:**

*“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).*

*“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16).*

### **3- Priesthood an appointment:**

*“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1).*

### **4- Priesthood... choosing certain ones:**

*“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. Then, having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3).*

That is why St. Paul is proud of this saying: *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15-16).*

### **5- Priesthood... is a Consecration:**

Lord Jesus Christ says: *“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth”*



(John 17:19). The word sanctify means consecrated, Christ consecrated Himself for service and salvation and so, all the ranks of priesthood are consecrated for service taking Christ the High Priest, as their example.

### **6- Priesthood... a Stewardship and Trust:**

The Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom the master will find so doing when he comes".

St. Paul also says, *"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful".*

(1Cor. 4:1-2)

### **7- Priesthood... a Great Honor:**

*"And no man takes his honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten you". As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek".*

(Heb. 5:4-6)

## **THE RANK OF A DEACON**

*"Deacon" is a Syrian word that means servant. In Greek, it is called "Deyakon". The deacon's main job is to help the priest or bishop in his religious service. The first church appointed seven deacons to serve tables, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, "Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said... therefore brethren, 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). "Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:6).*

There are three qualifications in a deacon:

- 1- To must be filled with the Holy Spirit and wise.
- 2- To be ordained deacons, through the laying of hands and praying.
- 3- To carry out specific responsibilities.

Our teacher St. Paul mentioned some other qualifications in his first epistle to his disciple Timothy, chapter 3:

### **Likewise deacons must be:**

- 1- Reverent.
- 2- Not double tongued.
- 3- Not given too much wine.
- 4- Not greedy for money.
- 5- Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.
- 6- Ruling their children and their own houses well.
- 7- They should be tested first, and then, if they pass the test, they are to serve.

*“Being a deacon is the first and least rank in the priesthood ranks, St. Peter praises it saying, “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1Tim 3:13).*

**There are 5 ranks for deacons:**

- 1- Epsaltos (hymnist).
- 2- Anaghanostos (reader).
- 3- Epidiakon (assistant deacon).
- 4- Deacon (full deacon).
- 5- Archdeacon (head of deacons).

**( 1 ) EPSALTOS**

Epsaltos, “ΨΑΛΤΗΣ” which is derived from the Coptic word “Psalmos” i.e. Psalm or hymn.

His job is clear from his name, learning hymns and tunes, and singing them in church. This rank was mentioned in some laws of the first church:

[The Epsaltos are also blessed by the Bishop]

Children may be ordained as Epsaltos, according to the Psalm: **“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength”** (Psalm 8:2). The idea of ordaining children is getting them attached to the church at an early age, so they might grow up learning the faith, rite and doctrine of an Orthodox Church. In addition to the high spirituality and holiness which they will attain while being in the church, thus the saying: **“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever”** (Ps. 52:8) might be fulfilled in them.

**The Rituals for Ordaining an Epsaltos:**

After the Reconciliation Prayer in the Holy Liturgy the Hegomen (the eldest priest) or the Archdeacon brings the children to be ordained, so they stand in awe before the altar’s door. The Bishop then comes and gives them advise that suits their age, eg. come regularly to the church, attend Sunday School classes, learn the hymns. He also advises them to be quiet in church and not to be naughty in the church, in the street or at home, to be obedient and not to swear or lie..., to practice confession and partake in the Holy Communion.



The Bishop must also get a verbal promise from the parents to help the new epsaltos carry out the advise, and not to prevent him to come to church under any circumstances. Then he advises the father priest to watch them and care for their spiritual life, and following their confessions. He also advises the elder of the deacons to teach them the hymns and praises of the church, as well as explaining some simple rituals. It is preferable if he tests them in reciting for example, the “Our Father” prayer, the Creed and some short responses. After that he starts ordaining them as Epsaltos:

**They bow their heads before him, then he prays on them:**

“O Lord Master God the Almighty, the Father of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, we ask and entreat you, O Lover of mankind, your servant(s) standing before you, who came to your One Holy and Apostolic Church, enlighten them with the sweetness of your holy words. Let them chant with understanding - spiritual songs. Let them be worthy to start in faith, worship you in wisdom and purity. Sanctify them. Bless them. Fill them with your fear. Guide them by your powerful angels. Enrich them with every good gift and perfect talent, so that they might live according to your holy blessed will, accepted by you. Let them be called to the perfect growth which is for your holy spirit, through your Only Begotten Son our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Glory, honour, dominion and worship are due to you together with Him and the Life-Giving and consubstantial Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen”.

He signs the first child three crosses without laying his hand while saying the name (...) Epsaltos on the Church of (...).

- 1- Blessed is the Holy Father... (Khen Efran).
- 2- Blessed is His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (in the second sign).
- 3- Blessed is the Holy Spirit the Paraclete (in the third sign).

✦ The Bishop signs the rest of the children in the same way.

✦ Then the service garments are presented ( the tunia without the Patrachil), so he signs them three times, then they wear them.

✦ The children stand in front of the elder deacons, and participate in the responses and tunes of the Holy Liturgy.

✦ They partake of the Holy Communion, after the deacons, everyone and their families rejoice. They have to be regular in attending the Holy Liturgy, and coming to the church. as they grow up, they get used to worship and virtues, they become saints without blame.

## (2) ANAGHNOSTOS

Anaghnostos “ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ” is a Greek word formed of two parts: “ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣ” which means “chapter”, and “-ΤΗΣ” which means “related to him”, so it means the chapter related to the reader, or the reader of chapters.

### Conditions for Ordaining Anaghnostos:

- 1- He is not to be less than 18 years old.
- 2- Witnessed by everyone for his good deeds and manners.
- 3- To be recommended by the priest and congregation, without any objection from anybody.
- 4- To be tested in good reading with understanding of the Holy Bible.
- 5- To practice spiritual virtues and means of grace: confession, Holy Communion, attending the church and reading from the Holy Bible.
- 6- To be ready for the service.
- 7- To be humble and meek, not to be proud of his voice or service.

### His Duties:

**1- Reading the daily readings in church:** especially the Epistles in Coptic and Arabic, that's why he should learn the introduction and end of each Epistle in Coptic and Arabic. He should read correctly without mistakes, so that the congregation might understand.

Introduction to the Pauline: A chapter of the Epistle of our teacher St. Paul the Apostle to... may his blessings be with us all, Amen.

At the End of the Pauline: The Grace of God the Father may come on our spirits my fathers and brethren, Amen.

Introduction to the Catholicon: which are the universal Epistles: The Catholicon: A chapter of the Epistle of our teacher... may his blessings be with us all Amen.

At the end of the Catholicon: Do not love the world nor the things in the world, for the world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Introduction to the Book of Acts: A chapter of the stories of our pure apostles, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, may the blessings of their prayers be with you and me, my fathers and brethren, Amen.

Conclusion to the Book of Acts: The word of God is still growing and increasing in this church and all churches from now and forever, Amen.

After reading the Epistle the Anaghnostos (the reader) kneels in front of the altar's door, kisses the cross and the priest's hand, proving his humbleness before God and the congregation, so that he might not be proud of his voice or his readings.

**2- reading the names of the father Patriarchs, who have reposed in the Lord:** and that's after the commemoration of the saints, when the deacon serving inside the altar says: “Let the readers (the Anaghnostos) say the names of our Saint fathers the Patriarchs who have reposed, may the Lord repose their souls all and forgive us our sin”. In the old days, the names of the Patriarchs were written on many tablets, and after hearing this response, each Anaghnostos used to call out some of the names. This is not followed now, but it is most encouraging if we return again to this tradition.



**3- Singing praises and hymns:** to learn the church's praises and hymns, and recite them in the Holy Liturgy.

**4- Preaching and teaching:** as mentioned in ordaining the Anagnostos: "Show your face O Lord, on your servant standing before you, to teach your Holy sayings, and preach your Holy Sayings, and preach your commandments to your people, and teach them your pure words, through which comes salvation of their souls and their redemption".

In the commandment it is said to him, "You should learn the books of the Holy Bible, one by one, so that you may be able to teach the congregation:, but he practices teaching and preaching after having permission from the Bishop or the Priest.

### **The Rituals of Ordaining an Aghnostos:**

It takes place after the prayer of reconciliation.

The nominee stands before the altar without wearing his tunia (holding it folded in his hands), bare head and bowing in meekness and awe before the Lord, ready to carry the honour of the service. The Bishop stands by the altar door, facing the west.

Behind him stands those who have nominated him, either priests or people from the congregation, they bow in repentance in front of the altar on behalf of him. they promise before God and the Bishop to look after him.

The Bishop asks the congregation in the church: "Do you agree that he truly deserves this rank?", they answer, "Yes, we approve that he deserves".

The Bishop cuts four locks of hair in the sign of the cross: one in the middle of his head, the others on the four sides of

his head, while saying: (...) Anaghnostos in the church of (...) Khen Efran... Ekezmaroot... then he blesses him with the three blessings, after which the congregation says: "Amen" after each blessing.

### **Notes:**

1- It is very important that the Bishop asks the congregation "Does he deserve?", so as to have a public witness before God and the church that he is worthy. The Apostle St. Paul says, "***And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also***" (2Tim 2:2).

2- Cutting the hair symbolises the cutting off, of bad habits and evil thoughts.

3- Cutting the hair in the arrangement of the cross, while mentioning the Holy Trinity points to the gifts and talents he gains from the Holy Trinity, through the blessings of Christ's death on the cross.

4- The five hair locks are a symbol of Christ's five wounds, which are the three nails, the crown of thorns and the spear.

♦ Following this, they all line up in front of the Bishop who prays for them and commands them for their responsibilities.

♦ The Bishop then prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, then offers incense in the four directions.

♦ He faces the west while praying: "We ask and entreat you, O Lord, Master, the Almighty, accept your servant(s), Aghnostos in your church, teach him/them your rights, grant him/them to be worthy to touch the utensils and be an honorable Aghnostos before you.



## Notes:

An aghnostos can touch the altar's utensils with a veil, to dry them up after the Holy Liturgy, and puts them back in their place.

◆ The Bishop then faces east, while praying: "O God the Great and Rich in His Gifts, Permit and fill him/them with every wisdom and understanding. Preserve him/them in your worship, without blame.

◆ After the prayers, the congregation responds, O hear us, O Lord have mercy upon us, O Lord bless us". This response is said generally at the end of any prayer.

◆ The Bishop then turns to the West, holds his face, saying: "O God, you who hold everyone with your right hand... show your face on your servant(s)... to teach your holy sayings and preach your commandments to your people... grant him/them a humble heart to read and understand your law, to be of benefit for him/them and those who listen to him/them.

## Notes:

◆ The Bishop's hand represent God's hand, which holds the mind of man, making him able to understand, teach and preach the life-giving strong word of God.

◆ The Bishop turns east and says: "O, Lord Master, who chose his servant Ezra, and granted him wisdom to read your law to your people... grant him the wisdom and spirit of prophecy to recite your holy sayings to your people without blame".

◆ It is very important that the Aghnostos' life be without blame, his deeds corresponding to his words, so that he might not stumble to anyone. His words should be strong, his service pure and useful for everyone, as was Ezra the great writer.

◆ The Bishop (or the Archdeacon if available) then reads the following commandments:

My son, this is the first grade of Priesthood, so you have to:

a- Learn the books of the Holy Bible one by one.

b- Read with understanding, according to the Lord's commandment "Let the reader understand", and [Agnostos] means the reader.

c- Preach the congregation.

d- Your life should be pure, as the lamp on the lectern, enlightening for those around you with your words and deeds.

◆ The Bishop then signs their service garments; they wear them; they join the chorus in the responses and praises of the Liturgy.

◆ At the end of the Liturgy, they partake of the Holy Communion. After the Bishop partakes of the Honoured Blood, and before drinking water, he blows on their faces, one by one, saying, "Accept the Holy Spirit".

◆ A procession is done for them in the altar and the church, everyone feels the Holy rejoice for their ordination.

## Clothes of an Aghnostos:

1- He wears a white tunia because the white colour is appropriate for the service of God, who is dressed in light, and who's white garment shown as light at the transfiguration (Mark 9:3). White colour is also a sign of purity, a characteristic which should in a deacon, and all the other grades of priesthood.

2- He wears the "Patrachel" in the form of a cross on his back, with it wrapped around the front as a belt, and with both ends hanging from over his shoulders.



### Notes:

- 1- “Patrachel” is a Greek word which means a grace or deaconship grade, that is, it is a grace taken by a person and carried on his shoulders.
- 2- It is in the shape of a cross because he is sharing in carrying the cross with Christ, as He says: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me”* (Matt 16:24).
- 3- The Patrachel is on the shape of a belt from the front, as a sign of getting ready for service, like John the Baptist, who used to gird his waist.

### Rules for an Aghnostos:

- 1- The hand is not laid upon him, but only his hair is cut.
- 2- He can get married after this rank, if his wife dies, he can get married once again, on the contrary to the higher priesthood ranks.

## ( 3 ) THE EPODEACON

Epodeacon “Ἐποδίακων” is a Greek word consisting of two parts: “Ἐποδ” i.e. under or helper, and “διακων” deacon i.e. deacon, so the meaning is deacon’s helper.

### Conditions for Ordaining:

- 1- He is not to be less than 20 years old in normal conditions, except if he is brilliant and outstanding in the church’s service, he is as wise as the elders and as honest as the saints.
- 2- To be recommended by the people and priests.
- 3- To everyone witness that he is of good manners and deeds.

### His Responsibilities:

- 1- To guard the church’s doors of heretics and animals.
- 2- To organise seating in the church: men in their specific places, women in theirs, virgins and nuns in theirs....etc.
- 3- To light the church’s lanterns.
- 4- To look after the church’s books, priests and servants clothes.
- 5- To prepare the censers.
- 6- To help the deacon, or replace him in emergencies.

### Notes:

These jobs are added to the previous jobs of Aghnostos, and do not delete them, so he can act as Aghnostos if needed.

### The Ritual of Ordaining an Epodeacon:

- 1- He bows before the altar before wearing a tunia, and that’s after the Prayer of Reconciliation.

- 2- The Bishop and attendant pray the Prayer of Thanksgiving, then the Bishop raises incense in the four directions.
- 3- The Bishop faces the East while praying: "O Lord of Hosts... accept your servant (...) as Epodeacon, he who is standing here waiting for Your Heavenly gifts.
- 4- The Archdeacon says: "the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, completing our weakness, may come upon this brother whose name was mentioned, to acquire the grade of Epodeacon... etc.
- 5- The Bishop, facing East, prays, "Yes O Lord, make him worthy to be an Epodeacon.
- 6- The congregation responds: "O Lord hear us, O Lord have mercy upon us, O Lord bless us", or Keryeleyson (Lord have mercy) 3 times in the same tune.
- 7- The Bishop faces west, holds the Epodeacon's face while praying: "O Lord the Master Almighty... show your face on your servant (...), to become an Epodeacon. Fill him with your Holy Spirit to become worthy to touch the service utensils" (note the utensils are to be carried with a veil when drying them and storing them.)
- 8- The Bishop faces East, and prays: "O Lord, look to our service, send your grace on your servant... to be worthy to live as Epodeacon without blame.
- 9- The Bishop then signs his forehead with his right thumb saying: "We call you in God's Holy church, Amen. The congregation responds, Amen.
- 10- The Archdeacon then says: (...) an Epodeacon for God's Holy Church, Amen. The congregation responds, Amen.
- 11- The Bishop signs the forehead 3 times with his right thumb (without laying a hand), while saying: "We call you(...) an Epodeacon for (...) church Khen Efran... Efezmaroot...

then the second and third sign. After each signing, the congregation responds, Amen.

At these signings, the Holy Spirit descends on him the gifts to carry out his service.

12- The Bishop faces the East, while praying the Prayer of Thanksgiving for completing this ordination, saying: "We thank you O Master, the Almighty, grant him the awesome and purity to be perfect in all the works of his service..."

13- After signing the tunia and the Patrachil, the Bishop dresses the Epodeacon with them, while saying: "Glory and honour... peace and establishing... Amen." Then he recites the commandment of Epodeacon: My son, you have gained a good grade... to be a follower and assistant to the deacon in the service, to watch the doors of the church and keep discipline in the church".

14- Then the Epodeacon stands with the chorus of deacons and joins in the responses and hymns of the Liturgy.

15- He partakes of the Holy Communion at the end of the Liturgy, the Bishop blows on his face, he goes around the church in a procession rejoicing.

**Clothes of an Epodeacon:** The same as Aghnostos.

**Notes:** If no Patrachil is available at the time of ordination, a silk red ribbon can be used instead.

### **Rules for the Epodeacon:**

- 1-The hand is not laid on him, nor is his hair cut, only the signings.
- 2- He can get married after being a Epodeacon, without losing his grade.



## (4) THE DEACON

♦ Deacon “**ΔΙΑΚΩΝ**” is a Syrian word, in Coptic “Rif Shemshi”.

### Conditions of Ordaining a Deacon:

- 1- He is not to be less than 25 years old.
- 2- He has to pass a period of testing and discipleship, to reach a reasonable level of maturity to carry out his service, as the Apostle says: “*But let these also first be tested, then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless*” (1Tim3:10).
- 3- To be a good example in his speech, acting, love, purity and care for his spiritual life and eternity.
- 4- To be humble and not greedy. Able to bear the hardships of service without murmuring, and has the principal to be fair with everyone.
- 5- To read and learn continuously, so that he might be able build his spirituality, and grow in grace and in knowing Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6- Everyone should witness that he is honest, pure and loves peace.
- 7- The church’s congregation should recommend him.
- 8- These conditions are a must, specially when the deacon is a consecrated deacon to serve the church.

### Responsibilities of a Deacon:

- 1- To say the responses of the litanies prayed by the priest at raising incense and the Liturgy.
- 2- To call the congregation to start the prayers.

3- To ask the congregation to keep discipline and quietness in the church, to stand in awe, purity and fear.

4- To help the priest in congregation visitations.

5- To write down the names of those who offer the oblations and offerings to the church, so that the priest might mention them after the Litany of Oblations. It was stated in the ‘Deskoleya’ (the Teachings of the Apostles) to “let the deacons write down the names of those who offer, either being alive or dead, to be mentioned during the readings and prayers”.

In the old days, there was a special room next to the church’s entrance, called the Deacon’s Room, where he used to sit and take offerings of the congregation, writes down their names, or those who reposed, for which they were offered, then gives those names to the priest to mention, one by one after the Litany of Oblations in the Holy Liturgy.

1- To clear the altar and prepare it, before the priest comes for the setting up for the Liturgy.

2- To read the Holy Gospel in the Liturgy. In the commandment in ordaining a deacon, the Bishop says: “... and has the honour of reading the Holy Gospels”.

3- In emergency occasions, he carries the cup and gives the Honoured Blood to the congregation, with the priest’s permission. Also in the commandment, “you should comprehend the honor given to you to carry the True Blood, which gives salvation to the world...”.

4- Serving the widows, orphans, needy, the sick and prisoners. The bishop says to him, “... you should visit the people of the Lord, the widows, the orphans, those who are distressed, help

whoever you can and pay for them. You should be a good example to them, so that they should see your good deeds...”.

5- Preaching and teaching: with permission from the Father Priest.

6- To recite the responses of a deacon from inside the altar, because only the deacon and the archdeacon can enter the altar and say the responses of the Liturgy. In the old days, no one was allowed in the altar except the Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Archdeacons, and the believer kings anointed with oil.

7- He participates with the Bishop or the priest in all other prayers: Baptism, Mayroun, liturgy of the water, consecrating the church, ordinations, feasts etc...

### **The Ritual of Ordaining the Deacon:**

1- It takes place after the Prayer of Reconciliation.

2- After accurate choice of the person nominated by the priests and the congregation, he stands before the altar without his tunia, bowing his head humbly.

3- The Bishop and attendants pray The Prayer of Thanksgiving, then the Bishop raises incense in the four directions.

4- The Bishop faces east while praying: “O Lord of Hosts... accept your servant (...) as a deacon, who is standing waiting for your Heavenly gifts.

5- The Archdeacon announces: “The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ completing our weakness may descend on (...).

6- The Bishop faces the west, puts his right hand on his head while praying: “O Lord God the Almighty... show your face on your servant (...) who has proceeded to deaconship fill him with the Holy Spirit, power and strength”.

7- The Bishop faces east while praying: “Yes O Lord, make him worthy to be a deacon...”. Then, “ Look O Lord to us, and our service, purify us from every inequity, send your grace from heaven on your servant (...), to be worthy to complete your service without blame...”.

8- The Bishop turns west, signs his forehead three times with his right thumb, saying: “(...) a deacon for the altar of... church Khen Efran... Efezmaroot...”.

First signing: We call you (...) a deacon for the altar of... church Efezmaroot...

Second signing: as for the first.

Third signing: as for the first.

After each signing, the congregation responds, Amen.

### **Notes:**

Here, the Holy Spirit descends and grants His gifts for the service.

9- The Bishop turns east while praying: “We thank you O Lord God the Master... for the laying of hands on your servant (...) and the descent of your Holy Spirit on him. Support him with your purity and grace.

10- The Bishop faces west, signs the service clothes of the deacon, which are the tunia and Patrachil. Then he wears him the tunia, puts the Patrachil on his left shoulder while saying: “Glory and honor for the Holy Trinity, The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, peace and establishment for the One Holy Apostolic Universal Church of God. Amen”.

11- The Bishop then recites the commandment, “My son, you have to be honest in this service, you have to do whatever is assigned for you and complete it...”.



12- The deacon enters the altar, bows, then stands on the right side, while the deacons sing 'Axious' (meaning worthy).

13- He participates in the responses from the inside, till the end of the Liturgy, and partakes of the Holy Communion.

14- The Bishop blows on his face saying, "Accept the Holy Sprit", after partaking of the Honored Blood.

15- A procession takes place in celebration as usual.

### **Clothes of a full Deacon:**

1- The deacon and the Archdeacon wear a tunia and the red Patrachil, as a sign of being washed up in Christ's Blood. The Patrachil is put on his left shoulder as a sign of carrying the cross, while the edges of the Patrachil resemble the wings of angels. In this St. John Chrysostom says: (meditate on the spiritual joy, you who are resembling the wings of angels when you wear your beautiful Patrachil on your left shoulder).

2- The deacon and Archdeacon might wear a cap decorated with crosses, Pictures of Our Lord Jesus and the saints. In some churches, it is still used, while mostly disappeared from lots of other churches. It is preferable to keep our old traditions.

### **Rules for Deacon and Archdeacons:**

1- If he is ordained before getting married, he is not allowed to get married.

2- If his wife died after his ordination, he is not allowed to marry again, exactly as the priest. If he does so, his rank is withdrawn.

## **SOME SPIRITUAL AND RITUAL DUTIES**

### **FOR ALL DEACONS**

1- All ranks of Deaconship should study the Coptic Language, because it is connected to all the rites, readings, praises and tunes of the church, so that they might read the Coptic Language, not Coptic written in Arabic or English.

2- They should learn, study and repeat the praises and hymns always.

3- They should be disciples of the singer of the church (Me'alem) or an experienced deacon.

4- They should be true partakers of the liturgy and other praises.

5- They should come early to the Liturgy. If any deacon is late after the Absolution of Ministers, he is not allowed to put on his service clothes and serve. If he is late after the reading of the Gospel, he cannot partake of the Holy Communion.

6- They should always wear the tunia and serve in every Liturgy, either inside the Sanctuary or outside, it is not right to serve around the altar without wearing a tunia. Since he is wearing the tunia and is serving, he should partake of the Holy Communion, and if doesn't partake of the Holy Communion then according to the rites of the church it is a great error.

7- They should present their tunias to the priest to sign them, for the following reasons:

a- It is considered as permission for them to serve in the Holy Liturgy.

b- A permission to have Holy Communion.

c- A declaration that these deacons are not banned by the church.

d- It is a sign of submission to the priest, the younger to the elder, asking for his blessing because the elder blesses the younger (Heb. 7:7).

8- While the priest is signing the tunia and Patrachil on both hands, while bowing his head or kneeling before the priest, to have the priest's blessing and approval.

9- After the sign of blessing, the deacon kisses the cross and the priest's hand.

10- While wearing the tunia, the deacon recites the two Psalms, "I will extol you, O Lord, for you have lifted me up.." (Psalm 29) and "The Lord reigns, he is clothed with majesty..." (Ps. 92).

11- Deacons should not go out of the church with the tunia, because these are clothes for service only inside the church.

12- They should take off the tunia at the end of the Liturgy, after releasing the angel of sacrifice, and never before.

13- When taking off the tunia, he should recite Ps. 47, "O clap your hands all nations".

14- Deacons should always attend the raising of Incense of Vespers, and reciting the Praise of the Vespers before that.

15- Every deacon should have a priest of confession, to confess once a month, and partake to the Holy Communion in every mass if serving, if there isn't anything to prevent him.

16- Psalm 150 and other hymns said during the Communion by roster among the deacons, so that there is no excuse for not partaking of the Holy Communion.

17- Deacons carry candles in the following times:

a- While the priest is choosing the Lamb, till placing the Lamb, till the placing of the Lamb in the Paten, and the wine in the chalice.

b- While reading the Coptic/Arabic Gospel.

c- Since the beginning of the consecration till its end.

d- During the second signings, starting from: "The Holy Body and Honoured Blood" till the end of confession.

18- The deacon is not allowed to go out with the censer after the commemoration, or blow the incense on the faces of the congregation, because he then distracts their worship and concentration in the prayers. He also attracts their attention away from the sacrifice on the altar.

19- Deacons are not allowed to talk to each other during the Holy Mass, or keep going in and out of the altar without a real need to do so.

20- There should be an Archdeacon in the church, or the eldest deacon to organise the service of deacons properly.

21- There should be a weekly meeting for deacons where they learn the Holy Liturgy, there are rites and spiritualities, hymns and praise. Also readings and the service inside the sanctuary and outside should be organised according to their ranks, and their efficiency in service and reading.

22- The readings of the feast and important celebrations, should be given to those who are regular in attending the Holy Mass and the meetings, throughout the whole year.

23- If a deacon sinned, and was given a repenting commandment, he should carry it out with submission, not murmuring or in pride, so that he might learn how to respect the deaconship service, its principles and its spirituality.

24- The deacon should not be proud of his voice, but pray in humility and awe.

25- A deacon should deal in love with his brethren the deacons, to be fair and humble.



26- A deacon should not smoke cigarettes or drink wine, lest he should be a stumbling stone for others.

27- A deacon should be aware of the sins of the tongue such as insulting, swearing, lying and slander, so that God might accept his service and prayers, **"Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be so"** (James 3:10). The blessing is praises and prayers, the cursing is swearing, insulting etc.

28- Every deacon should stick to the rules and responsibilities of his rank, such as the way the Patrachil is worn, the services in the altar or outside, his readings etc.

29- The deacon should have spiritual service in the church eg. Sunday School or spiritual meetings, besides his service as a deacon, for the deacon is a servant full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and knowledge, not only a parrot repeating hymns and praises.

30- Each deacon should carry out the spiritual, and social responsibilities imposed on them, which our teacher Paul the Apostle ordered saying, **"For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus"** (1Tim 3:13).

31- A deacon should have a profound knowledge on the church's teachings, not only its rites:

32- The priest or Archdeacon should follow up the completion of all these rules and responsibilities so that the deacons might serve a blessed calm service without problems, their service will then be useful, their prayers acceptable, **"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"** (John 4:24).

Archdeacon **"Αρχηδιακων"** is a Greek word composed of two sections:

♦ Arch **"Αρχη"** means head or president.

♦ Deacon **"Διακων"** means deacon.

So Archdeacon means the head of the deacons.

## Conditions of Ordaining an Archdeacon:

- 1- To be very well acquainted with the Holy Books, perfecting all the duties of Aghnostos, Epodeacon and Deacon, which are the ranks that he supervises.
- 2- To be very well acquainted with the church's rites and its praises and tunes, in all its different occasions.
- 3- Not to be less than 28 years old.
- 4- To have good witness from everyone concerning good manners and a life without blame.
- 5- To be recommended by the priests and congregation.

## Responsibilities of an Archdeacon:

- 1- He heads all other ranks, and decides about their duties.
- 2- He is like the eye and ear of the Bishop, updating him with the congregation's state.
- 3- He presents other chosen people for different deaconship ranks.

## The Rituals for Ordaining an Archdeacon:

- 1- The ordination takes place after the Prayer of Reconciliation.
- 2- He stands before the sanctuary bowing his head.

3- The Bishop hears the congregations witness for him, after reading the recommendations to ordain him.

4- The Bishop prays: "O Lord the Master, the Merciful send the grace of your Holy Spirit on your servant (...) who is called to be an Archdeacon... fill him with wisdom and strength like Stephen the first Archdeacon":

a- To carry the Honorable Blood Chalice, which is for the Lamb without blemish.

b- To serve the orphans and widows.

c- To care for the worshippers, teach the ignorant, rebuke the offenders, bring back the astray and organise the deacons.

d- Serve the strangers.

5- The deacon says "Pray", the congregation responds, "Lord have Mercy".

6- The Bishop prays: "Now also our King, we ask and entreat you, O Good lover of mankind, for your servant (...) to make him worthy to the call of Archdeacon, through the descent of your Holy Spirit on him...".

7- The Bishop signs him three signings, dress's him in his service garments, the tunia and the Patrachil, as done with ordaining the deacon.

8- He enters the sanctuary, attends the Holy Mass and participates in the responses.

9- He partakes of the Holy Communion.

10- A procession takes place for him around the church, celebrating the honorable rank.

◆ His uniform: as that of a deacon.

◆ His commandments: as that of a deacon.

## **Ritual of Releasing the Ribbon of Deacons:**

There is a ritual for releasing the ribbons, held after the Holy Mass and the procession.

The Bishop prays the Prayer of Thanksgiving, raising the Pauline incense, Psalm 50 is said, then the deacons sing "tay shoury" ('the censer'...). One of the deacons reads the Pauline Epistle, from the First Epistle of our teacher St. Paul the Apostle to his disciple Bishop Timothy (3:8-10), dealing with the conditions of being a deacon.

The three Agios are said, then the Litany of the Gospel.

Psalm 133:1 "Behold, Bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who might stand in the house of the Lord".

Then St. John's Gospel (17:24-26) dealing with love, which is the base of every service in every rank of service.

One of the priests says the Major Litanies of the Fathers and of Peace, then the Bishops say the Litany of the Gatherings.



## DEACONESSES IN THE CHURCH

In the first church, there were deaconesses helping the Apostles, the Bishops and the Priests in some of the fields of service. No lady was allowed to join the services unless she exceeded 60 years of age, mostly being a widow of only one husband. The rules of the Apostles were that the deaconesses must be either a virgin or a widow of 60 years or older to only one husband.

✦ Some examples were Phoebe, the Servant of the church of Cenchrea, St. Paul commended her to the church of Rome saying, *“I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also”* (Romans 16:1,2).

✦ Also we hear about another deaconess, and a disciple to our teacher Paul, she was called Tekla, she believed and was baptised, she became his disciple, and sent her to the town Eucnea to serve there. She faced many tortures and persecutions, the Lord used to save her each time. When she was 80 years old, she dedicated herself for worship and meditation, then she reposed in peace, after an honest service. The Greek Sinixarium describes her saying, “Peace to St. Telka the martyr, who martyrised without shedding blood”. The Coptic Church celebrates her departure on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Thoout.

The service of consecrated deaconess had ceased in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but Pope Shenouda III revived it when he ordained a

great number of deaconesses in the Pentecost Feast on 1981. Also some Bishops ordain deaconesses to serve in their Dioceses.

### Conditions for a Deaconess:

St. Paul cared much about the widow deaconesses in the first church, referring to chapter 5 of his First Epistle to his disciple Timothy, we can define the conditions for a successful deaconess:

- 1- To be a widow of only one husband (1Tim. 5:9), or a celibate virgin.
- 2- If she is a widow, she should not be less than 60 years old, lest she be a stumbling stone because of her young age, or she would lean to marriage once more.
- 3- Everyone should witness for her good manners and deeds, and her previous service, such as: she welcomed strangers, she washed the saints feet, she helped the poor, needy, orphans and sick people, she brought up her children in the fear of God, she organised her house properly, for her children and husband without problems.

### The Rite of Upholding Deaconesses:

It is well known that the rank of a deaconess is not included in the church ranks, it is not a priesthood rank, for there is no priesthood for ladies. St. Mary the Virgin, the Lady of the Heavenlies and Earthlies, the Mother of the Incarnate God, did not acquire any priesthood rank, although she was the Mother of all the Apostles, sharing the service with them.

✦ The hand is not laid on a deaconess, as in the ordaining of priesthood ranks. After the Prayer of Reconciliation, she



stands in front of the sanctuary bowing her head while the Bishop prays the following prayer mentioned in the Laws of the Apostles:

**“O Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and woman, who filled Mary, Deborah, Hanna and Kelda with His Spirit, you did not refrain that you Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ be born from a woman. Now look at your servant standing before you, the chooses deaconess, fill her with you Holy Spirit, cleanse her of every iniquity of the body and spirit, for the honour of you and your Christ and the Holy Spirit with whom you share the Glory worship forever Amen”.**

The Service and Care Committee of the Holy Synode, is preparing now for a complete detailed ritual for upholding the deaconess and deaconesses assistants.

### **Responsibilities of a Deaconess in the Church:**

A deaconess can carry out many services in the church, as an example:

1- Helping the priest when baptising the ladies. The priest puts his hand on the head of the baptised woman inside the Baptismal Font, he immerses her 3 times in the Baptism water in the name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit. After getting out, she puts on her clothes, then the priest anoints her with the Holy Myrrour, only on the seen parts of her body. There should be a deaconess attending the baptised lady, to help and guide her in what should be done before and after baptism.

2- Organising the ladies to sit in their specific areas in the church.

3- Organising the ladies to partake of the Holy Communion: She should make sure that they are Orthodox Christians, confessing regularly. Also to make sure that they are dressed in modest clothes, and they are not wearing any makeup when proceeding to the Holy Communion.

4- She helps in the visitations to the girls and ladies, encouraging them to come to the church's liturgies and meetings.

5- She can serve in Sunday School for Children, and through her simplicity and kindness, attracts them to the church.

6- She can serve in the church childcare centre, for she can bear the children, and feed them with her kindness and love.

7- She can work in the social work of the church, serving the widows, needy and poor, a complete service.

8- She can work in Orphanages, being a mother to those who are deprived from having a mother in their childhood.

9- She can work in nursing homes, serving them with sacrifice, in their eating, drinking and bathing, or nursing them, bearing them because of their old age and illness.

10- She can visit the sick ladies, either at home or in the hospitals, talking to them with God's words and encouraging them. She can also inform the father priest about those who need visiting or communion.

11- She can organise the ladies activities in the church, either functions or workshops, etc.

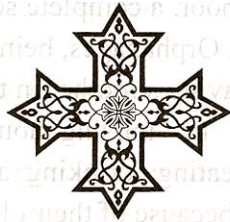
12- She can supervise the cleanliness of the church. Its furniture, except the sanctuary, as it is forbidden for ladies to enter inside it.



13- She can supervise in the hospitals established by the churches or Bishoperices.

14- She can supervise the “Foreign girls Hostels” for those girls coming from other countries, they are in real need of Christian care, to protect them and help them in their success.

*May the Lord Bless the lives of all deacons and deaconesses to become a sweet aroma before Him. Amen.*



## PREPARING TO ATTEND CHURCH

### We come with love:

The Psalmist says in Ps. 25 : “**O Lord, I loved the beauty of your house, and the place of your glory**”. This is one of the sentences said by the Bishop when consecrating the altar... The Psalmist also says, “**How lovely is your tabernacle O Lord, my soul longs, yes, evens faints for the courts of the Lord**” (Ps. 84:1,2).

He goes to the house of the Lord with love and anxiety, with all the feelings of the heart, that’s why he benefits from being there, he blesses the servants of the Lord who are dwelling in his house, such as the monks and servants of the altar, so he says in the same Psalm: “**Blessed are those who dwell in your house, they will still be praising you**” (Ps.83:4).

The Psalmist also rejoices for coming to the house of the Lord, he says, I was glad when they said to me, “**let us go into the house of the Lord**”(Ps.121:1). He who rejoices for going to the house of the Lord, for sure he’ll enjoy sitting there and gaining lots of spiritual benefits, and because of the Psalmist great rejoice, he wishes he could stay there forever, so he says: “**One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I will seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple**”.

(Ps. 27:4)

## The Holiness of The Lord's House:

Assuredly, while in the Lord's house, you feel that you are in a holy place, acting as whatever befits its holiness, and the Psalmist says: "**Holiness adorns your house, O Lord forever**" (Ps. 93:5). It is enough that it is called "The House of The Lord". It is consecrated with Holy Oil (Mayroun), the Spirit of God dwells in it, it became specialised and holy for the Lord... as the tabernacle was before, and became holy for the Lord, a part of it is called "the Holy", and what represents the sanctuary now was called the "Holy of Holies".

The first place that was consecrated and anointed with oil was Bethel, where the Lord appeared to Jacob our father, he saw a ladder joining earth to heaven, and angels going up and down it, so he said, "**How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven**" (Gen. 28:17). Everything in the house of God is holy; the service utensils are not used except by the priests, the deacons only carry them with a lefafa (veil). They are consecrated with the Holy Oil, also the censer, icon, baptismal font... Because of the Holiness of the place, God said to Moses, when he appeared to him in the burning bush: "**Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground**" (Ex. 3:5). In the older days, people used to take off their shoes before entering the churches, and this still preserved now in our monasteries. but because of the huge congregation now, it is impossible to do this and people only take off their shoes when approaching the sanctuary... where the altar is and the Holy Sacrifice.

And so, in my trip to consecrate churches in England, U.S.A. and Australia, I only consecrated the altar.

The Sanctuary is the place where only the servants of the altar enter, pure, fasting and ready for the Holy Communion, they take off their shoes and enter, as this befits its holiness.

## The Church is also called the House of Angels, Resembling Heaven:

The lights of the church reminds us of the lights of heaven, also pointing to the angels of heaven, or the saints who are "**The light of the world**" (Matt. 5:14), so, we light the candles or lanterns before their icons, remembering that they were a light to the world.

The church is holy because it is specified for prayers to be held in it, so the Lord says: "**For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations**" (Is. 56:7). And so our Lord Jesus cleansed the temple, in great strictness when he saw them using it, not for its holy purpose: which is prayer.

## The Preparation:

For this reason, entering the house of the Lord, should be preceded by spiritual and bodily preparation. So a person enters when he is pure bodily and spiritually.

**Bodily:** Having a bath or washed, wearing clean clothes, fasting if going to attend the Holy mass.

In the past they used to go to the churches while singing psalms. That's why the psalms are called songs of the Ascents, so at least occupy yourself with prayers while going to church, so that your mind is ready and spiritually wise.



Do not enter the house of the Lord while your mind is occupied with worldly matters, which might interrupt your concentration while being in church.

*Also in repentance enter the house of God:* with a pure heart, clean thought, with no inequity or problems with others.

The priests and deacons put on their white garments (tunia) before starting to pray, as a sign of the pure heart. The priest washes his hands before starting the Holy Mass, while saying: ***“I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go about your altar O Lord”*** (Ps. 26:6).

### **The Spiritual Preparation is very Important before the Holy Communion:**

Therefore it is not appropriate to have Holy Communing everyday, lest it should turn into a habit, and you lose your preparation and caution. However this might vary between the priest and the layman.

We also prepare the altar, it is set up while praying and raising incense around it, in preparation for the sacrifice to be placed on it!!

We raise Vesper and Morning incense, we incense around it before the Liturgy of the Saints, before taking off the Eprospharine, the Pauline and the Acts (Eprexis) incense, the Gospels procession, giving the congregations the blessings of incense.

### **We Pray the Absolution Five Times for the Congregation.**

Absolution of the Vespers, Midnight absolution, absolution of Raising Morning-Incense, servants absolution after offering

the Lamb, in addition to another inaudible absolution said by the priest in his prayers, before the final confession... all this is done in preparing them for Holy Communion, remembering Samuel the Prophet's words, before offering a sacrifice at the house of Jesse of Bethlehem: ***“Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice”*** (1Sam 16:5). In the past, not everyone deserved to enter the church, or to attend the Holy Mass. There were punishments to forbid their entrance, when there were choruses in the church. The Epodeacon's duty was to guard the church doors, lest an unworthy person, or one with punishment enter. This happened with St. Sarah before her repentance, and with the Empress in the days of St. John Chrysostom.

### **Early Attendance:**

It is not appropriate to go late to church, or after offering the Lamb, for the Holy Bible says, ***“those who seek me diligently will find me”*** (Prov. 8:17). David the Prophet says in the Psalm: ***“O God, You are my God, early will I seek you, my soul thirsts for you”*** (Ps. 63:1). The right thing to do in church, especially for the monks: is to attend Midnight Prayer, then the Midnight Praise, Raising of Morning incense then the Mass. But as for you, you have to attend at least from the beginning of the Mass, offering the Lamb and the servant's absolution.

### **Reverence:**

Let's always say what our Father Jacob said: ***“How awesome is this place! This is more than the house of God,***



**and this is the gate of heaven**” (Gen. 28:17). And so people used not to live next to the church, out of awe and respect, lest they should commit any sin beside the holy place. Only the houses of priests and Levites used to surround the tabernacle, those were the servants of the house of God, but houses of people used to be a little bit more further away.

*We see reverence even at the standing of the Cherubim and the Seraphim:* Isaiah the Prophet explains this saying: “Above it stood the Seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

### **Signs of Reverence: Standing, Kneeling, Bowing and Keeping your Senses Silent:**

So sitting during prayers, especially during the holy moments is not appropriate in the church. We find the deacon crying out before the reading of the Gospel “Stand up in the fear of God and listen to the holy Gospel”, and in another occasion “bow to God in fear and reverence”.

And so we should not speak at all during prayers, either we are attending the Mass or any other of the church’s mysteries as the Baptism or any prayer, also in the sermon, we should not comment. The presence of a fun club in the church’s playground makes our children lose respect for the church, playing and screaming, especially if there isn’t a guide to

control them; and make sure that their entertainments are run in a spiritual manner. If respecting this place is a must, then how about respecting the sanctuary of the church? Not everyone is allowed in, no talking, laughing or moving too much inside it, no leaning on the altar. Only one Qorbana (holy bread) should enter the sanctuary, and that is the Lamb.

### **Discipline:**

Everything in the church should be done in quietness and discipline, St. Paul says: “**Let all things be done decently and in order**” (1Cor. 14:40). There is a place for deacons, a place for priests, a chair for the Bishop... The Sanctuary is on a higher place than that of the congregation, there are 3 steps for the chair of the Bishops, because he passes through 3 ranks: deacon, priest and Bishop.

The priests stand in the right side of the altar. The Bishop or the serving priest signs them after taking off the Prospaharine, and the three holies, so it would be very strange if the Bishop is blessing, while no priests are standing in their proper place.

The movement of the priest is also in a special order, also the processions of the Holy Cross, Palm Sunday... there is an order for everything.

What causes disorder in the church is noise of the children, sometimes the photographers or the organisers themselves. Children run here and there and scream causing disturbance. In some churches, if the church has a stony building or



a special chapel there is a meeting or Mass specially for children. As for the infants, some churches overseas specialised a glass room to stay in with their mothers, where the mothers can see through the glass windows, and listen to the prayers through microphones installed in the room, thus crying of these children can't be heard, sometimes they call them the Crying Rooms.

Disorder sometimes happens during Holy Communion, with people pushing and shoving, or during distributing the Elogia (part of the other offered holy breads) or having the blessings of a Bishop or a priest...! While discipline solves lots of problems, it is time consuming... but things get worse when disorder comes from those responsible for organisation, by their shouting, and rebuking people without reason, using authority without taking into consideration other people's feelings. It is much more preferable to let these people to become aware of how to deal decently with others.

Also, there should be discipline during weddings: some people forget that it is one of the church's mysteries, which they have to respect, they take it as if it is just a celebration... The same for any functions held in the church. Here we remember another important point in coming to church, which is:

#### **Modesty:**

Modesty is a must in the house of God, modesty in clothes, ornaments and senses. Ladies should cover their heads in church, especially during the Holy Mass and Communion.

If there is a deaconess, she should look after these matters. Keeping the senses includes concentrating our sight, not to look around the church, thus keeping also our thoughts.

Another important point is:

#### **The Sounds:**

Quietness and listening is appropriate in the church. If people talk, they cause noise, and this means that they are not caring about prayer. Do not talk to the person sitting next to you, especially if it is loud, also, no one is allowed to call out to another person in the church, let it be by signals. This concerns the deacons also and not only the congregation, they should agree on what responses are to be said before entering the church, not during prayers or through the leader deacon, without discussions. Hymns and praises should be said in harmony, all the deacons in the same way and tune, no odd sounds. If a deacon finds out that he is different than the rest, he should either keep silent or join their way.

#### **Humility:**

Entering the church should be done in humility, with a feeling that we are unworthy, exactly as the tax-collector who stood afar, and could not raise his eyes to heaven (Luke 18:13). The church teaches us that the believer enters the church while saying: "As for me, through your great mercy, I enter your house and bow before your Holy Sanctuary in Your fear". My entrance is not because I am worthy, but because of your great mercy. Being in church, I bow before Your Holy Sanctuary in fear. WHERE is this feeling of unworthiness when we enter the church?

An example of humility is the preparation prayer said by the priest before the start of the Mass: "O Lord, you know the heart of everyone, you are Holy resting in the hearts of His Saints, You are The Only One without sin, capable of forgiving sins". "You Know O Lord that I am unworthy, and not ready for this holy service which is Yours. I can't stand and open my mouth before Your Holy Glory, but through Your great mercy and pity in this hour, to start and complete...". If the priest says this, then what about the congregation.

**Some notices:**

We should stand in the church praying, following the meanings of the words. If there is something hard to understand, we say our own prayers inaudibly.

We do not have to leave the church before the blessing and release, but we leave after the priest says: "The love of God the Father, the grace of His Only Begotten Son, the community and gift of the Holy Spirit be with you, go in peace, the peace of the Lord be with you". The deacons do not take off their tunias before the priest takes his off, because they serve the priest, and do not leave before him. After the release do not stay in the church playground, talking nonsense, and losing the benefits we gained from the Mass and the sermon.

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