



**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 – Sunday, April 03, 2011**

- + Deacons meetings for children are held on the first Saturday of each month (3:00 to 5:00 PM) however, deacons meetings for adults, university/college students and high school students were suggested to be held on the first Sunday of each month (2:15 to 3:15 PM) to address rites and general subjects, along with the hymns which can be taken on the other three Sundays of the month.
- + Learning the hymns together to unify the hymns and voices.
- + Hymns are art and they can be said in different ways according to the style of different teachers. No one is absolutely correct, but we need to standardize the hymns according to one hymn source.
- + The microphone should be set at an appropriate level which is clear and well heard. Pick a microphone with specific color and train your voice to that microphone
- + The ideal scenario for chorus lead would be a chorus leading; this is the ultimate goal. Through constant practice and review, we can conduct as one chorus. Therefore we should learn the hymn together from one source, so come to class or use the same source and learn it at home.
- + The hymns have their deep spiritual effect.
- + The timing of the Divine Liturgy was discussed:  
We start the reconciliation prayer with Ishleel at 10:10am and that would be standard. However, if we start earlier then we can include special hymns like aspasmos, etc.
- + The readers should practice their readings using the same English translation and practice their tone pitch speed pronunciation to whine the skill of public speaking.
- + For the young deacons and the microphones; we should hold the microphones for them and make sure they are about 4 inches away.
- + The names of deacons who practiced the Good Friday hymns will be placed on the list to be said together; others who want to say these hymns, they can but in a lower voice and with their ears following along.
- + Music notes benefits in speeding the process of learning and it will help the learning process. It will be difficult at first but it's worth the investment in time.



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**Deacons Meeting – Sunday, May 01, 2011**

+ Abouna stresses the spirit of love, dedication, humility that was seen in the Passion Week which affects the spirituality of the congregation. Abouna emphasized these qualities in the deacon which is an important influence on the people.

**+ Three points about deaconism were addressed:**

**1- Spirituality of the deacon:**

+ Deaconate is not about the hymn, it's serving the altar and the glory of God. This is the job of the angles and we have the likeness and the work of angels. Hypocrisy annoys God. God will tolerate sins and will give chances, but hypocrisy is not tolerated and this is demonstrated in the gospels where we see sharp words "*whoa to you!*"

+ We cannot wear a tonia and act differently because this is hypocrisy. This will be similar to Christ saying to me "*whoa to you!*"

+ How can one be like an angel? It is done through deep spirituality. One main part of practicing spirituality as a deacon is practicing the spirituality of hymnology. This is rich traditions and these hymns are rich in spirituality which was passed from inspired saints.

+ Each hymn has spirituality. It has a certain tunes, meanings, certain times it is said. There is a reason for all this.

+ A deacon should study what he practices. Singing a hymn without meaning is almost hollow. And when we sing in a manner where we are praying, that changes the spirituality of the church. Deacons, like Moalem Mikhail El-Batanoni was crying during his hymns.

+ In the Orthodox Church, we have so much richness and we care much about the rites in the church. The reason for this consistency and systematically is that it allows us to focus on the meaning, interpretation and depth of the hymns. For instance, when giving the censer to Abouna, one can think of the incarnation, the mystery of God's divinity become one with His humanity in the Virgin's womb. This can be done when the rites become second nature and it frees you to think and contemplate in prayer. So we must benefit through learning the rites.

+ The deacon is a role model. If we are not spiritual deacons this puts the kids in danger. We should not be a stumbling block! Imagine a deacon outside of the church who is violent, with no sign of meekness or humility; one who is loud and jokes inappropriately. These kids will take this as an acceptable behavior for a deacon - hypocrisy.

## 2- Responsibility of the deacon:

+ A deacon who knows the hymns and rites is good for a hymnist – psaltos. If deacon interprets and describes the bible, he is an anagnostos. The bible is a part of his life - at all stages of deaconism.

+ A deacon who is serving in the altar should come early and make preparations for the liturgy. When a deacon see things which may need to be cleaned or adjusted in the altar, regardless of his turn or his responsibility, he should have it addressed or get someone to fix it. For instance, if the altar is not tidy or if the storage boards are open, a deacon should address these issues. These responsibilities should not be asked for.

+ The deacon is helping Abouna during the Divine Liturgy. There is a lot of attention to organize the deacons outside during communion. Those who are free should help in organizing kids during communion which becomes very hectic. For instance, an older deacon and a younger deacon (for encouragement) can help in organizing the kids or cleaning the altar.

## 3- Practices of the deacon:

+ Laughing during the Divine Liturgy is not acceptable.

+ Sharing the cymbals is good, and it is done in humility, but for the sake of time, don't reach to the point where invitations to play cymbals end up affecting the time and the hymn.

## Questions and Answers:

+ Q: What do we do when an older experienced deacon comes to our church? How do we treat him?

+ A: We have to make them feel welcomed and respected but that does not mean he should lead. No bishop would come to another diocese that is not his without an invitation.

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**Deacons Meeting – Sunday, August 07, 2011**

- + Deacons shouldn't open the secret prayers of the people. We must keep them closed and give them to Abouna.
- + A mistake was noticed in saying **"Epi Epros Evki Estaseete"** in the joyful tune; this response should NOT change regardless of joyful season or not.
- + Once the deacon wears the tonia, he is like a soldier in the battle field; so he shouldn't go in the altar and spend the whole time there.  
Some want to pray alone, however, they shouldn't put on their tonia and go inside the altar to pray. They can pray with the congregation – without serving as deacons - but do not make this a habit, otherwise, the kids deacons will start to do the same.
- + We should not talk during the sermon even if we do not understand the language. We all understand partially each language: English or Arabic. If we pay attention we will understand some points.
- + When we use the cymbals we should play it in a simple fashion. Sometimes when we go to monasteries, we come back with a new way of playing the cymbals or singing certain hymns. Please refrain from introducing new methods; pray the hymns in humble and simple way. If we show off, we steal the glory of God as people start to praise us instead of God.
- + The altar group head deacon is the one who is responsible for distributing the hymns.
- + Every microphone is labeled and used for a specific purpose. They should be used 1-2 inches from your mouth. Please do not turn off any microphone during any service in or outside the altar.
- + Those who are scheduled for serving in the altar, they should make sure that the batteries are charged for the microphones the night before the Divine Liturgy. Also they should make sure the vessels that will be used for the wine and water are clean for use the next day.
- + Tonias should be in good condition, washed and ironed. There are lockers for the deacons that can be rented for \$40 a year.

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**Deacons Meeting – Sunday, September 11, 2011**

+ Deacons resembling the angels, in serving God. It is a great honor and blessing to serve in the altar as the Cherubim and the Seraphim.

+ A deacons' newsletter is used to be issued seasonally – stopped lately, it needs to resume again. A newsletter can talk about church feasts, theology or rites, and their significance. It may also include points were discussed during the deacons meetings.

A suggestion was made to have this info on e-mails if the newsletter needs more preparation work.

**+ Deacons, who are not serving in the altar, should stand outside. Only those who serve is in the Altar can be in the Altar.**

+ One of the adult deacons who serve in the altar can help translating the sermon to the young deacons. An idea is to use the translation device as well, for the English speakers from the congregation, to listen to the translation in the same time.

**+ We should not use the utensils (water containers) of the altar to drink water.** This is not a cup and it is solely dedicated for the service of God and it should be respected.

**+ We should try not to use the wax candles often and use the candles with liquid instead,** for the following reasons:

- 1- The young deacons try to play with the wax candles during the prayers in the altar.
- 2- They vanish quickly, and if for example they were used during the Gospel reading, and it happen to vanish, quickly becomes a distraction for everyone.
- 3- They are also expensive compared to the liquid candles.

There are 6 liquid candles on the altar that can be used in the altar or during the Gospel reading; if there are more than 6 deacons serving in the altar then the wax candles can be used for the extra deacons. In this case, wax candles can be given to the adult deacon only.

During Evnoti nai nan in the regular days (no feasts), the deacon can give Abouna wax candles to hold them with the cross; however, he may give him the golden cross that holds the liquid candles during the feasts or special occasions.

**+ Deacons should not open the prayers requests. They are private and may include names of people so Abouna is the only one who can open them.**

**+ Deacons need to improve saying the altar responses.** The altar group head deacon is to follow up with his group young deacons, he can treat them as a Sunday school servant: teach them the rites and responses, encourage them - In this sense he will know which child knows which hymns.

**+ Oghnostos deacons should always wear the patrasheel (patrachen) during the Divine Liturgy - This is part of deacon's uniform.**

During the vespers of special occasions (such as Nayrouz vespers, St Mary's Revival week vespers, ... etc) deacons should try to wear the tunic as well.

+ The deacons who hold the candles beside abouna during the communion should be attentive, observing and very careful not to burn abouna's tunic or the lafaef.

An adult deacon should take care of this service – to hold the candle next to the Body and the Blood of Christ during the communion – As he is mature and has a keener eye to notice and resolve problems.

+ During the procession around the church, the crosses should not be distributed to kids who can't hold the metal crosses due to their weight.

+ Coptic and Hymns classes should be promoted to the kids during Sunday school classes and through emails and newsletters.

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**Deacons Meeting – Sunday, Oct 02, 2011**

**+ Deacons Convention**

- An idea to organize a convention for the deacons – perhaps on a Saturday 9:00am to 5:00pm – and it can be scheduled bi-yearly then.
- Topics can be arranged to address church history, rituals, significance of hymns, etc.
- Each convention may have a theme and related topics that can be distributed on some deacons, or perhaps guest speakers can be invited too.

**+ Responsibility of deacons serving in the altar**

- It is not only saying responses and take care of the shoria but it's about serving the entire altar. For example: clean the altar, the chairs, the shoria, turn off the microphones, etc.
- Head deacons are responsible to be aware of these things and to distribute these tasks. Always keep in mind that altar deacons are angels surrounding the throne of God, so they can't take off their tonia and just run away before abouna is spreading the water.

**+ Arrangement during the Communion**

There is an improvement in this area; the following shows the coordination of abounas and the deacons during the communion:

- Abouna give the communion to deacons first.
- Abouna then takes the Body and gives the communion to kids.
  - o Deacon has to be in front of abouna saying **(Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord)** symbolizing St. John the Baptist. He goes ahead of the Body and says that loudly (be careful not to confuse or block abouna while moving) until he reaches beside the table to give communion.
  - o Deacon is like a watching angel; he follows abouna's hand, follows the little kids who are taking the communion, and observes everything and tells abouna if any issue.
  - o Another deacon is to stand on a side to organize the kids and the flow of the communion. He can physically move the kids (but not the adults) to approach the Body or the Blood – an adult deacon is requested to do that.

**Notes:**

- When an adult is having his kid taking a communion (the Blood), the kid takes it first and then stands in front of his father; then his father takes the communion, so the Blood chalice is now on top of the kid's head – he may

accidentally hit it – in this case, the deacon should help pulling the kid slowly to avoid being under the chalice.

- It's good to allow kids deacons helping in collecting the lafaef but not to sacrifice the service. A kid deacon sometimes doesn't take the lefafa from the kid who takes the communion (after taking the Body) who may use it on his mouth after taking the Blood; therefore, the adult deacon is requested to help in this process.
- If a pearl (piece of Body) is accidentally dropped on the floor during the communion, abouna is the only one who comes down and checks it; deacons shouldn't touch it.

#### + Preparing the altar during / after the communion

- The altar deacon can take the lafaef on the left side of the altar to put the red towel – The red one can clearly show if any pearl (piece of Body) drop on the towel – but he can leave the lafaef on the right side of the altar.
- There shouldn't be lafaef under the towel at the left side to avoid wetting them while washing the vessels – the water can spill on the towel, goes to the lafaef which will be folded and stored after, and then may become smelly.
- The incense box is to be closed after the tarheem prayer (prayer for the departed after the commemoration of saints). Papers which have the names of departed are to be put in another box and to be closed.
- Deacons use the metal silver container to pour the water on abouna's hand after the communion. The silver containers are used in the main church and small containers are used in the chapel downstairs.
- The idea of deacons drinking the water from the paten is not ritual. However, this is exceptionally done for the deacons serving in the altar since they can't leave the altar and go out to drink water after the communion.

#### + General Notes:

- Deacons who wear the tonias and don't serve inside the altar, they are not supposed to be in the altar during the Divine Liturgy, however, they're kindly requested to stand outside.
- Some of the deacons who serve in the altar may decide to sit outside during the sermon, which is ok.
- Deacons who are assigned to lead the Divine Liturgy are requested to follow the time schedule to make sure we finish at 11:30AM.  
[http://www.smsj.ca/Deacons/Schedule/Time%20Schedule/Annual%20\(Sunday\)%20Service%20Time%20Schedule.pdf](http://www.smsj.ca/Deacons/Schedule/Time%20Schedule/Annual%20(Sunday)%20Service%20Time%20Schedule.pdf)
- The laptop and projectors are requested to be left ON for Sunday school songs starting right after the Divine Liturgy.

#### + Questions & Answers (Q&A)

Q: Do we have to take off shoes when we step on the deacons choruses' area?

A: The reason behind taking off shoes is that God has told Moses to take off his shoes because the place where he stands is holy.



<sup>5</sup> *Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5).*

And the spiritual meaning is when I take off my shoes; I separate myself from the world and am consecrated to God.

Q: Are the deacons carrying the wine and water (during the offertory) supposed to be crossing their hands?

A: Deacon who is holding the wine crosses his hands and makes a sign of cross before and during the procession of the lamb, but then he can uncross them after. However, deacon who is holding the water doesn't cross his hands.

The procession of the lamb is a symbol of carrying the Lord Jesus Christ to the tomb to bury Him while putting the lamb on the patent and cover it with the dome (which represents the shape of the tomb) and then the lefafa on top of it.

Q: When exactly can the deacon turn off the candle at the end of The Institution Narrative prayer and before the Descent of the Holy Spirit; is it before Amen Amen Amen or after?

A: The right time to turn off the candle is before Amen Amen Amen. The candle is symbolizing the angel. Note: Don't let deacons bow down with candles in their hands.

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**Deacons Meeting – Sunday, Nov 06, 2011**

**+ What's the Divine Liturgy?**

The Divine Liturgy is presenting heaven on earth, and everything is presented symbolically, but the presence of God is literally.

**+ What's the meaning of the word "Divine Liturgy"?**

The word "Liturgy" means the work of people; and "Divine" means heavenly/ Holy - God is involved (Something is related to God) - which means God is involved with group of people working together to make a holy thing.

**+ What are the components of the Divine Liturgy?**

Many components are involved in the Divine Liturgy in order to call it a Divine Liturgy as follows:

**1- God**

- + The first thing is God Himself; God is presented during the Divine Liturgy.
- + As a deacon, I come early to the church for it's my turn to serve in the altar; this concept has to be clear in mind. Serving as a deacon is not a matter of a turn in the altar service or the reading for this is a very weak concept, but it's a matter of serving God Himself.
- + Since we serve God in the altar or outside the altar, we should respect this service and benefit from the blessing and joy that we feel after praying the Divine Liturgy.

**2- Priest**

- + Abouna or a bishop or the pope.

**3- Deacon**

- + During abouna's ordination, abouna is ordained as a deacon first (full deacon), then he is ordained as a priest. So, if one day there is no deacon and two abounas are there, one of them can pray as a deacon and that shows the importance of having a deacon in the Divine Liturgy service.

**4- Congregation**

- + The congregation includes anyone else like parents, kids, etc.
- + If there are 3 priests praying, one can do a priest, the second one a deacon and the third one the congregation.

### + How can these work altogether in the Divine Liturgy?

+ Symbolically, we have the presence of God in the Divine Liturgy - where ? **The Holy Board**, which has been consecrated by the pope or the bishop by the holy oil of Myron; and now the Holy Board is **the Altar**.

+ Abouna usually brings the board with crosses on it (for example) and give it to a bishop who consecrates it with the mayron, and then abouna can take it and place it on any table or place it on an altar that's not consecrated yet to be able to pray a Divine Liturgy (same as in our church).

+ The Lord Jesus Christ Himself comes and attends the prayers of the Divine Liturgy when the priest says the prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit.

+ Therefore, all congregation who come to the church are supposed to take the communion, and of course the deacons as well. Deacons are supposed to be fasting while serving in the altar or outside, but in some emergency cases, the deacon who is serving outside may not be fasting.

### + Who designed the Divine Liturgy?

The Lord Jesus Christ, as mentioned in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as follows:

#### Matthew 26: 26-28

<sup>26</sup> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." <sup>27</sup> Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

#### Mark 14:22-24

<sup>22</sup> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." <sup>23</sup> Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup> And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.

#### Luke 22:17-20

<sup>17</sup> Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; <sup>18</sup> for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And 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." <sup>20</sup> Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

+ Jesus took bread: Same as in the offertory of the lamp.

+ Gave thanks / blessed: Same as in the Institution Narrative prayers, even the same words.

+ Broke it: Same as in the fraction.

+ Gave it: Same as in the communion.

+ There are certain parts in the Divine Liturgy that represent the core of the belief, so every church has to pray it, like Offertory, Institution, Descent of Holy Spirit, Fraction, Communion, but there are some parts that may include some additions/changes which don't touch the core of the Divine Liturgy, like the litanies (the litany of waters, fruits and airs combined) or the commemoration of saints (there is a short one and a long one).

### + Conclusion:

+ There are some words/translations in the Divine Liturgy that may change the meaning, for example:

**To partake:** the Arabic translation ( لإصعاد ) is wrong, but the right translation is ( لننال ).

To partake of the holy mystery, it's not about a who ( يُصعد الذبيحة ), but God through the priest.

Same meaning in any sacrament, for example in matrimony, it's not about a who marry but God who does through about a.

+ God is giving us a taste of heaven in the Divine Liturgy; when we pray a Divine Liturgy, the whole church is like a heaven and deacons in the altar are like angels praising God.

+ The ritual of the Divine Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church is not the same as for example, The Russian, or Armenian. The main components are the same, like offertory, institution narrative, descent of Holy Spirit, but there are some changes, for example:

In Russian church, there are differences in the form of the bread, the cloth, but the idea and the core of the faith are the same. The same in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and St. Gregory – Although there are some differences, but the core is the same.

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