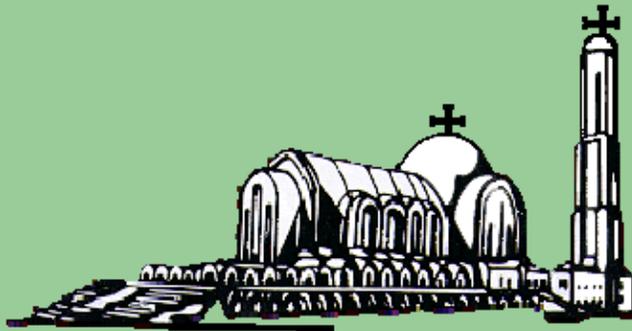




St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 11:

*THE RITE OF THE
HOLY LITURGY (I)*

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



1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ Overview:

- God, as the loving Heavenly Father, who created the whole world on our behalf, asked Moses to offer some articles to be used in His House, being aware that they really belonged to God. He ordered him to anoint not only the Tabernacle but also the ark of testimony, the table and its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense and so on, all with sacred ointment saying to him, "You shall consecrate them that they may be most Holy, whatever touches them will become Holy". (Exod. 30:29).
- The Church of the New Testament, as Christ's Bride, offers several special vessels to be used in God's House, being aware they are God's own.
- They are consecrated by prayers, the word of God and by crossing them by the anointment of Chrism.
- When consecrated, they are only to be used for God's service. 2



1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ The Chalice:

- The Communion Cup, into which wine mixed with water is poured, is consecrated into the Blood of the Lord through the Holy Liturgy.
- The Lord Himself used the chalice (Mt. 26:26, 27) and the Apostles followed the same ritual.
- The Early Christian Chalices were commonly made from wood or glass. By the third and fourth centuries, precious metals became common, and valuable chalices of Gold and silver were offered by the believers.
- The bowl of the Coptic Chalice has a bell-shaped form, the stem is long and rests on a circular stand.





1. The Sacred Vessels



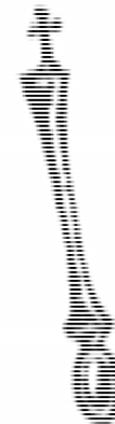
❖ The Paten:

- It is called in the Coptic 'tdickc', and in Greek 'disxos', a small round tray, without a stand and having no engraving.
- It is usually made of silver or gold.
- This paten has a symbolic meaning, as it represents the Lord's manger and tomb.



❖ The Spoon (Mysterion):

- The Spoon in Coptic is called "pim/yt/r" and in Greek "labij".
- In it the Blood of Christ is administered to the communicants.



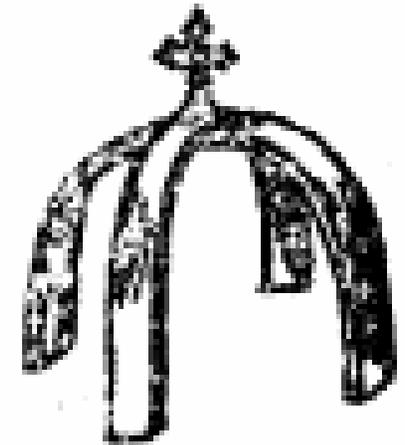


1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ The Dome (Star):

- It is called in Arabic “Dome ” and in Greek “asthr” or “astcixos”(asterisk), and consists of two silver arched bands, held by a screw, crossed over each other into the shape of a cross, usually surmounted by a small cross.
- It is said that St. John Chrysostom had introduced this article, which is placed upon the paten to keep the holy bread in a prescribed order, and to support the coverings.
- It represents the shape of the tomb and also reminds us of the star that appeared to the Wise men.





1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ The Cruets:

- Cruets are two vessels used in holding the wine and water for the Eucharist.
- There are three other cruets used by the Coptic Church, they are as follows:
 - Firstly; one is used to hold the Chrism (Myron), the sacred cruet which only the priest or bishop can hold. It is usually preserved in the Sanctuary, and sometimes on the Altar.
 - Secondly; a cruet contains the Oil of “Kallilion” or “Gallilon”, used in the liturgy of Baptism.
 - Thirdly; a cruet contains the oil Of “Apocalypses”, that is the Oil which is used on the last Friday of the Great Lent (in the service of the Sick); and is used in the service of the Saturday of Joy (before Easter) when all the book of Revelation (Apocalypse) is read.

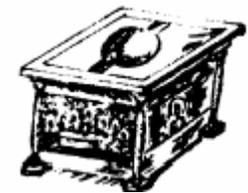




1. The Sacred Vessels

❖ The Ark:

- In the middle of the Alter, there is a wooden box, called in Coptic 'pitotc' which means 'a seat' or 'a throne', and is used as a Chalice-Stand.
- Usually it is cubicle in shape, approx. 30x25cm, with a top closed with high flaps.
- Titles of the Ark:
 - It is called '**the Throne**' for it represents the presence of the Crucified Lord.
 - It is also called '**the Ark**', as it looks like the Ark of Noah through which the creation was saved. We are also saved by the Blood of the New Testament which is in the Chalice of this Ark.





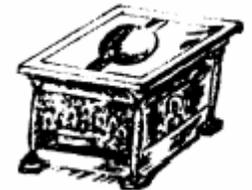
1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ The Ark:

- Titles of the Ark (Cont.):

- Its name also corresponds to the '**Ark of the Old Testament**', for the last one contains the following articles:
 - Firstly, the Tablets of Law written with the finger of God to declare God's covenant with man. The new Ark now contains the true Blood of Christ, as the New covenant, that fulfils the Law and the prophets.
 - Secondly, Aaron's rod which flowered, as a symbol of the Virgin Mary who begot the Incarnate Lord, whose Blood is in this new Ark.
 - Thirdly, the jar of manna, as a symbol of the true Manna, the Life-giving Body and Blood of Christ. (John 6).





1. The Sacred Vessels



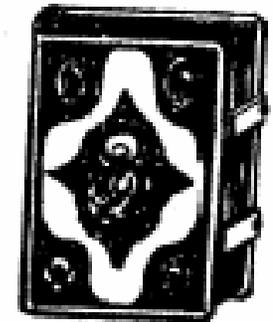
❖ The Ciborium/Pyx:

- The Ciborium or the Pyx is a small vessel of silver, circular in shape and having a cover, with measures about six centimeters in diameter. Its height is about six centimeters.
- Its purpose is to convey the Holy Body moistened with a few drops of the precious Blood to the sick or prisoners, or to any person who cannot attend the Divine liturgy.



❖ The Book of Gospel:

- A copy of the New Testament covered with silver or gold and decorated by icons, has in the middle of one side, the icon of the Resurrection or Crucifixion and the other side, there is the icon of the Patron Saint or St. Mary and the Child Jesus.





1. The Sacred Vessels

❖ The Censor:

- Under the Old Testament dispensation, the use of incense in divine worship was prescribed by God and controlled by the most Strict Regulation (Ex. 30:34-38).
- It was one of those ceremonies which belonged to the highly ceremonial rituals of Judaism; which took place within the holy place, and was upheld by the priest alone.
- One of the first gifts offered to Christ while He was yet an infant, was the frankincense, a costly gift of love which should be offered to Him by His people today.
- “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, ...” (Malachi 1:10,11).
- The censor is one of the symbols of the Virgin Mary.





1. The Sacred Vessels



❖ The Censor:

- Censing is a symbol of:
 - The presence of God
 - Offering prayer as a sacrifice of love
 - The purification of people
 - Giving honour



❖ Other Articles:

- A Small box for incense, usually of silver to carved wood.
- The Ewer and Basin, are used for washing the hands of the celebrant during the liturgical services.
- The Oblation (Qurban) Basket is a small basket made from palm leaves in which the holy bread is placed.
- The triangle and the cymbals.
- The Liturgical Fans.





The Ritual of Raising of Incense



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense

❖ Overview:

- The use of incense in the church is not a pagan ritual but a Biblical fact which represents the prayers and praises of the saints and angels.
- Incense is raised during Vespers and Morning Prayers before every liturgy, except those during the Great Lent which are concluded late, and hence, incense is only raised during Vespers on the Saturday night.
- The Raising of Incense is an introduction and preparation for the Liturgy, consisting of a collection of prayers, praises and Thanksgiving prayers which request the Lord's blessings upon the sacramental service.
- The Raising of Incense may be performed on its own, not just as an introduction to the Liturgy, however, the Raising of Incense is mandatory prior to the Liturgy (except, of course, during Lent, as just stated above).





2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Thanksgiving Prayer:

- The priest enters the Church and opens the curtain saying, "Have mercy upon us, O Father the Almighty, O Holy Trinity have mercy upon us, O Lord of Hosts be with us for we have no other supporter in our tribulations but You."
- He then prays The Lord's Prayer and prostrates before the altar saying, "We worship You, O Christ, with Your Gracious Father and the Holy Spirit, for You have come/risen and saved us."
- He then prostrates before the other priests and the congregation saying, "Accept my prostration. Bless me and forgive me."
- He exchanges a holy kiss with the other priests as a sign of love, peace and reconciliation.
- He also turns to the congregation and says, "Forgive me, I have sinned."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Thanksgiving Prayer:

- The absolution from the other priests, and the forgiveness from the congregation is very important before starting the prayers, for our beloved Savior said, "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25).
- The priest then stands reverently before the altar with his hands raised, the cross in his right hand. The deacon stands behind the priest and begins praying the Thanksgiving Prayer.
- After praying the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the priest prostrates and kisses the entrance of the sanctuary.
- He then enters the sanctuary with his right foot, as he is entering the Holy of Holies



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Mystery of Incense Prayer:

- The priest stands before the altar and the deacon brings the censer to him from the right side of the altar. The priest places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer while making the sign of the cross three times.
- These five spoonfuls of incense represent the five righteous men of the Old Testament who offered acceptable sacrifices to the Lord, and the Lord smelled their pleasing aroma.
- These men are:
 1. **Abel**
 2. **Noah**
 3. **Melchizedek**
 4. **Aaron**
 5. **Zacharias**



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Mystery of Vespers and Morning Incense:

- The priest then goes around the altar three times with the censer, silently praying the Three Litanies; the 'Litany of the Peace of the World and Church', the Litany of the Fathers', and the 'Litany of the Gatherings', while the congregation sings the Verse of the Cymbals. Facing him on the opposite side of the altar is the deacon who holds the cross and responds. This is known as the Incense Circuit.
- Then the priest kisses the altar, and comes out from the sanctuary without turning his back on the altar. He steps out of the altar with his left foot, while still facing the altar.
- After leaving the sanctuary, the priest raises incense before the sanctuary three times; the first time saying, "We worship You O Christ our God with Your gracious Father, and the Holy Spirit for You have come and saved us." The second time he says, "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" (Ps.5:7). The third time, he says, "I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the angles I will sing praises to You" (Ps.137:1-2).



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Mystery of Vespers and Morning Incense:

- He then raises incense once to the North of the sanctuary where the icon of St. Mary is displayed, and says, "We hail you with Archangel Gabriel. Hail to you highly favored one, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women" (Luke 1:28).
- Then he turns and raises incense towards the West, saying, "Hail to the hosts of angels, hail to my fathers the apostles, the martyrs and all the saints."
- At this point the priest faces the congregation who are standing together in rows, resembling the Heavenly Jerusalem where the angels and saints dwell, then raises incense to the South of the sanctuary where the icon of John the Baptist is always placed, and says, "Hail to John, son of Zacharias, hail to the priest the son of the High Priest."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense

❖ The Mystery of Vespers and Morning Incense:

- The priest then raises incense once more towards the East, thus ending the procession in the name of the Lord, saying, "Let us worship our Savior, the beloved of mankind, because He had mercy on us and saved us."
- He faces the East and waits until the congregation finishes chanting the Verse of the Cymbals, then starts praying the appropriate litanies.
- The priest, standing at the door of the sanctuary, raises incense in all four directions, signifying that God is Omnipresent and can hear our prayers and this is called "a cross of incense".





2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



- ❖ **The Mystery of Vespers and Morning Incense:**
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- ❖ **The Litany of the Departed:**
 - The Litany of the Departed is always prayed during the raising of the Incense of Vespers. Praying for the departed is very important and a well established teaching in the Coptic Church.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Litanies of the Sick, Travelers and Offering:

- When raising the Morning Incense during weekdays, the priest prays the Litanies of the Sick and of the Travelers, but on Sundays and on holy feast days, the Church anticipates that no one would be traveling, but rather, they are attending the Liturgy or celebrating the feast, bringing their offerings and oblations.
- Therefore the Litany of the Offerings is prayed instead of the Travelers on Sundays and on holy feast days.
- The priest prays the Litany of Offerings at the altar, facing East, not at the door of the sanctuary where the rest of the litanies are prayed.
- On Saturday mornings, the Litany of the Departed is said, in commemoration of our Lord Jesus Christ in the tomb on Easter Saturday.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Procession of Incense:

- After the priest finishes praying the litanies at the door of the sanctuary he enters the sanctuary, put hand of incense and comes out of the Altar after doing a complete circle around it.
- Then he stands facing the East and starts another “cross of incense” as mentioned before and right after, he gives incense to the “Katameros” (reading books both Coptic & English or Arabic).
- And if there is any Holy Relics in the church, he goes and gives a hand of incense before it, then comes back to give hand of incense to the other Clergy (3 hands to the Bishop, 2 hands to the Hegumen and 1 hand to the presbyter), then starts the procession of incense inside the nave of the church as follows:



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Procession of Incense:

- Then the priest starts the procession of incense inside the nave of the church as follows:
- The Incense Tour around the Church begins. The priest walks to the North of the sanctuary door to the iconostasis and offers incense before the icons of the angels, the apostles and saints. Here he prays such prayers as: "Hail to Archangel Gabriel", while standing before Archangel Gabriel's icon, "Hail to the martyr, St. George", before the icon of St. George...etc
- After offering incense before the icons to the North of the sanctuary the priest proceeds Westward among the congregation, offering incense and blessing them, saying:
During Vespers Incense: "The blessing of the Vespers incense be with us, Amen." During Morning Incense: "The blessing of the Morning incense be with us, Amen."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Procession of Incense:

- He then walks to the North-West corner of the Church behind all the seats at the back and then walks South until he reaches the centre walkway.
- He walks down the centre walkway towards the East until he reaches the middle sanctuary door, then he turns South to the iconostasis and offers incense to the icons there.
- He continues incensing before the icons on the South side of the iconostasis, then he proceeds Westward down the Southern-most aisle of the Church, offering incense to the congregation and blessing them.
- The priest continues down the Southern walkway in a Westerly direction, until he reaches the back of the Church where he then turns North and travels behind the pews to the centre aisle. Again, he walks down the centre toward the East, while offering incense and blessing the congregation.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The 5 Inspiring Contemplatory Versus:

- Before he reaches the place of the Passover (Holy Week) Prayers, the priest recites the first verse of the Five Contemplatory Verses, saying, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He, being one Hypostasis, we worship and glorify Him."
- When the priest reaches the place where the crucifixion icon is usually placed on Good Friday, he stops and completes the other four verses.
- Incensing towards the East, he says the second verse, "This is He Who raised Himself as an acceptable sacrifice on the cross for our salvation".
- The priest then raises incense towards the North saying the third verse, "So His Good Father smelled it on Golgotha in the afternoon."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The 5 Inspiring Contemplatory Versus:

- The priest then raises incense towards the West while facing the main Western door of the church (a symbol for the door of Paradise) and says the fourth verse, "He opened to us the gates of Paradise and returned Adam to his rightful place."
- He then raises incense toward the South while saying the fifth verse, "Because of His cross and Holy Resurrection, He returned man once more to Paradise".
- All five of these verses are a glorification for Christ, Who was crucified for our sake, and gave us salvation.
- The priest then continues walking Eastward down the centre aisle, all the time offering incense to the congregation and blessing them, until he reaches the sanctuary door.
- Standing at the altar, he puts one spoonful of incense into the censer, saying, "Glory and honor, honor and glory to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The 5 Inspiring Contemplatory Versus:

- With the penitent prayers and collective repentance that is offered by the congregation during the incense tour, the priest goes back to the altar and prays **The Mystery of Confession** also called **The Mystery of the Return**, as the priest says it after he returns from the Incense Tour.
- Here he raises incense over the altar while saying the Mystery of the Congregation's Confession, saying, "O God, as You accepted the repentance of the thief on Your right while on the cross, accept the confession of Your people. Forgive all their sins for the sake of Your Holy Name which is called upon us, and according to Your mercy and not on account of our sins."
- In this prayer the priest asks God to accept the confessions and repentance of his people, just as He accepted the confession and repentance of the thief at Golgotha.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The 5 Inspiring Contemplatory Versus:

- He then goes once around the altar, raising incense, before departing via the sanctuary's main door. Standing before the sanctuary door the priest again raises incense in the four directions (as he has done previously) then offers incense to the Holy Bible and the senior clergymen.
- Having done this, the priest then hangs the censer in its place.
- This ascending incense gives comfort to the spirit and soul of the congregation through its sweet fragrance, as it represents the prayers that are rising to the Throne of Grace which the Angel offers to the Divine Glory.
- During the incense circuit, the deacons are chanting the appropriate Doxologies for the occasion and the Saints.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Prayer of Efnouti Nai Nan (Lord Have Mercy):

- After the Doxology and the Creed, the priest holds the cross with three lit candles to signify that He Who was crucified is the Light of the world, sacrificing Himself to give light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.
- The priest stands in reverence in front of the Sanctuary.
- He spreads both his arms, holding the cross with the three lit candles in his right hand, while the left hand is being opened in supplication and humility.
- While facing due East, and without making the sign of the cross, he chants, "Lord have mercy, settle Your mercy upon us, have compassion upon us."
- He turns to face the North and, while signing the cross, says, "Hear us."
- Then he turns towards the West, gives the blessings to the congregation, and says, "Bless us."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



- ❖ The Prayer of Efnouti Nai Nan (Lord Have Mercy):
 - The priest then turns to the South and says, "Guard us," while making the sign of the cross.
 - He then turns to the East once more, and with the sign of the cross, he says, "Help us."
 - Still facing East, he completes the Litany without signing, saying, "Take away your anger from us, visit us with Your salvation and forgive us our sins."
 - Then the congregation responds by "Kirialyson 3 times".



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Litany of the Gospel:

- At the end of the congregation's response, the priest makes a sign of the cross over the congregation with the cross and the lit candles, and says, "Let us pray", followed by, "Peace be with you all."
- He then blows out the candles and gives them to the deacon, crosses the box of incense, and puts another spoonful of incense into the censer while saying the Litany of the Gospel.
- Standing before the sanctuary, he then offers incense to the Holy Bible while saying, "We worship before the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers of David the Psalmist and Prophet. O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins."
- Entering the sanctuary with the censer, the priest then goes around the altar performing the Round of the Gospel while saying, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace." Then the Gospel is read.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The 5 Minor Litanies:

- Having put one spoonful of incense in the censer, the priest stands before the door of the sanctuary and prays the Five Minor Litanies concerning:

1. Safety
2. The Church Fathers
3. The Holy Places
4. The Weather and Vegetation
5. The Congregation





2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Absolutions:

- The priest then takes the cross from the deacon and recites the three absolutions; two of them are prayed in silence while facing the East, and the third is said audibly while facing the congregation (West).
- While the priest is saying the third absolution, the congregation bows their heads, asking for absolution and forgiveness.
- These three absolutions are the same prayers that our spiritual father prays on us after confession.
- At the end of the absolution, the congregation proceeds towards the priest to kiss the cross, the Holy Bible, and the priest's hand.

❖ The Blessing:

- Finally the priest prays the final blessing which varies according to the season.



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Blessing:

- "May God have compassion upon us, bless us, make His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us. Lord save Your people, bless and uplift the Christians everywhere, through the supplications and prayers of the Lady of us all, the holy Theotokos St. Mary, and the holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, and all the heavenly hosts, and our fathers the Apostles, the martyrs, the saints and the cross bearers, and the blessed saint and angel of this day. May their holy blessings, their grace, their favor, their love, and their support be with us all forever, Amen."
- The priest then says, "Christ is our God", and the congregation responds with, "Amen, let it be so."
- Facing the East, the priest continues, "O King of Peace, grant us Your peace and forgive us our sins, for unto You is power, glory....Amen."



2. The Ritual of Raising of Incense



❖ The Blessing:

- He also asks the angel of peace to accompany each member of the congregation as they leave the church, until they arrive at their homes.
- Then together with the congregation, the priest prays The Lord's Prayer.

