

Liturgy of the Believers

Objectives

To gain a basic understanding of the liturgy

References

- ❖ “The Spirituality of the Rites of the Holy Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church” Bishop Mettaous, Bishop of St. Mary Monastery, El Sourian.
- ❖ “How to Benefit from the Holy Liturgy” Bishop Mettaous, Bishop of St. Mary Monastery, El Sourian.
- ❖ “Spiritual Meanings of the Rite of the Holy Liturgy” Fr. Zakariah El-Suriany, St. Mary Monastery, El Sourian.

Scriptural Verse

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53)

Lesson Outlines

Parts of the Liturgy of the Believers’ Rite

The Anaphora: “Meet and Right”

- ❖ The priest puts the veil that was over the “Prospharine” on his left hand and the one that was on the paten on his right hand.
- ❖ Uncovering the plate with the bread in it while the chalice is still covered symbolizes the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene, after the Resurrection and hiding His identity from her.
- ❖ He holds the cross and signs the congregation with it while saying “The Lord be with you all”.
- ❖ The people respond, “And with your spirit” “You also helping together in prayer for us” (2 Corinthians 1:11)
- ❖ He signs the servants on his right saying “lift up your hearts.” “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21)
- ❖ The people answer, “They are with the Lord.” Before responding, we must ensure that our hearts are truly uplifted. We must put our minds and hearts in the words and the meaning of the response because if we utter it and our hearts are not uplifted and our minds are not focused on praying, then the following verse may apply to us “These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8).
- ❖ The priest signs himself while saying “let us give thanks to the Lord”.
- ❖ Afterward the priest lifts up his hands, covered with the veils and prays “meet and right”.
- ❖ The veil resembles the seraphim with whom, after the reconciliation through the cross, we are able to praise God.

The Trisagion “Agios”

- ❖ The priest holds the cross, while his hand is covered with a veil and makes three signs of the cross while saying Agios “Holy”. The first sign is on himself, the second is on the

servants and the last is on the congregation. "Holy, Holy, Holy the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

- ❖ The veil on the priest's hand holding the cross is the one that was on the chalice pointing that we are to be sanctified only through the blood.
- ❖ Uncovering the chalice refers to the Lord Jesus Christ revealing His identity to Mary Magdalene afterwards and she knew Him.

"Was incarnate" till ... "He rose from the dead"

- ❖ After that the priest puts a hand of incense in the censor while saying "was incarnate and became man". When he reaches to "descended into Hades through the cross", the priest bow while setting his arms on his chest in the likeness of the cross.
- ❖ Then the priest prays the part starting with "He rose from the dead" and when he says "...and give each one according to his deeds", he beats his chest in a sign of regret for his sins.
- ❖ Putting the incense in the censor points to the incarnation of the Lord Christ.

The Sanctification

- ❖ The priest removes the veils from his hands and washes his hands with the incense ascending from the censor. This is done as he is about to hold the mysteries and sanctify them.
- ❖ Then he takes from the smoke of the incense and puts it over the paten and the chalice while saying "...for being determined to give Himself up to death for the life of the world".
- ❖ Putting the smoke of the incense on the bread and the wine points to the Lord giving up himself on the cross. The incense represents the life of the Lord Christ and the altar represents the cross.
- ❖ Then the priest takes the bread on his hands and when saying "He lifted up his eyes...", he signs the bread three times while saying "He had given thanks, ...and blessed it,...and sanctified it"
- ❖ After that, the priest starts to divide the bread into two parts; a third and two thirds, from above downward without separating the pieces.
- ❖ This division resembles the incarnation of the Lord (one of the Trinity) without being separated from the Father or the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Then the priest opens the bread a little and blows in it the blow of the Holy Spirit. He separates two other small parts, one at the top and one at the bottom of the bread. Thus the bread becomes divided into four parts in the shape of a cross.
- ❖ Then the priest puts his finger on the edge of the chalice and makes one circle counter clockwise while saying "Likewise also the cup after supper He mixed it of wine and water".
- ❖ Then he holds the tip of the chalice with his right hand and says "He tasted" and he again blows in the chalice.
- ❖ This circle symbolizes that the blood of the Lord was shed on behalf of the whole world. Also the blood of the burnt offerings and the peace offerings in the Old Testament used to be sprinkled around the altar in a circle.
- ❖ The movement is counter clockwise points that the blood is for the children of God who live pure life against the earthly lusts.

- ❖ Then the priest holds the chalice and moves it from the west to the east and from the left to right.
- ❖ This move says that through the blood we were transferred from being aliens to God (at the west) to the paradise once more (at the east) and from being rejected (at the left) to become accepted (at the right).
- ❖ Then the priest bows before the altar while saying inaudibly the litany of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and the wine to change them to the body and the blood of the Lord.
- ❖ At this moment, the change takes place and the priest cannot sign on anything with the cross as the Lord Christ is on the altar and being the Chief priest, He is the one who bless others.

The Litanies and the commemoration of the saints

- ❖ After the conclusion of the sanctification of the mysteries, the priest takes the two veils on his hands and start praying the 7 litanies : peace, fathers, priests, mercy, places, air, waters, or vegetation, and the offerings.
- ❖ After that, the priest prays the commemoration of the saints and at its end he puts a hand of incense in the censor.

“Those O Lord”, “lead us”, introduction of the fractions

- ❖ After this, the priest prays the parts of “those O Lord” and “lead us into your kingdom”. When the priest concludes by “Irimi paci = Peace be with all”, he bows before the altar without signing the congregation.
- ❖ This is in order not to turn his face away from the sacrifice and at the same time, the Lord is on the altar and He is the one who blesses the people.
- ❖ The priest says “Again, let us give thanks to God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, for He has also made us worthy to stand up in this holy place ...”

The Fraction

- ❖ The priest takes the Holy Body by his right hand and puts it on the palm of his left hand. Then he points with his right index to the Body while saying “the Holy Body”.
- ❖ Then he dips the tip of his right index into the chalice while saying “the precious Blood”.
- ❖ Then with the blood on the tip of the right index he makes a cross over the whole Body (its front and its back)
- ❖ Signing the Body with the Blood points to how the Lord’ Body was covered with His Blood at the time of His crucifixion.
- ❖ The priest transfers the Body from his right hand to his left as this reminds us with what the Jews (the people on the right) have done by delivering the Lord to the hands of the gentiles (the people on the left)
- ❖ At this time the deacons light the candles to honor the sacrifice and point to the Lord who shone upon us through His resurrection. Also the candle is a symbol for self sacrifice in order to give light to others.
- ❖ After that, the priest starts dividing the Holy Body as a symbol of the Lord’s sufferings.
- ❖ At the end of the prayers of the fraction, the congregation prays the Lord ’s Prayer.

Conclusion

The Divine Liturgy is a journey through the Old and New Testaments that shows how the Lord prepared His people to receive Him as the Savior of the whole world. It reminds us of the prophecies and sacrifices of the Old Testament and then brings us back to the New Testament where the Lord was born and wrapped in swaddling cloth, baptized, crucified and rose from the dead to give us life through the partaking of His Divine Body and Blood. Let us contemplate on this journey every time we come to church to partake of this holy sacrament.

Activities/Discussion Points

This lesson should be presented as a slide show in order to be able to visualize the different events.