

# COPTIC RITES (3): Liturgy of the Word (Liturgy of the Catechumenen)

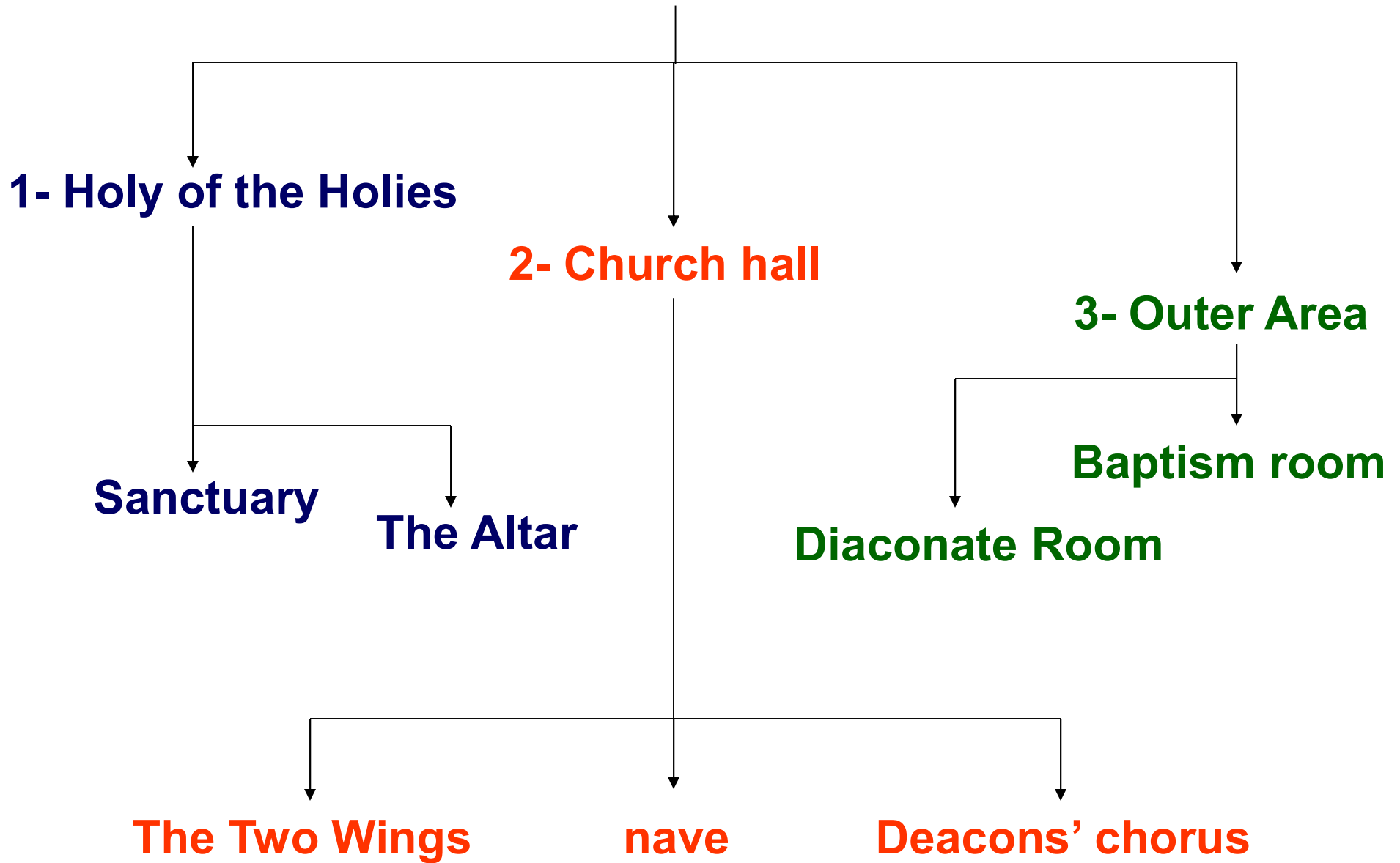


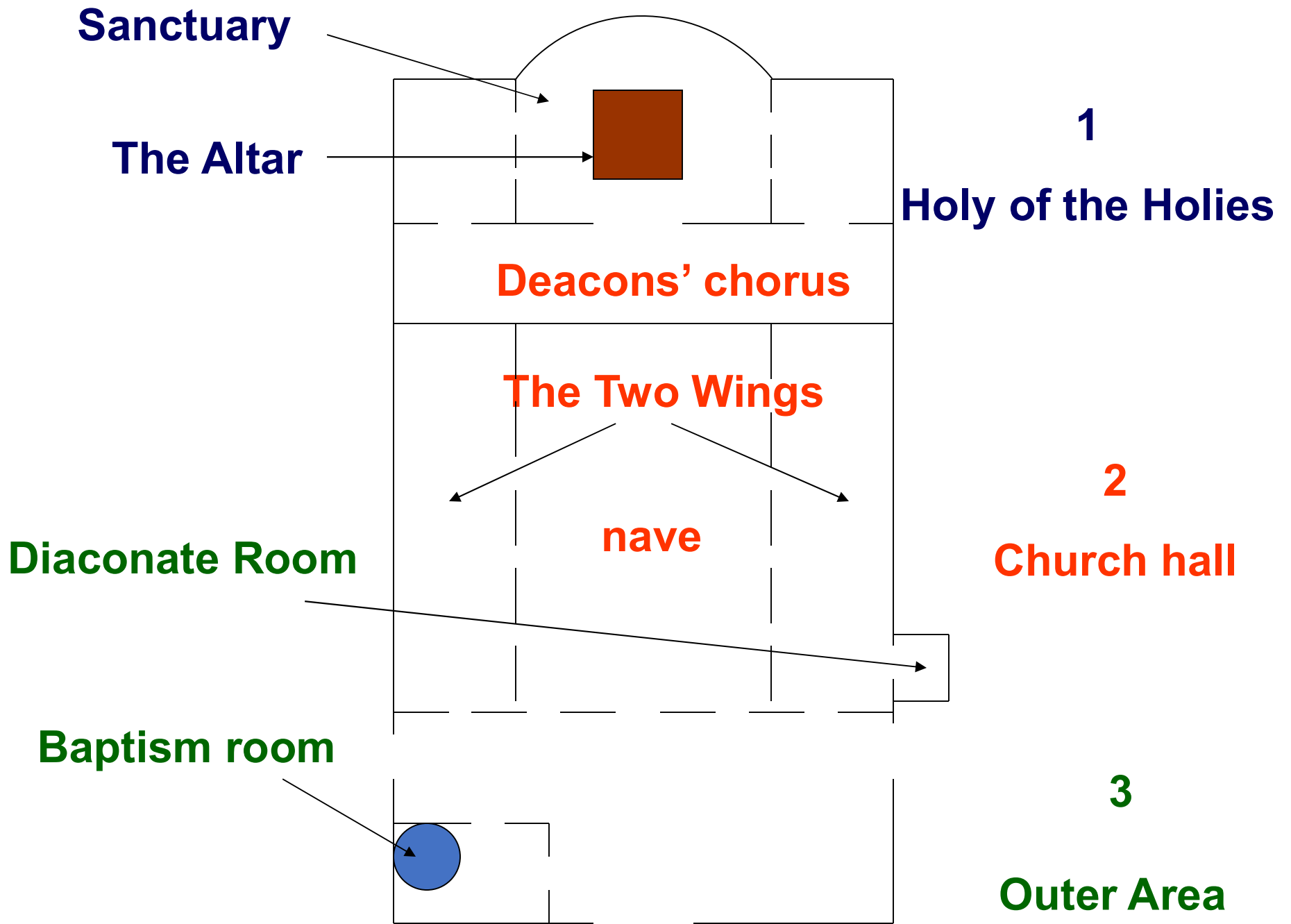
# Catechumen



- A Christian convert under instruction before baptism.
- In the early church, a new Jewish or pagan convert used to undergo a course of basic instruction and training in Christian doctrine and ritual, for three years
- They were allowed to attend until the reconciliation prayer
  - They exited at the deacon's response: "Greet one another with a holy kiss..."
  - Hence the ending: "look towards the East, let us attend"

# The Church's Divisions





## Divisions

## Choruses

### Participants

*(will take communion)*

### Prostrators

*(kneel, asking God's mercies)*

### Listeners

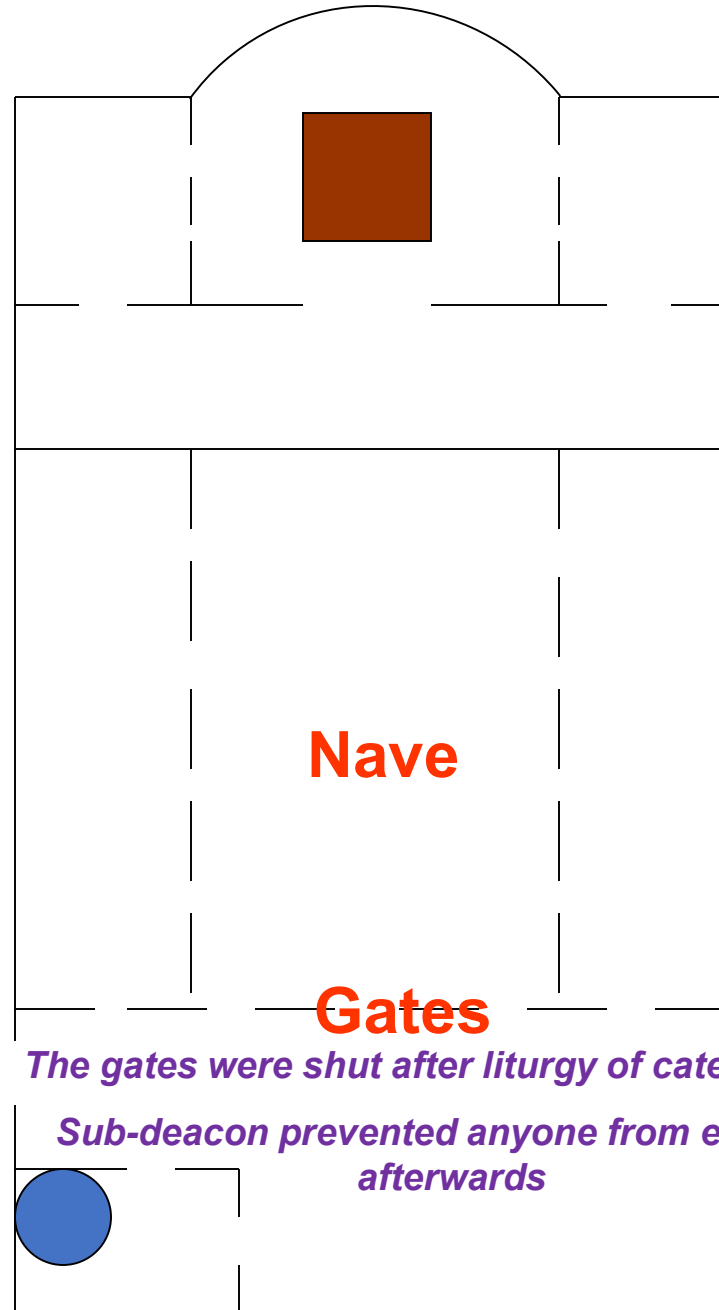
*(listen and pray)*

### Catechumen

*(learn the faith, leave after readings)*

### Weepers

*(may not enter; stand outside, entreating those who enter to pray for them!)*

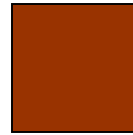


Deacons

Believers

Catechumen

Sinners



Nave

Gates

*The gates were shut after liturgy of catechumen.*

*Sub-deacon prevented anyone from entering afterwards*

# The Liturgy of the Word (Catechumen)

1. The Pauline: Procession and reading of the Pauline epistle
2. Catholicon: Reading of the Catholic epistle
3. The Praxis: Procession and reading of the Acts
4. The Synaxarium
5. The Litany of the Gospel
6. The Three Great Litanies
7. The Creed and the Reconciliation's prayer

# 1. The Pauline: procession and reading of the Pauline epistle <sup>(1)</sup>

- After praying the absolution of the servants the priest enters the Sanctuary and puts five spoons of incense in the censor to start the incense procession for the Pauline epistle
  - The rite is the as in the procession of incense during the vespers or matins' raising of incense.



# The Hymn of the Censer

The congregation chants the hymn for the Virgin on Saturdays and Sundays and all non-fasting days.

<p>Ψαιγοῦρη ἵκκαρος          εἴψαι ᾗ πῆρωματα εἴψεν          νενχίχ ἵκκων πιοῦηβ          εἴψαλε οὔθουνοῦφι ἐῖψωι          ἐχεν πικκῆρωῦψωι.</p>	<p>This censer of pure gold,          bearing the aroma, is in the          hands of Aaron the priest,          offering up incense on the altar.</p>
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On all fasting days (except during the Great Fast and Ninevites' Fast), Saturdays and Sundays of the Great Fast, and on the two Feasts of the Cross, the following is chanted:

<p>Ψγοῦρη ἵκκαρος τε ἱπαρθενος          πεκκῆρωματα πε πεκκωτηρ          ακκικι ἕκκω ακκωτ ἕκκων: οὔθ          ακκχα νενκκωβι κκκκ ἐβκκ.</p>	<p>The golden censer is the Virgin,          her aroma is our Savior. She          gave birth to Him; He saved us          and forgave us our sins.</p>
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On weekdays of the Great Fast and during Ninevites' Fast, the following is chanted:

<p>Κεο τε ἱγοῦρη: ἵκκαρος          ἵκκαρος: εἴψαι ᾗ πικκεβς:          ἵκκρω εἴκκῆρωῦψωι.</p>	<p>You are the censer of pure gold,          bearing the blessed ember.</p>
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# Incense in the Coptic Church

- It symbolizes the existence of God amid the congregation.
- The sweet aroma reminds us of the sweet aroma of His life and His Sacrifice
  - *“...Given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” (Eph 5:2)*
- It symbolizes prayers.



■ The rite of incense was commanded by the Lord:

- *34 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. 35 You shall make of these an incense... 36 And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. (Exo 30)*



## Where is the Incense kept?

The incense is kept in a wooden or metal box (it used to be made of gold)





The priest puts incense inside the censer to lift up the prayers of congregation.



# *The censer*

## Bells

To remind the people to be alert in prayers and to do good deed

## Dome

symbolizes the heaven

## Fire

symbolizes the Divine nature of Christ

## Incense

symbolizes the magi's gifts.

Burning the incense:  
suffering of Christ



## Hook

Symbolizes Jesus Christ who descended from Heaven

## Chains

Symbolizes the Trinity, united by one chain in the Middle (the unity)

## Coal

symbolizes the human nature of Christ

## Inner Bowl

symbolizes the womb of The Virgin Mary where divinity Was united with humanity

- The deacon reads from one of the 14 Epistles of St. Paul

- During the Pauline's procession of incense, the priest journeys through the whole church
  - St. Paul journeyed preaching the gospel to all nations



- The priest starts the procession in the church from the **left** side (north) to the **right** (south)
  - Through the service of St. Paul we were transferred from darkness (with those rejected on the left side) to light (with those accepted on the right side).

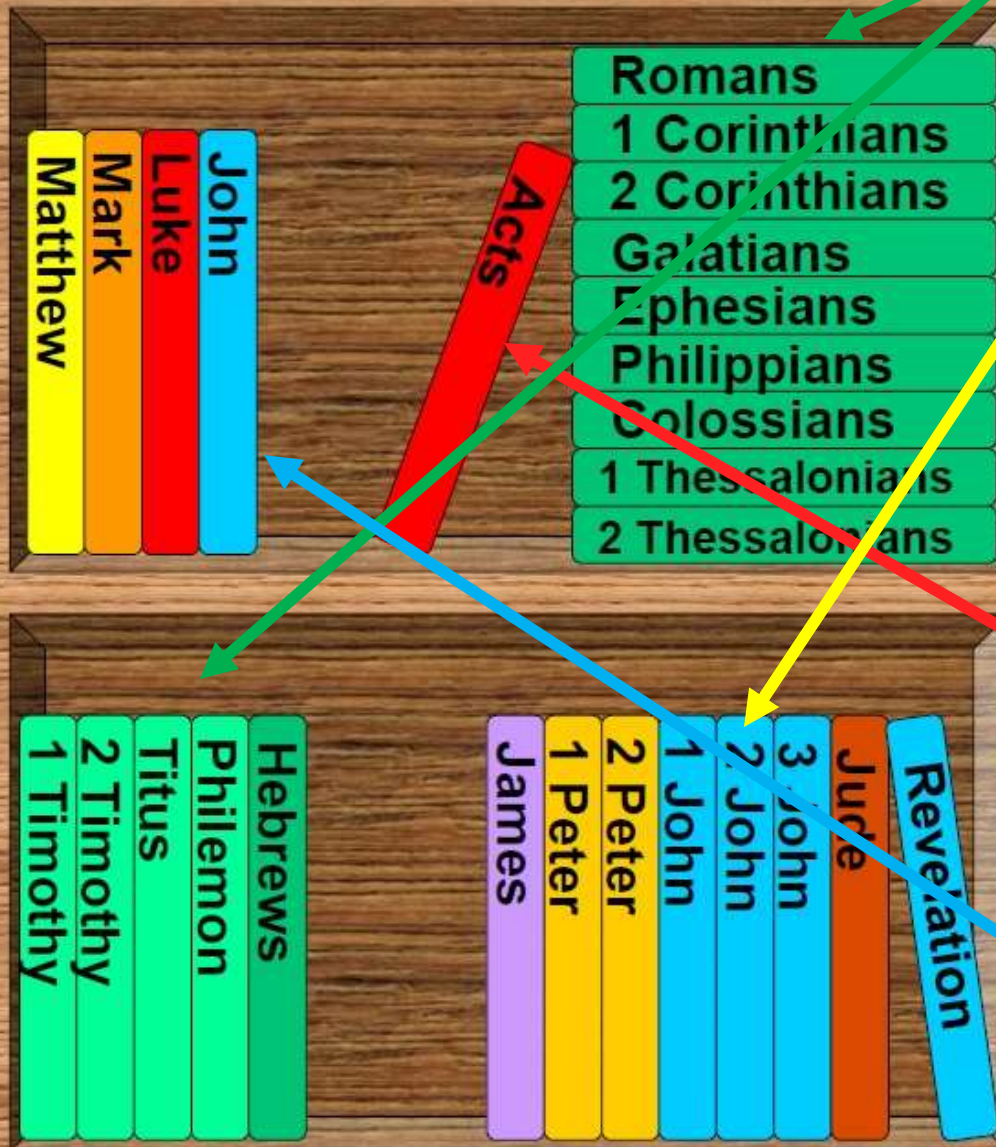








# BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



- **Pauline Epistles:**
  - 14: Romans – Hebrews
- **Catholic (Universal) Epistles:**
  - 7: James – Jude
- **Praxis:**
  - Acts of the Apostles
- **Gospel:**

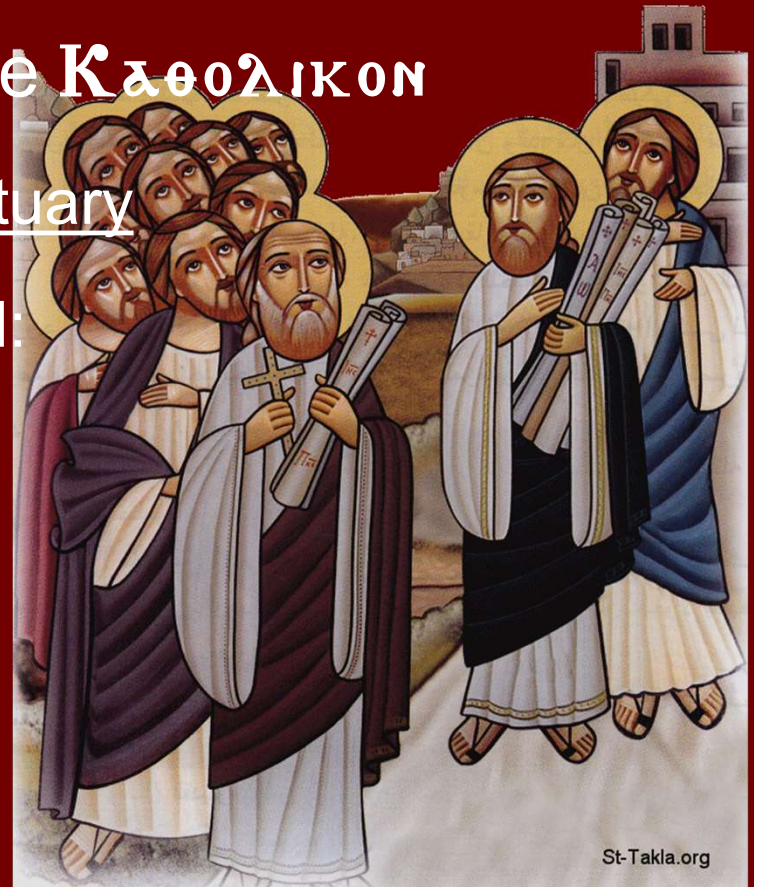
## 2. Catholicon: The reading of the Catholic epistle (1)

- The deacon reads from one of the 7 General Epistles

- There is no procession for the Καθολικόν

- The priest remains in the sanctuary
- The commandment of the Lord:

- *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)*





### 3. The Praxis: Procession and Reading of the Acts <sup>(1)</sup>

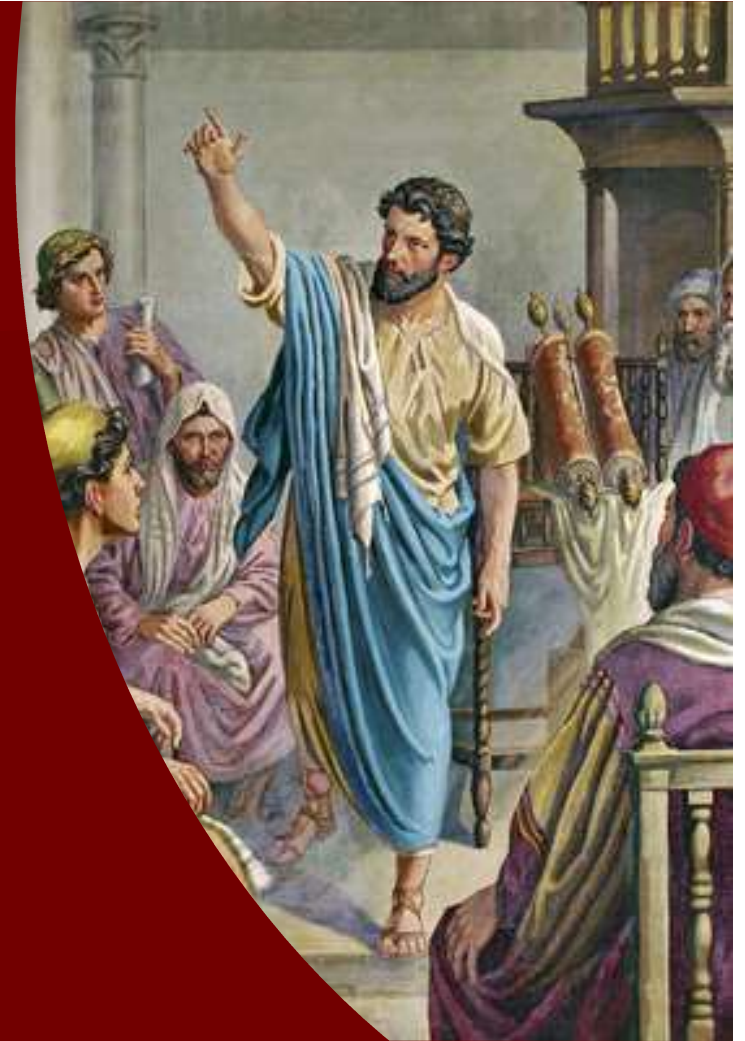
- **Praxis** (Greek πράξις): “Stories” – Acts of the Apostles
- The deacon reads from the book of Acts
- The priest puts one hand of incense in the censor to start the Acts’ procession of incense.
- After the three circuits in the sanctuary (around the altar), the priest go in the church starting from the southern side (**right**) to the northern side (**left**) only in the **second chorus** and not in the whole church.



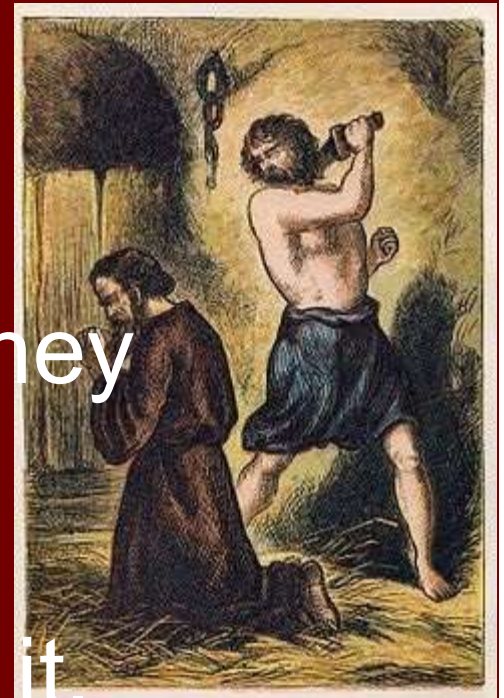
- The procession of the Acts is not in the whole church
  - The service of the disciples was mainly in Jerusalem and Judea (not as St. Paul's which extended to the whole world).



- The procession of Praxis goes from right to left:
  - The disciples began preaching to the Jews who were from the right side people (being the people of God previously)
  - When the Jews rejected the faith, the apostles were directed to the Gentiles who were the people of the left side.



- The priest conclude the Acts' procession of incense at the door of the sanctuary:
  - He does not enter the sanctuary with it
    - Hooks it on the gate – or
    - Gives it to the deacon
- After the apostles preached, they did not return to Jerusalem as they were martyred outside of it.

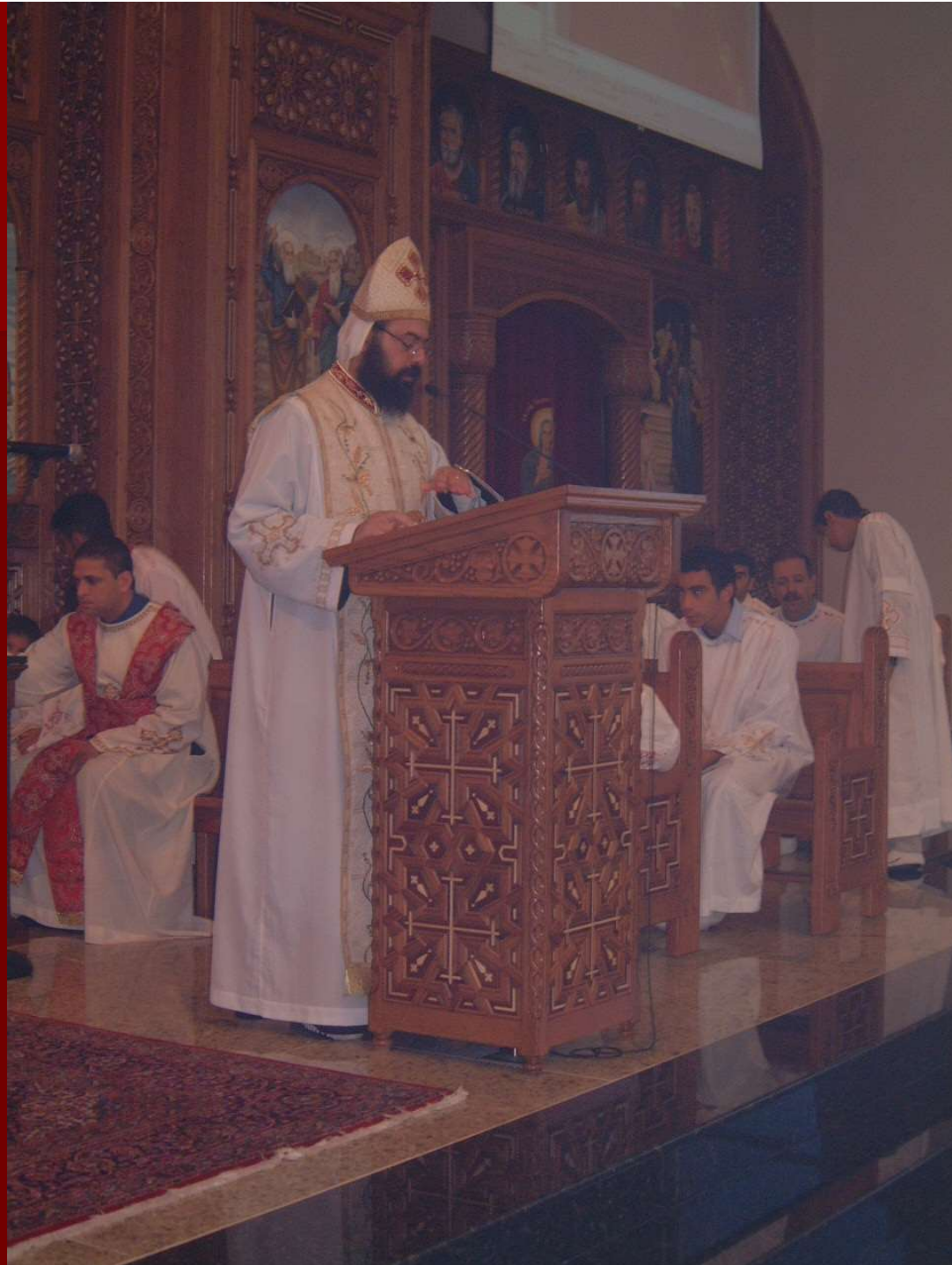




## 4. The Synaxarium

- The priest reads the biographies of the saints who were martyred or departed on that same day.
- It is read after the Acts as it is a continuation of the history of the church that started by the Apostles.
- The Synaxarium is not read during the Holy Fifty days as the joy of the resurrection surpasses all feasts and takes the whole attention of the church.







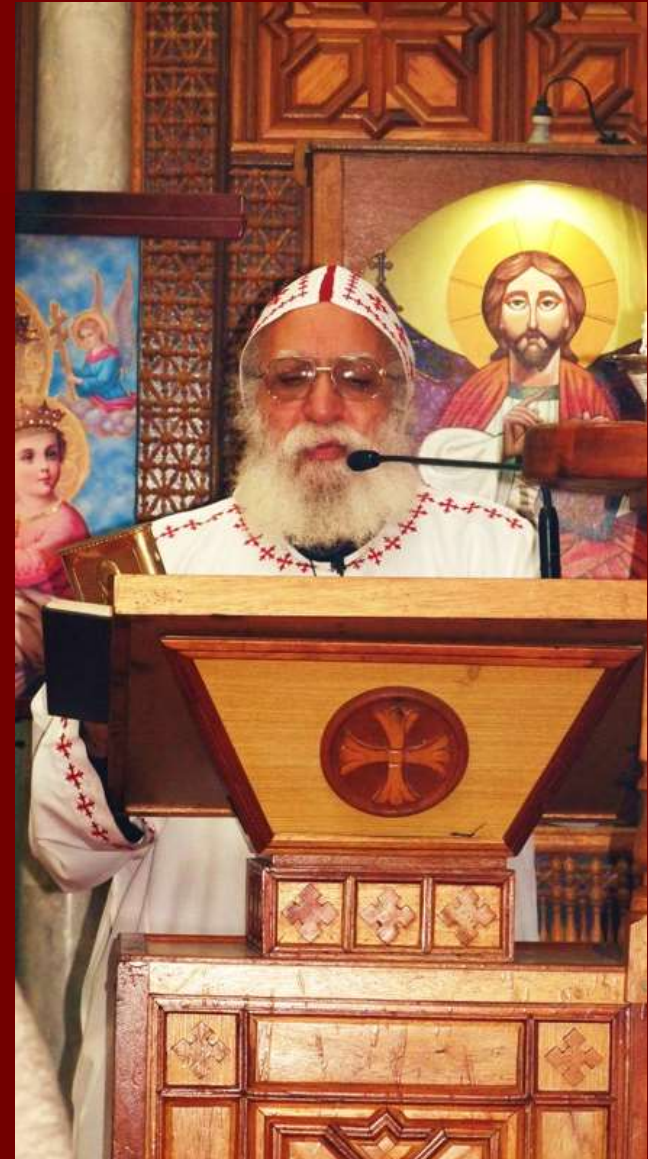


## 5. The Litany of the Gospel followed by the Gospel's reading

- The rite of the litany of the Gospel and the Gospel reading is similar to that during the raising of incense.



- The Psalm is chanted
- The Gospel is read
- The Sermon is delivered
  - Explanation of the Gospel
  - Lessons from the Gospel





- During the reading of the Gospel, the gospel is placed on the “Mangalia” (pulpit)
  - Denoting the appearance of the Lord Christ as the Teacher.





- After the reading, the gospel is placed behind the throne that include the chalice
  - Denoting the appearance of the Lord at that time as the Sacrifice.
  - The open gospel on the pulpit should also be closed at that time.

# The Three Great Litanies

- The three long litanies are prayed:
  - the peace of the Church,
  - the Church Fathers,
  - the Assemblies.
  - (sometimes they are prayed inaudibly)

# Litany of the Peace

- During the Litany of the Peace of the Church, the priest signs the congregation with the cross when saying “...*let not the death of sin have dominion over us, nor over your people*”
  - with the sign of the cross, sin was abolished.



# Litany of the Fathers

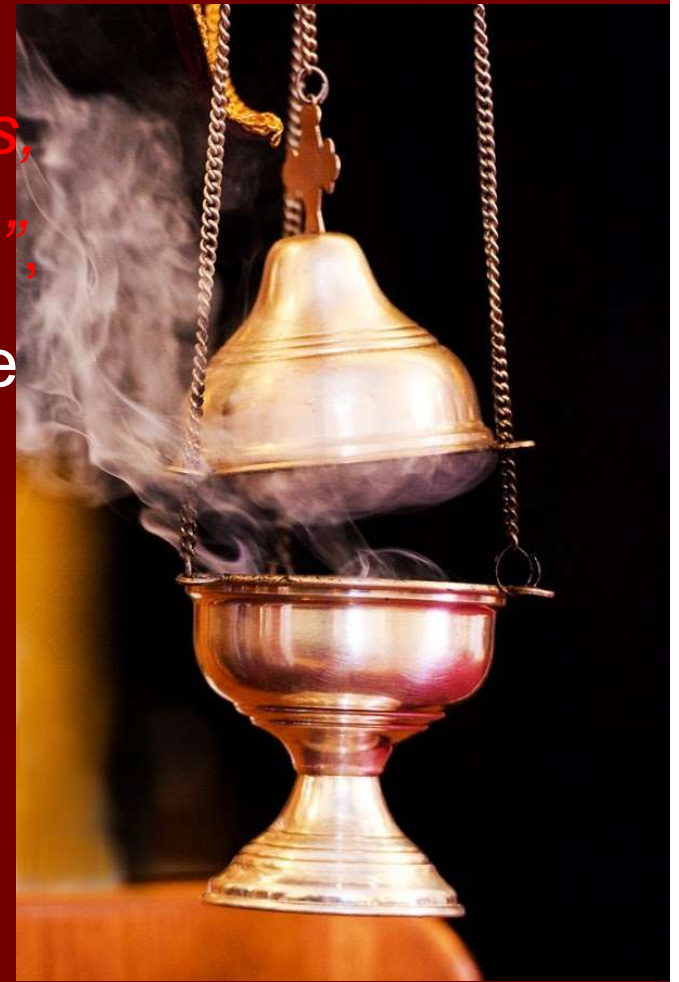
- During the Litany of the Church Fathers, the priest points to the congregation with the incense box while saying “...and our prayers on their behalf”
  - Incense symbolizes the prayers
  - King David said: “*Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*”  
Psalm 141:2





# Litany of the Assemblies

- During the Litany of the Assembly, and when saying “*..houses of prayers, houses of purity, houses of blessings*”, the priest raise the incense above the altar in the likeness of a cross
  - Sanctification of the altar
  - Prayer that the church will be always a house of *prayers, purity, and blessings*.





## Litany of the Assemblies

- At the end of the Litany of the Assembly, the priest raises the side of the “Προσφεριν”, and offers incense to the Mysteries
  - This points to the spices and perfumes that were put on the Lord’s body in the tomb.



## 6. The Creed

- The deacon, standing on the right side of the sanctuary, holding the cross says: *“In the wisdom of God, let us attend. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy. Truly...”*
- The congregation then, in one accord, recites the Creed audibly: *“We believe...”*



# The Creed

- *The congregation responds to “Truly...” with the creed*



– *Affirming that the creed is what they truly believe in*

– *The Creed explains our faith:*

- *Trinity: The Father, Son, Holy Spirit*
- *Church: One holy catholic (universal) apostolic*
- *One Baptism*
- *Resurrection of the dead, life of age to come...*



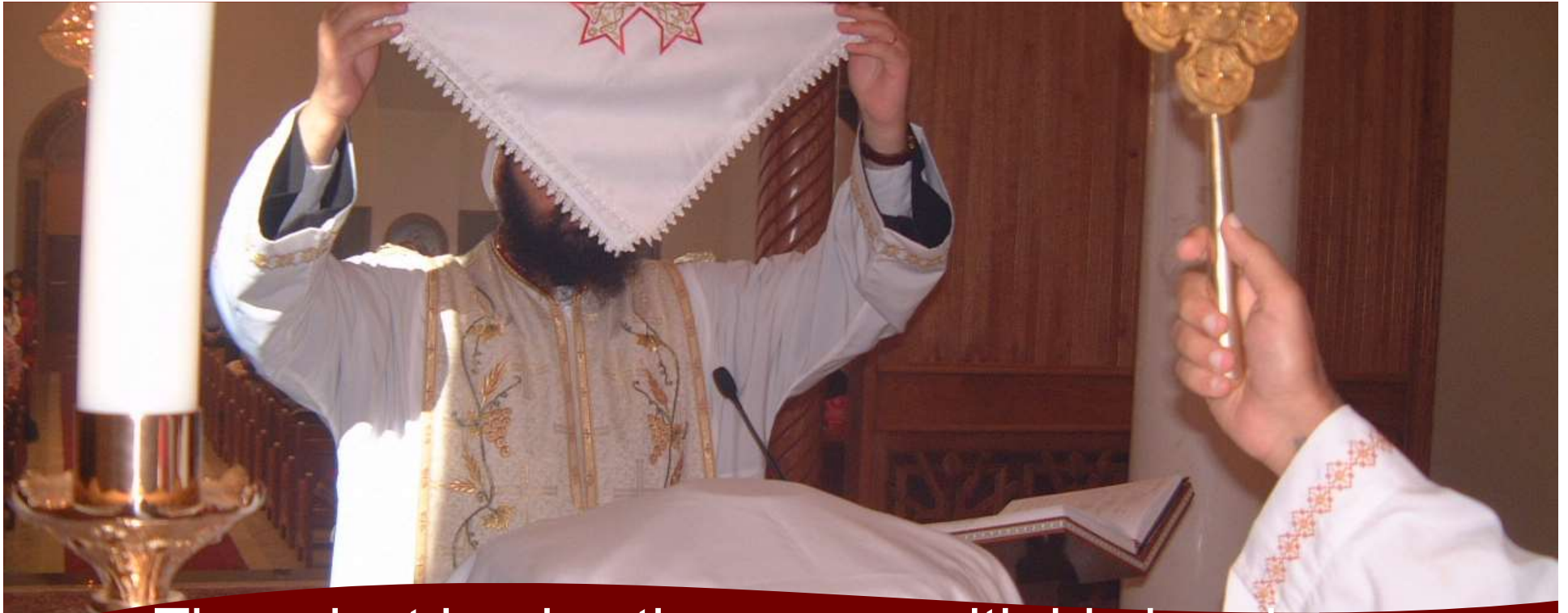
## 6. The Reconciliation Prayer

- Meanwhile, the priest washes his hands three times
- He sprinkles the water before the congregation as if saying: *“I am innocent”*
  - *The priest has been teaching his congregation the ways of God*
  - *If the congregation still lives in sin and proceeds to the Sacrifice, the priest is innocent of their guilt*
- The priest dries his hands, stands before the altar, facing east and starts praying the Reconciliation Prayer.



- The congregation recite the Creed before the Reconciliation's Prayer as a declaration of their faith as a necessity along with the love that we declare while reconciling with God and with one another.
- The priest sprinkles the water, after washing his hand, before the congregation as a warning for them lest anyone would approach the Mysteries in an unworthy manner.



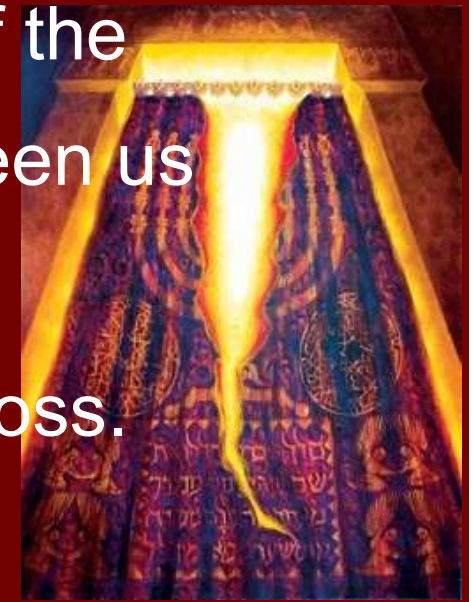


- The priest begins the prayer with his hands uncovered (not holding any veils)
- When praying the second part of the Prayer, “According to Your good will, O God...” he holds the sides of the veil on the “Προσφεριν” and raise it before his face
- A deacon holds a cross on the opposite side of the altar.

- The priest prays the Reconciliation's Prayer while his hands are not covered as a sign of the nakedness that was caused to us because of our sin before we reconcile with God through the blood of His Son.



- The veil that the priest holds during the second part of the prayer is a symbol of the middle wall, that is the old enmity between us and God that was taken down by the redemptive action of the Lord on the Cross.





At the end of the Prayer, the priest puts the triangular veil on the left side of the altar

With the help of the deacon standing opposite him, he left up the *Prosvereen* while shaking it.





- At the end of the Prayer, this veil is put down and the cross (in the hand of the deacon) appears while the deacon says, “greet one another”.
  - Reconciliation happened on the Cross
- Lifting up the *Prosvereen* points to the rolling of the stone from the door of the tomb
- The shaking of *Prosvereen* before removing it resembles the earthquake that happened



Reconciliation:  
*“Greet one  
another with a  
holy kiss...”*



- The Reconciliation's Prayer was set at the beginning to remind the people that they have to reconcile with God and with one another before approaching the Mysteries.
- In the liturgy of the Covenant Thursday, and Bright Saturday, the Reconciliation's Prayer is not prayed as the true reconciliation was completed by the resurrection of the Lord on Sunday.

