

The Sacrifice Of Praise

Пійолйтолйі устол

iLet the peoples praise you; let all the peoples praise youî

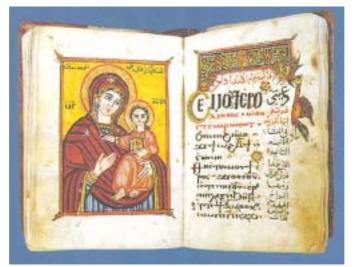
(Psalm 67:3) Written by: Father Timethous Soliman St John the Baptist Coptic Church, Miami, FL

And the Word of the Lord was rare in those daysÖÖÖ then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh (the place of worship in the Tabernacle) (1 Samuel 3:1,21).

fter the death of Joshua, the son of Nun, and the end of the period of the Judges, there was no king in Israel. The people forsook the Lord God and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The Holy hour, and the Morning Doxology before the raising of the morning incense. All of these praises take place before the Divine Liturgy. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all the church rites are arranged decently and in order as St Paul stated: *iLet all things be done decently and in order*. \hat{i} (*I Corinthians 14:40*)

As with all other services in the Coptic Church, the Holy

Bible tells us that the Word of the Lord was rare in those days, but notice that the Lord appeared again in Shiloh where the Children of Israel were praising God. Does not this remind you of our days in which many are doing what is right in their own eyes? We thank God for revealing Himself every day to those who desire to worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Pardon me, my dear reader, for this lengthy introduction, as you might be thinking of what I am alluding to. I meant to tell you that we cannot offer God animal



Copto-Arabic MS (R) The Seven Theotokis for the Seven Days

sacrifices anymore, but we can offer **the Sacrifice of Praise**, which is the fruit of our lips.

Our Coptic Church stresses the importance of **the Sacrifice** of **Praise**, and in its Rites she has devoted most of the hours of the day and night throughout the week for the Praise of the Lord of Hosts. As someone said the Psalmody is the Royal garb, which the Church wears to meet Christ the King in the Divine Liturgy. Also Jeremiah, the prophet, said: *ìIf* the word of the Lord be with them, let them make intercession to the Lord of Hosts.î (Jeremiah 27:18). Therefore, we pray the Vesper Praises before the evening raising of incense, the Midnight Praises before the morning Psalmody starts with giving Glory to the Holy Trinity, The Lordís Prayer, the Thanksgiving Prayer, and Psalm 50. Thereafter, on non-fasting days, the prayers of the 9th, 11th, and 12th offices of the Agpeya are prayed, while during fasting days, the prayers of the 11th, and 12th hours are prayed.

At this point the congregation prays the Introductory Psalm, Psalm 116 in its beautiful tone. They proceed to the Fourth Canticle, The Psali of the day or the Psali of the feast,

if applicable, the Theotokia of the day, and the conclusion of the theotokia (Adam or Batos) Finally, the Raising of the Evening Incense is prayed.

Next comes the prayer of the Midnight Psalmody, which begins with the midnight office of the Agpeya commemorating the second coming of The Lord. Afterwards, the hymn: iArise, O Children of the Light,î and the First, Second and Third Canticles are chanted. Thereafter, the Greek and Batos Psalis for the Three Saintly Children, the Commemoration of the Saints, the Doxologies of the Saints only, or the saints and the feasts, if applicable, and the Fourth Canticle are sung.



Holiness of Hymns and Purity of Praises

The body of the Holy Psalmody begins with the Psali of the day, or the Psali of the feast. Then the Theotokia of the day is said. Afterwards, the Antiphnonarium (praises to the saint of the day) is recited, the Theotokia is ended with the conclusion of the Theotokias (Adam or Batos). Here the introduction to the Creed and the Creed are recited together with the Litany, iHave Mercy O Godî. Finally, the Midnight Psalmody is concluded with the Absolution of the Midnight Office said by the priest.

As you might have noticed my dear reader, that the order of the Midnight Psalmody is following the pattern pictured for us in Psalm 66:12, which states: iÖWe *went through water and through fire; but you brought us out to rich fulfillment*.î The first Canticle represents the water (Exodus 15), the third Canticle represents the fire (Completion of Daniel 3:23), and the fourth Canticle along with the Commemoration of the Saints represents the rich fulfillment, which is Heaven.

The Midnight Praises are followed by the Prayers of the Morning Hour. The latter consists of prayers of the First Hour in the Agpeya, the Doxology of the Morning Hour and then the conclusion of the Adam Theotokias After all these praises we start the Divine Liturgy. The faithful who attends all these praises before participating in the Divine Liturgy, receives an abundance of Grace that fills him with an overwhelming joy that exceeds all the minds of men.

We thank the Lord who has made it possible for us and for our children to praise His Name in the original language of our land of immigration, which is English. The English Holy Psalmody consists of the Prayers of the Evening Hour, the Raising of the Evening Incense, the Midnight Psalmody, the Prayers of the Morning Hour, and the Raising of Incense

May the Lord help us to continually sing unto Him a new song, and forbid us not from standing before Him, lifting up holy hands and serving His Holy Name until His coming, through the intercessions of St John the Baptist and through the prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and His partner in the Divine Liturgy His Grace Bishop Youssef. Amen.