



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Reference: www.suscopts.org/qa/

The following questions are answered by His Grace Bishop Youssef Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States.....

+ What brought about divisions in the early Christian Church in 451?

Division in the early churches occurred in 451 A.D. The Oriental Orthodox Churches comprising now the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and the Malankara Indian Churches refused the Council of Chalcedon of 451 AD. The Chalcedonian Council was a very “political” council held in the City of Chalcedon in Asia Minor and dealt with the Heresy of Eutyches, an archimandrite of Constantinople. The Coptic Church was accused of following the teaching of Eutyches, who believed in Monophysitism. This doctrine maintains that our Lord Jesus Christ has only one single nature; the divine nature, and not the human as well as the divine.

The Oriental churches have refused and rejected the teaching of Eutyches. They believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, yet His divinity parted not from His humanity not for a single moment nor a twinkle of an eye. The Oriental Churches did not accept the two separate natures of Jesus Christ that was advocated in Chalcedonian Council. The Oriental Orthodox Churches have accepted the formula of faith made by St. Cyril “One nature for the incarnated God the Word” (Miaphysitism). Our belief is Jesus Christ, Him being perfectly divine and perfectly human and these two natures are united together without confusion, without mingling, and without alteration (miaphysitism).

What does the Procession of the Cross on Hossana Sunday and during the Feasts of the Cross signify? What are the theological and ritualological meanings?

St. Paul said, “*But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world*” (Gal 6:14). The Procession of the Cross signifies the joy of the Church in the Cross of her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. The procession is done on the two feasts of the Cross and also on Hosanna Sunday because on this day we celebrate the Entry of our Lord Jesus Christ to Jerusalem as a king who will reign on the wood of the Cross (the throne of the King).

In the procession there are twelve stations that reflect the joy of the heavenly ranks with the cross. These are (Archangel Michael, Archangel Gabriel), the Victorious Church (St. Mary, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles, St. Mark, the Martyrs, and the Saints), and the Striving one (the Altar, the Northern Gate, the Baptistry, and the Southern Gate).