

Understanding our Church Rites

Part Two

The Offering of the Lamb



After the prayers of the Agpeya, the priest washes his hands, and stands at the gate of the Sanctuary. The highest ranking clergy bears the basket in which the offerings of bread (Korban) have been placed.

The number of "Oblations" (bread) offered should be one of the following:

- Three: Resembles the Trinity
- Five : Resembles the 5 Sacrifices of the Old Testament: (Leviticus 1-5)
 1. Burnt Offering
 2. Grain Offering
 3. Peace Offering
 4. Sin Offering
 5. Trespass Offering
- Five also resembles the five different species of pure animals, from which these sacrifices were offered: sheep, goats, bulls, pigeons, and turtle-doves.
- Seven: Resembles the five Old Testament sacrifices plus the two birds for the ritual of cleansing healed lepers (Leviticus 14).
- Any other ODD NUMBER greater than seven.

The reason the number has to be odd is

that if there is an odd number, that means that there is always a unique "member" in the offering; i.e. every "piece of bread" can be paired with another "similar one" except for one unique one. This unique member resembles the Lord Jesus Christ, who is unique and unpaired with any other human.

The Oblation is also called "The Lamb" because from amongst it will be chosen the KORBAN (Sacrifice) which will become the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God:



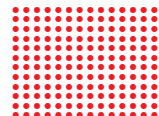
"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times

This article continues the study of our church rites. It was written by Gerges Gad of St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church of Houston, Texas.





ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!' " (Revelation 5:11-12)

The Examination of the Lamb



While the priest is examining the oblations, the congregation chants Kerie-layson (Lord Have Mercy) forty-one times To understand this rite, we read Acts 22:24; St. Paul was in Jerusalem and a mob assaulted him:

"The commander ordered him [Paul] to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him." (Acts 22:24)

The Romans "examined" prisoners "under scourging" as in the case of St. Paul. We also remember that the Lord Jesus Christ was "examined under scourging". The Romans beat prisoners with "forty stripes minus one" (2 Corinthians 11:24), i.e. thirty-nine times. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ was whipped thirty-nine times.

The other two "Kerie-layson" represent the crown of thorns and the slap:

"And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, 'Do You answer the high priest like that?' " (John 18:22)

"So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him." (John 19:1)

"And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe." (John 19:2)



The thirty-nine whips, the crown of thorns and the slap are all the sufferings of the trials (Examination), thus we chant "Kerie-layson" forty-one times. Therefore, the priest "examines" the Lamb, while we remember the suffering our Lord endured during His examination for our sins.

At the end of the examination, the congregation recites "Holy Holy Holy..." This is the verdict of the examination. The Lord Jesus Christ was examined and was found to be innocent and "Holy Holy Holy":

"Because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth." (Isaiah 53:9)

"The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips." (Malachi 2:6)

"[Pilate] said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him" (Luke 23:14)

The Characteristics of the Lamb

- Shape: round - eternal; no beginning or end - like the Lord's eternity
- It has 13 crosses:
 1. 1 large cross in the middle - resembles the Lord Jesus Christ
 2. 12 crosses surround it - resemble the 12 disciples
- The inscription Agioc o~ Yeoc: Agioc ic.uroc: Agioc a~yanatoc (Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal) is written all around it.





This praise was said by Joseph and Nicodemus. As they were about to bury the Lord, and were considering how they would bury the body of the Lord of all creation in the earth, the Lord Jesus opened His eyes and looked at them. Then they cried out with this praise.

- It is written on the Holy Bread as it will be a sacrifice resembling the Lord Jesus Christ on the Holy Cross.

There are five holes which resemble the sufferings during the Crucifixion

- Two are for the nail wounds on the hands.
- Two are for the nail wounds on the feet.
- One for the spear.

These five holes resemble the sufferings of the Cross.



The more popular explanation is that the five holes resemble: two nails of the hands, one nail of the feet, the spear, and the crown of thorns. However, this explanation does not make a clear dis-

inction between the sufferings of the examination and those of the crucifixion.

The Preparation of the Lamb

The oblation is made with water, flour, and yeast. No salt, sugar, or any other substance should be added.

Yeast (Leaven) is a symbol of sin:



"Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you

may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

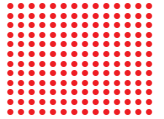
Yeast is especially a symbol of hypocrisy:

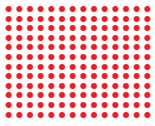
"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.' (Luke 12:1)

The yeast, when leavens, appears big-ger than it really is, just like a hypocrite who likes to appear more vital than he really is. So yeast, the symbol of sin, is put in the Holy Bread which will be changed into the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He carried the sins of the world:

"So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:28)

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own





body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed" (1Peter 2:24)

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Our Coptic Church, as well as all the other Eastern Orthodox Churches use leavened bread, but the Catholic Church uses unleavened bread for the Eucharist.



Here are some proofs of the rite of the use of leavened bread:

- The Lord Jesus Christ used leavened bread when instituting the Eucharist. That was the "bread" that was used at that time, before the Passover: (John 13:1)
- All the Evangelists clearly agree that the Lord Jesus Christ used bread: (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23)
- The Roman Catholic Church itself used leavened bread, until the 11th Century.
- All the church fathers who spoke of this subject remarked that leavened bread is to be used.
- The Church has been following what the Apostles themselves had been doing: using leavened bread: (Acts 2:46, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17)



Towards Canaan's Land

This poem written by Deacon Chris Minias,

St. Mark Church, New Orleans, LA

and placed in the Talent Contest of this year's (2007)

"Towards Canaan's Land" Graduate Convention.

Congratulations Chris!

A life has been given to us
And worshipping the Lord is a must

Towards Canaan's Land we are on our
way

While we have to fast and pray
Pray to the Lord with all our hearts
We also must fast from the start

As we prepare to climb the mountain
The Lord we must let our hearts in
Having the Lord on our side
We will get through the long ride

Towards Canaan's Land in our days
While we worship and praise
Sing unto the Lord with a joyful voice
Give him praise and rejoice

As we go through the vast desert
Our lives we must convert
A life lived according to the Lord
Abiding by his each and every word

Towards Canaan's Land we may have
hardship and tribulation
But the Lord will relieve our complications

The Lord is with us on the way