

## Coptic Liturgies

The Divine Liturgy or service of the Eucharist was the heart of the Christian worship and prayers in the early apostolic church and is still nowadays in all traditional and apostolic churches. Its root came from the Greek word λειτουργία (which is pronounced as Afkhologion), which can be transliterated as "leitourgia," meaning "the work of the people". In Coptic it is called a "Ἄναψοφα" (which is pronounced as Anaphora). In Latin, it is called "Liturgy". Divine Liturgy comprises a solemn religious ceremony, following a carefully prescribed formal ritual. The word is most commonly applied to the religious ceremonies of our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice of His own body and blood. "Eucharist" in Greek means "Thanksgiving"

Divine Liturgy or Eucharist is a New Testament Sacrament instituted by The Lord Jesus Christ Himself before His passion. The Holy Apostles and Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, thus in details describe the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Lord's Supper on Good Thursday: Holy Gospels of St. Matthew 26, 26-29; St. Mark 14, 22-24; St. Luke 22,19-23. *"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'"* (Luke 22:19-20). The Holy Apostles strictly fulfilled this command of Christ and celebrated the Sacrament of Communion. So also did the Bishops and Presbyters of the church which the Apostles founded and ordained, making use of an unwritten tradition until the 4th Century.

There many liturgies that had been arranged by the Holy Fathers. Historically, it was known that the Divine Liturgy according to St. James the Apostle was the first Divine Liturgy that used by the early Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. In our time, our Coptic Orthodox Church uses three Liturgies: (1) The Divine Liturgy according to St Basil, bishop of Caesarea, (2) The Divine Liturgy according to St Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop of Constantinople, and (3) The Divine Liturgy according to St Cyril I, the 24<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. St. Cyril's Divine Liturgy is the same Divine Liturgy of St. Mark the Evangelist but Pope Cyril rearranged its rituals after adding the litanies. This Divine Liturgy is one of the oldest liturgies known to the Christian world. Versions of St. Mark's Divine Liturgy exist in Ge'ez, the ancient language of Ethiopia, which ceased to be a living language in the 14th century A.D., but has been retained as the official and liturgical language of the Coptic Church of Ethiopia. Many scholars believe that most of the liturgies that exist nowadays are derived from St. Mark's Divine Liturgy.

St. Basil's Divine Liturgy, which is considered the most elegant and elaborate, and the one best suited to grand occasion, is dedicated specially to the Person of the Omnipotent Father. St. Gregory's Divine Liturgy is dedicated to the Person of our Divine Redeemer, for He dwells particularly on his Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. Again, St. Cyril's Divine Liturgy is dedicated to the Person of the Omnipotent Father. The Divine Liturgy according to St. Basil is the one used most of the year; St. Gregory's Divine Liturgy is used during the feasts and on certain occasions; only parts of St. Cyril's Divine Liturgy are used nowadays, however, some priests and bishops used to pray St. Cyril's Divine Liturgy during the great holy lent as His Holiness Pope Cyril the sixth and Father Bishoy Kamel.

The Divine Liturgy was composed by the Holy Apostles The Lord Jesus Christ taught to them after His resurrection appeared to them: *"to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by*

*many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).*

Ritually, all liturgies including our three liturgies follow the same order as set and taught to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28).*

About thirty years later, in his letter to Corinthians, St. Paul the Apostle mentioned this great sacrament: *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (Corinthians-1 11:23-26).*

The Divine Liturgy consists of three parts: (1) The Offer of Oblation; (2) The Divine Liturgy of the Catechumens; and (3) The Divine Liturgy of the Faithful. The main subsections of almost all traditional liturgies including Coptic ones are: (1) Prayer of Thanksgiving, (2) Prayer of Consecration, (3) Prayer of Fraction, and (4) Prayer of Communion.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is considered the most common Divine Liturgy used in the Coptic Orthodox Church and most of the other Orthodox Churches around the world. It is dedicated specially to the Person of the Omnipotent Father. St. Basil's Divine Liturgy was established at the end of the 4th century, and derived mainly from the Divine Liturgy of St. Mark the Evangelist. As in all other liturgies, Vespers and Matins prayers always precede the service of the Divine Liturgy itself.

St. Basil's Divine Liturgy which is the most commonly used Divine Liturgy in our Coptic Church includes the following as its main subsections within the three sections mentioned above: (1) Offering of the bread (Lamb); (2) The Circuit; (3) The Prayer of Thanksgiving; (4) Absolution; (5) The Intercessions: St. Mary, the Archangels, the Apostles, St. Mark, St. Mena, St. George, Saint of the day, the Pope and bishops; (6) Readings: 3 Passages from Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, and Acts; (7) Synaxarium: The Saints of the day; (8) The Holy Gospel with an introductory prayer and Psalm reading; (9) Supplications for the Church, the fathers, the congregations, the president, government, and officials; (10) The creed (Nicene creed of St. Athanasius, the 20th Coptic Pope); (11) The Prayer of reconciliation; (12) Holy, Holy, Holy; (13) Crossing the offerings; (14) Prayer of the Holy Spirit invocation and outpouring; (15) Supplications for the Church unity and peace, the fathers, the priests, the Place, the (Nile) water (or the vegetation or the Crops), and the offerings; (16) Memory of the congregation of Saints; (17) Introduction to the sharing of the Holy Communion; (18) The fraction of the bread; (19) The profession and declaration of Orthodox faith; (20) The Holy Communion; (21) Psalm 150 and appropriate hymns (concurrently with the offering of the Holy Communion); (22) Benediction; and (23) The Eulogia.

The Divine Liturgy according to St. St Gregory of Nazianzus (St. Gregory the Theologian), bishop of Constantinople is dedicated to the Person of our Divine Redeemer, for He dwells particularly on his Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. Our priests and bishops usually pray this Divine Liturgy in the great feasts of the church especially the Nativity, Epiphany and Resurrection feasts. St. Gregory's writings and homilies including his Divine Liturgy are poetries characterized by

great theologian sense and deep meditations in the great love of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity for His Incarnation and His Suffering and Crucifixion. Through out the Divine Liturgy St. Gregory portrays the history of salvation since the first sin that committed by Adam and Eve in the Paradise of Eden and the wisdom of the Godly plan to save the human race along the history.

The Divine Liturgy according to St. Gregory is similar to that of St. Basil in its first part, The Offer of Oblation, but the prayer of the Prothesis of the Bread and the Wine that is directed to the Son that the priest prays before the absolution of the servants is replaced by the prayer of Absolution to the Father. After the reading of the Holy Gospel, the order of St. Gregory's Divine Liturgy is as follow: (1) The prayer of the veil; (2) the prayer of reconciliation to the Son; (3) The anaphora; (4) The Institution prayer; (5) The short litanies; (6) The commemoration of saints; (7) Introduction to the fraction; (8) The Fraction; (9) The prayer after "Our Father"; (10) The prayer of submission to the Son; (11) The prayer of absolution to the Son; (12) The confession; (13) The prayer of thanksgiving to the Son after the distribution of the Holy Mysteries; (14) The prayer of submission to the Son after the distribution of the Holy Mysteries; and (15) The dismissal prayer and blessing with distributing the Eulogia as mentioned in St. Basil's Divine Liturgy.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Cyril is the Coptic version of the Greek Liturgy that was instituted by the Holy Apostle, St. Mark the Evangelist. It is dedicated to the Person of the Omnipotent Father of the Holy Trinity. St. Cyril, the Pillar of the faith, the 24<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria added the short and long litanies and deacon's recites. Eighteen litanies are instituted in St. Cyril's Divine Liturgy, seven litanies before the commemoration of the saints and eleven litanies after. This Divine Liturgy is used in our Coptic Churches during lent. The first part of the Divine Liturgy is similar to that of St. Basil up to the Gospel's reading, then after that, the arrangement of the Divine Liturgy is as follow: (1) The prayer of the veil; (2) The Creed; (3) The prayer of Reconciliation by St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch or St. John; (4) The Anaphora; (5) The Litany of peace; (6) The litany of the sick; (7) The litany for the travelers; (8) The litany for the waters of the rivers; (9) The litany for the seeds and the herbs; (10) The litany for the air of heaven; (11) The litany for the leader; (12) The commemoration of the saints; (13) The litany for the departed; (14) The litany for the Oblations; (15) The litany for the Patriarch; (16) The litany for the bishops; (17) The litany for the rest of the Orthodox; (18) The litany for the place; (19) The litany for those who are standing in this place; (20) The litany for those who are have asked us for prayer; (21) The litany for the servant priest; (22) The litany for the priesthood; (23) The litany for the assemblies; (24) For You are God; (25) Holy, Holy, Holy; (26) The Institution narrative; (27) Therefore now, O God; ( 28) For Your People; (29) The prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit; (30) Special litany; (31) Introduction to the fraction; (32) The Fraction for the Father; (33) A prayer after "Our Father"; (34) The prayer of submission to the Father; (35) The prayer of submission to the Son; (35) Prayer before the confession; (36) The confession; (37) A prayer of thanksgiving to the Father; (38) The prayer of submission to the Father; and (39) The dismissal prayer and blessing with distributing the Eulogia as mentioned in St. Basil's Divine Liturgy.