



Παλιεπισκοπος ηρεμηνι νορθοδοξος ητε νιωω ερσοτη ετσαρησ
Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

*“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing”
(1 Timothy 3:13)*

General Instructions for Deacons and Church Attendance Discipline

- ❖ That he prays the Lord’s Prayer upon awakening.
- ❖ That he prays the following psalms on the way to church:
 - Psalm 122 in its entirety:
“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’...”
 - Psalm 27:4-5:
*“One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.
For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.”*
 - Psalm 65:4
*“Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You,
That he may dwell in Your courts
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple.”*
- ❖ That he crosses himself at the outside entrance of the church.
- ❖ That he feels that he is entering heaven as he is entering the church.
- ❖ That he walks quietly and slowly towards the sanctuary while saying, “But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple” (Psalm 5:7).
- ❖ That he bows before the sanctuary three (3) times while saying, “I worship You O Christ...with Your good Father... and the Holy Spirit for You have come and saved us.”
- ❖ That he receive the blessing from the priest and goes to stand in his place.
- ❖ During the service of Vespers and Matins, at least the Sanctuary Deacons, must wear their tunics.
- ❖ After he receives the blessings of the priest and the *Beshara* (the Gospel) at the end of the Matins Raising of Incense, he enters the sanctuary to prepare to wear his vestments.
- ❖ While putting on his vestments he should be quiet while reciting Psalms 29 (*“I will exalt You...”*) and 92 (*“The Lord has reigned....”*). After putting on the vestments he should exit, bow down before the sanctuary and take his place amongst the chorus of deacons.
- ❖ That all deacons participate (serving inside and outside the sanctuary) in the prayers of the Psalms.
- ❖ Wearing of the deacon vestments will be allowed until the “Absolution of the Servants” and not after
- ❖ During the liturgy, he must keep himself from excessive movement, from entering and exiting the sanctuary needlessly and to keep his conversation only to matters regarding the service with as quiet a voice as possible.
- ❖ That he bows down in the known times for bowing during the liturgy and not sit down during prayer except for the times when sitting is allowed or by exemption from the priest.
- ❖ That he faces the altar while bowing down and praying for Christ (the Body and Blood) present on the altar, is our East.
- ❖ That the deacon enters and exits the sanctuary through the side entrances except while responding to the Litany of the Gospel and the Processions of the Feasts.
- ❖ Movement in the sanctuary proceeds counter-clockwise around the altar (from the right to the left).
- ❖ After every reading, the reader shall bow down before the right-hand side of the main sanctuary entrance then proceed to the priest to receive his blessing while making sure to follow the proper discipline of entering and exiting the sanctuary (see previous points).
- ❖ That he participates in all the responses and hymns for the congregation and deacons in one spirit and one voice.
- ❖ That he should not raise his voice in prayers, except specifically the prayers of the congregation and the deacons. However, it is not wrong that his heart should rise (and not his voice) and that he participates in every prayer.
- ❖ That he follows the deacon in charge in all the responses and that he not raise his voice above him even if his intention is to correct.
- ❖ That all deacons, **without exception**, receive Holy Communion before the congregation.
- ❖ That he not use the cymbals or the triangle except by permission from the deacon in charge of the service and that he be aware that the cymbals and triangle are meant to keep the beat in a quiet manner and away from the microphone.

Instructions to the Lead Deacon outside the Sanctuary

- ❖ That he be present early to the liturgy (25 minutes before the start of the Matins Raising of Incense) and that he prays the prayers of the First Hour and the Doxology of Matins.
- ❖ That he prepares the schedule for deacons serving in the sanctuary and he is in charge of assigning the readings outside the sanctuary.
- ❖ That he leads the deacons in all the responses in a group manner and that his goal should be the participation of all the deacons and the entire congregation in all responses and hymns.
- ❖ That all responses be in accordance and following the language in which the priest is praying.
- ❖ That he be in agreement with the priest regarding the long hymns ahead of time for the Divine Liturgy in general and especially during Feasts.
- ❖ That he observes the behavior of the deacons and maintain silence in the church using the help of the other deacons.
- ❖ That he and those around him look towards the sanctuary during prayer except during the times of the readings during which everyone should look towards the *Katameros*.
- ❖ That he is in charge of assigning responsibility for the cymbals and triangle.

Instructions to the Lead Deacon Serving in the Sanctuary

- ❖ That he be present in the church from the beginning of the Matins Raising of Incense and assist in organizing the altar and prepare for the service of the liturgy with the priest.
- ❖ He is personally responsible for arranging the *Eprosphareen* upon the altar – carrying the wine (during the Offertory) – laying the *Eprosphareen* after the Prayer of Thanksgiving (except in the presence of another priest) – rounding the altar during the Pauline – reading the Gospel (with permission of the priest) – removing the *Eprosphareen* after the Prayer of Reconciliation (except in the presence of another priest) – praying the response of the confession at the end of the liturgy.
- ❖ That he stand at the north side of the altar and assist the priest with the pages of the liturgy book and distributing the responses amongst the deacons of the sanctuary in a discreet manner.
- ❖ That he assign one of the deacons of the sanctuary (who should be knowledgeable in the manner of presenting the censer in a ready state, emptying it of ashes and presenting it to the priest in the appropriate manner) for the service of the censer from the beginning of the liturgy.
- ❖ Only he is permitted to stand during times of bowing down (with humility in his heart) to observe the Body and Blood, shielding them from anything that may fall into or upon them (if necessary).
- ❖ That he maintain silence and conservation of movement in the main sanctuary and the side sanctuaries.
- ❖ After the end of the liturgy, he and the other deacons of the sanctuary are responsible for reorganizing the altar and returning it to its original state (e.g. wrapping the vessels, disposing of the water and the contents of the censer, the lights, etc.)
- ❖ That he not allow the presence of anyone who should not be there inside the sanctuary.

Instructions for the other Deacons in the Sanctuary

- ❖ That he focuses only on the sanctuary deacons' responses and that he not raise his voice for responses outside the sanctuary.
- ❖ That he keep his eyes on the Body and Blood.
- ❖ That he abstains from excessive movement, laughing, talking, or signaling and that all his movements should be performed in silence and meekness. Additionally, all his movements should only pertain to the service of the sanctuary and always with the knowledge of the lead sanctuary deacon.
- ❖ That he assist the lead sanctuary deacon in arranging the altar before and after the liturgy.

Blessed be the obedient son

*H.G. Bishop Youssef
Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern U.S.*