

DEACON

Bishop Moussa

- Deacon "diakwn" is a Syrian word, in Coptic
- "Rif Shemshi".

Conditions of ordaining a Deacon:

- 1- He is not to be less than 25 years old
- 2- He has to pass a period of testing and discipleship, to reach a reasonable level of maturity to carry out his service, as the Apostle says: "But let these also first be proved, then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless." (1Tim3:10)
- 3- To be a good example in his speech, acting, love, purity and care for his spiritual life and eternity.
- 4- To be humble and not greedy. Able to bear the hardships of service without murmuring, and has the principal to be fair with everyone.
- 5- To read and learn continuously, so that he might be able build his spirituality, and grow in grace and in knowing Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6- Everyone should witness that he is honest, pure and loves peace.
- 7- The church's congregation should recommend him.
- 8- These conditions are a must, specially when the deacon is a consecrated deacon to serve the church.

Responsibilities of a Deacon:

- 1- To say the responses of the litanies prayed by the priest at raising incense and the Liturgy.
- 2- To call the congregation to start the prayers.
- 3- To ask the congregation to keep discipline and quietness in the church, to stand in awe, purity and fear.

4- to help the priest in congregation visitations.

5- To write down the names of those who offer the oblations and offerings to the church, so that the priest might mention them after the Litany of Oblations. It was stated in the 'Deskoleya' (the Teachings of the Apostles) to "let the deacons write down the names of those who offer, either being alive or dead, to be mentioned during the readings and prayers."

In the old days, there was a special room next to the church's entrance, called the Deacon's Room, where he used to sit and take offerings of the congregation, writes down their names, or those who reposed, for which they were offered, then gives those names to the priest to mention, one by one after the Litany of Oblations in the Holy Liturgy.

6- To clear the altar and prepare it, before the priest comes for the setting up for the Liturgy.

7- To read the Holy Gospel in the Liturgy. In the commandment in ordaining a deacon, the Bishop says "... and has the honour of reading the Holy Gospels".

8- In emergency occasions, he carries the cup and gives the Honoured Blood to the congregation, with the priest's permission. Also in the commandment, " you should comprehend the honour given to you to carry the True Blood, which gives salvation to the world..."

9- Serving the widows, orphans, needy, the sick and prisoners. The bishop says to him, "... you should visit the people of the Lord, the widows, the orphans, those who are distressed, help whoever you can and pay for them. You should be a good example to them, so that they should see your good deeds..."

10-Preaching and teaching: with permission from the Father Priest.

11-To recite the responses of a deacon from inside the altar, because only the deacon and the archdeacon can enter the altar and say the responses of the Liturgy. In the old days, no one was allowed in the altar except the Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Archdeacons, and the believer kings anointed with oil.

12-He participates with the Bishop or the priest in all other prayers: Baptism, Mayroun, liturgy of the water, consecrating the church, ordinations, feasts etc.

The Ritual of Ordaining the Deacon:

1. It takes place after the Prayer of Reconciliation.

2. After accurate choice of the person nominated by the priests and the congregation, he stands before the altar without his tunia, bowing his head humbly.

3. The Bishop and attendants pray The Prayer of Thanksgiving, then the Bishop raises incense in the four directions.

4. The Bishop faces east while praying: " O Lord of Hosts...accept your servant (....) as a deacon, who is standing waiting for your Heavenly gifts.

5. The Archdeacon announces: "The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ completing our weakness may descend on (...).

6. The Bishop faces the west, puts his right hand on his head while praying: " O Lord God the Almighty... show your face on your servant (...) who has proceeded to deaconship fill him with the Holy Spirit, power and strength."

7. The Bishop faces east while praying : "Yes O Lord, make him worthy to be a deacon...". Then, " Look O Lord to us, and our service, purify us from every iniquity, send your grace from heaven on your servant (...), to be worthy to complete your service without blame...".

8. The Bishop turns west, signs his forehead three times with his right thumb, saying :"(...) a deacon for the altar of....church Khen Efran....Efezmaroot....

First signing: We call you (...) a deacon for the altar of.... church Efezmaroot...

Second signing: as for the first

Third signing: as for the first

After each signing, the congregation responds Amen.

NOTES

Marriage in our church has five important goals :

Here, the Holy Spirit descends and grants His gifts for the service.

9- The Bishop turns east while praying: " We thank you O Lord God the Master...for the laying of hands on your servant (...) and the descent of your Holy Spirit on him. Support him with your purity and grace.

10-The Bishop faces west, signs the service clothes of the deacon, which are the tunia and Patrachil. Then he wears him the tunia, puts the Patrachil on his left shoulder while saying: "Glory and honour for the Holy Trinity, The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit, peace and establishment for the One Holy Apostolic Universal Church of God. Amen."

11-The Bishop then recites the commandment, "My son, you have to be honest in this service, you have to do whatever is assigned for you and complete it..."

12-The deacon enters the altar, bows, then stands on the right side, while the deacons sing 'Axiuous' (meaning worthy).

13-He participates in the responses from the inside, till the end of the Liturgy, and partakes of the Holy Communion.

14-The Bishop blows on his face saying, "Accept the Holy Sprit", after partaking of the Honoured Blood.

15-A procession takes place in celebration as usual.

Clothes of a full Deacon:

1. The deacon and the Archdeacon wear a tunia and the red Patrachil, as a sign of being washed up in Christ's Blood. The Patrachil is put on his left shoulder as a sign of carrying the cross, while the edges of the Patrachil resemble the wings of angels. In this St. John Chrysostom says: [meditate on the spiritual joy, you who are resembling the wings of angels when you wear your beautiful Patrachil on your left shoulder].

2. The deacon and Archdeacon might wear a cap decorated with crosses, Pictures of Our Lord Jesus and the saints. In some churches, it is still used, while mostly disappeared from lots of other churches. It is preferable to keep our old traditions

Rules for Deacons and Archdeacons:

1. If he is ordained before getting married, he is not allowed to get married.
2. If his wife died after his ordination, he is not allowed to marry again, exactly as the priest. If he does so, his rank is withdrawn.

Some Spiritual and ritual duties for Deacons:

1. All ranks of Deaconship should study the Coptic Language, because it is connected to all the rites, readings, praises and tunes of the church, so that they might read the Coptic Language, not Coptic written in Arabic or English.
2. They should learn, study and repeat the praises and hymns always.



3. They should be disciples of the singer of the church (Me'alem) or an experienced deacon.

4. They should be true partakers of the liturgy and other praises.

5. They should come early to the Liturgy. If any deacon is late after the Absolution of Ministers, he is not allowed to put on his service clothes and serve. If he is late after the reading of the Gospel, he cannot partake of the Holy Communion.

6. They should always wear the tunia and serve in every Liturgy, either inside the Sanctuary or outside, it is not right to serve around the altar without wearing a tunia. Since he is wearing the tunia and is serving, he should partake of the Holy Communion, and if doesn't of the Holy Communion then according to the rites of the church it is a great error.

7. They should present their tunias to the priest to sign them, for the following reasons:

One. It is considered as permission for them to serve in the Holy Liturgy

Two. A permission to have Holy Communion.

Three. A declaration that these deacons are not banned by the church.

Four. It is a sign of submission to the priest, the younger to the elder, asking for his blessing because the elder blesses the younger (Heb 7:7).

8. While the priest is signing the tunia and Patrachil on both hands, while bowing his head or kneeling before the priest, to have the priest's blessing and approval.

9. After the sign of blessing, the deacon kisses the cross and the priest's hand.

10. While wearing the tunia, the deacon recites the two Psalms, "I will extol you, O Lord, for you have lifted me up.." (Psalm 29) and "The Lord reigns, he is clothed with majesty..." (Ps 92)

11. Deacons should not go out of the church with the tunia, because these are clothes for service only inside the church.

12. They should take off the tunia at the end of the Liturgy, after releasing the angel of sacrifice, and never before.

13. When taking off the tunia, he should recite Ps 47, "O clap your hands all nations". Deacons should always attend the raising of Incense of Vespers, and reciting the Praise of the Vespers before that.