

The Coptic Orthodox Church

- † The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the ancient churches founded by the apostle “St. Mark the evangelist”
- † Christianity entered Egypt before St. Mark at the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts (2:10)
- † This church was also blessed by the refuge of Lord Jesus and the holy family as prophesied by Isaiah (19:1) and fulfilled in (Mat 2:14) and there is no doubt that some of the Egyptians at that time began to believe that this child is on extraordinary one because of the wondrous things that happened at His presence there.
- † But it is said that St. Mark the evangelist is its founder because he was the one who preached it regularly and ordained bishops, priests and deacons and prepared the church in its official form.
- † It is an apostolic Church adhering and sticking to all the rites and rules practised in the apostolic age and she is keeping them through the ages.
- † It is a biblical Church and all what the Coptic Orthodox Church practise, it has its proof and roots in the bible.
- † It is also a traditional Church, and its rites are delivered from age to age and many believers and priest, and high priests were martyred in order to keep its faith pure without change or alteration through the ages.
- † Some of its rites are delivered aurally as spoken and taught by Lord Jesus to His disciples as written in the gospel of St. John “and there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written” (John 21:25)
- † “To these (the apostles) He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs appearing to them over a period of 40 days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God”(Acts 1:3).
- † It is also a church of martyrs and it offered thousands and millions of martyrs through the ages, from the foundation of the church and St Mark the evangelist being its prime martyr, till now and this very day.

- † It is also a church of saints as it presented many saints in thousands to the heavens...and also it believes in the intercession of saints and uses many prayers asking the intercession of saints in its liturgical services
And it observes 2 kinds of intercessions:
 1. The ***Redemptional Intercession*** and this is considered for incarnate Lord Jesus alone which He completed on the cross for the redemption of the whole world

“My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1Jhon 2:1-2)

2. The ***Entreating Intercession*** and this is considered for the holy Virgin Mary and the angles and the martyrs and the saints as the church believes that it consists of 2 parts

- a. The suffering church here on earth
- b. The triumphant and victorious church in heaven.

And there is a constant continuous link between the 2 churches which was never broken.

And the examples for this from the holy bible are many:

1. The intercession of the Virgin Mary the mother of God in the wadding of Cana of Galilee to Jesus when the wine run out, and He accepted her demand and converted the water to wine (John2)

2. The intercession of our father Abraham for Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis (18:23-33).

3. In the book of Exodus Pharaoh said to Moses and Aaron “ Make supplication of me” which means that he was asking their prayer that God might remove the plagues from the land of Egypt (exodus 8:28)

And there are also many other examples.

For the same reason we put the icons of saints in the church:

- To have an example of the saints who completed their way to heaven successfully
- To encourage the believers to go on their same way
- To remember that they are usually praying, for us in heaven
- To remember that they were saved and reached their places in heaven after long strive in the way of righteousness on earth.

† It is also a church of prayer and fasting

1. It keeps its prayers as they were held in the first age without a alteration or short cutting or abbreviation
2. Its liturgy is kept as delivered from the early apostolic fathers and as put by St. Mark the Evangelist
3. It keeps the prayers of the hours “Agbya” which divides the day into 7 periods of prayer memorising the different occasions in Lord Jesus life.

4. For the preparation to Divine liturgy it prayers
- a. The vespers prayer which is offering the evening incense.
 - b. The midnight praises which are parts from the praises written in the holy bible in both the old and new testaments
 - the praise of Israelites after crossing the red sea
 - some of the psalms of David
 - the prayer of 3 young men the friends of Daniel the profit when they were thrown in the blazing fiery furnace
 - the commemoration of saints and their praises as well as for the Virgin Mary
 - c. The matins prayer which is offering the morning incense.

The church also determines periods of fast which are unique and it divides them into 2 categories:

1st category

- Wednesday (day of betrayal) and Friday (day of crucifixion) of every week
- The holy lent 55 days
- The 3 days of Jonah the profit or the Nineveties

These days are completely vegetarian without milk, cheese, egg, meat or any animal products at all.

2nd category

- Fast of advent 43 days
- Fast of Virgin Mary 15 days
- Fast of apostles 30 days (approximately)

The same as the 1st category but fish is allowed as a care for the health of the believers because the days of fasting are about 220 days per year

Why fish? Because it is a symbol of chastity and self control as its reproduction is non sexual between the male and the female but the female lies the eggs and the male fertilizes them separately.

And this is of the fundamental attitudes in the time of fasting.

† It is a church with a Trinitarian faith.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and it believes in the complete perfect incarnation of Christ(the unity of the Divine and Human natures without mixing or alteration or mingling or confusion or separation for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye.

And it never believed in monophysitism

† It is a sacramental church, and it believes in and practices the 7 holy sacraments.

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Repentance and Confession
4. Holy Eucharist
5. Holy matrimony
6. Priesthood-Holy orders
7. Unction of the sick

And it has for each sacrament its basis and mention in the holy bible.

† It is the church from which the monasticism and the ascetic life developed and spread in the whole world. And this was founded by St Anthony the great in the 3rd century.

It has 3 fundamental vows

1. Celibacy and chastity
2. Poverty (the use of adequate means of living)
3. Obedience which is self denial and overpowering oneself