Deacons Meetings - Readers & Subdeacons

- 2022-01-12 - Subdeacons & Saturday Altar
- 2023-03-26 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting
- 2023-09-06 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting
- 2024-01-17 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting
- 2024-04-24 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting
- 2025-08-13: Subdeacons Meeting

2022-01-12 - Subdeacons & Saturday Altar

Spiritual

Acts 6-7: Contemplations on the Life of St Stephen

- First of seven men to be chosen and ordained as a deacon
- Ordained because the apostles needed to give their time to Spiritual work
- The spiritual work is for apostles, bishops, priests. So the deacons are serving in the administrative work
- The role of deacons in the church is big. It's not just serving in the altar:
  - Making orban
  - Cleaning the church and its facilities
  - Preventing the heretics from entering the church
  - Serving on the board
  - etc.
- The apostles gave qualifications and criteria for those servants (Acts 6:3)
  - Good Reputation (inside and outside the church)
  - Full of the Holy Spirit (having the fruits of the spirit)
  - Full of Wisdom
- The Apostles, Bishops and Priests have a different role (Acts 6:4)
  - Ministry of the Word (i.e. sermons and preaching)
  - Prayers
- If the deacons didn't do their part, it ends up falling on the Apostles... And this happens sometimes now with Abouna
- The Result of the Deacons' Service (Acts 6:7)
  - The service multiplying
  - The word of God spreading
- When the service is organized and everyone is doing their part, the Church of God will grow and the Word of God will spread

Lessons from the Life of St Stephen

Brave Enough to Say Yes to the Call of Service

- "Speak O Lord, your servant hears"
- Christianity was not easy or popular in those days. The environment of service was martyrdom. It was a great risk
  - St Stephen and the deacons took a risk and showed great courage.
  - He didn't shy away when the times got rough, but received martyrdom

- We don't have risk of martyrdom, but we have many inconveniences and difficulties in our life and service. Schedule, tired, family, work, etc.

Filled with Faith and the Holy Spirit

- How could the apostles measure faith or holy spirit? It was manifested in their life and actions
- St Luke mentions St Stephen full of the Holy Spirit four times in these two chapters
- Conduct in our lives, in our business dealings, in daily transactions, etc.

Handled Opposition and False Accusations with Grace

- He did not defend himself but simply shared his faith with grace and love, seeking their salvation
- Be strong in the faith and stand up for the Truth

Good Knowledge of the Word of God

- No one would dare have this conversation unless he knew the Word of God
  - Acts 7 is a good A-Z summary of the Old Testament
  - "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15)
- This is shown in how you read the word of God. Someone who reads well can deliver a message to the hearer.
  - Sometimes the reader can delivery a clearer message than the sermon.
  - Every deacon should be ***ready enough*** to give a sermon in a moment's notice

Pray for those who Persecute You

- Many will stand against us and oppose us - Good intentions or bad, with knowledge or without
- How do I handle this?
  - Do I carry a grudge?
  - Do I speak evil of them?
  - Between deacons should be care and love, but we all still can grow
- Pray for those who treat us badly

Strive to be of Good Reputation

- When you have the urge to respond in a secular way, remember who you are and Who you are serving

Administrative

- Deacons' Meetings
  - These are important and require commitment

    - If you have a valid reason to miss it (i.e. sick, traveling, work, school), please communicate it with Abouna
    - The service of the Reader and Subdeacon is **as important** as Sunday School - both are services for TEACHING
- You should wear your Tonia even if it's not your day for service
    - "There's already a lot of people" is a reason sometimes, but if that's the case why would the Lord make thousands of thousands of angels?
    - To stand and serve as a deacon is the service you are ordained for, and you will greatly benefit from it
- Scheduling
    - Sending availability in a timely manner on the group every two months
    - Sending availability on groups for weekday liturgies (see Jonah in February)
    - Sending a message when you will be unable to make it to your service
- Attending the Tasbeha and standing with the deacons or in the front rows - especially during Kiahk
- Father of Confession and regular confession
- Proper Vestments (including Tonia, Badrashel, Taleeg) and respect for them
- Arriving 15min before the Liturgy Starts, regardless of your position

Announcement - New Adult Deacons Class

- Every Wednesday at 8:00-9:30pm
- **Arabic and English**
- Rituals, Dogma, Hymns, and the Deacons Service in General
- Purpose:
    - To remember things that were forgotten from lack of use
    - To be in harmony with the rituals and practices in our church
    - To serve the adult deacons
- Jan Guirguis will be responsible for and serving that class
- **Required attendance for Saturday Altar Servants**
- **Required attendance for Friday Altar Servants who are not already attending the Advanced Hymns**
- *It's okay if you don't know, but what is more important is a willingness to learn*
- **Starting Feb 2, 2022**

2023-03-26 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting

Spiritual Topic - Deuteronomy 12

- “But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go." (Deuteronomy 12:5)
  - We are surrounded by different ideologies, forms of worship, thoughts, etc.
  - The world is like an ocean full of waves, and the Church is like the seashore where we come to rest after fighting with all the waves of this world.
  - "and you shall rejoice in [ ]all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you." (Deuteronomy 12:7) - Sacrifices happen in the house of God
- "and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all to which you put your hands" (Deuteronomy 12:18)
  - Offerings come with a reward and with rejoicing - there is no offering to God made in sorrow
- "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."
  - This is one of the duties of the deacon (Subdeacon, reader, even priest/bishop) - we are not allowed to add or remove from the word of God... so when we read the word of God, we must read it carefully in order to convey the right message to the congregation

Administrative Points

- General
  - Follow the leader who is serving outside; do not overshadow them with loud voice or with starting a response too early. Most of them are young and they are still learning and growing, and they cannot compete with an older or stronger voice.
  - The Adults Hymns Class is on Wednesday evenings at 8:15pm
- Microphone
  - Be aware if the microphone is on or off on the altar, and do not sing along with the deacons outside if your microphone is on. First turn it off and then sing along. It is distracting to the leaders outside and causes confusion on the Live Stream.
  - Do not be embarrassed to request the microphone from the deacons outside to say your response. Your response is important to be heard by the congregation
  - Use the wireless microphones for any responses not in the altar
  - Be aware of the microphone when the father the bishop is visiting and to make sure that he has a microphone for all of his responses not at the altar
- Responses
  - All responses should follow the language that Abouna was praying in

    - All responses should follow the text in Coptic Reader or in the Diocese Euchologion (يجالوخ)
    - The Litany of the Fathers is now posted on the altar to be followed. Be aware with what Abouna is praying and what names he said/did not say and follow him. The document can be found here:

      https://www.dropbox.com/s/slro7j34cs6d4lp/Archpriest.docx?dl=0
    - The deacon responses are posted on the church website here: https://srcoc-hymns.weebly.com/deacon-responses.html. Please review them and especially the Liturgy of St Gregory as we come to the Holy 50 Days.
    - Litany of the Oblations on Sunday morning should be said by all of the deacons as a chorus from outside and inside
- Scheduling
    - Keep your eye on the schedule - if you see any empty spot in the schedule, please send Morcous a message to volunteer for the spot
    - Any changes to the schedule have to happen in the groups and not one on one
    - You can filter for your name on the schedule and see all of the days that you have any kind of service
- Reading
    - When reading, we are reading the Scripture and we should read in a manner befitting the Scripture (not like an altar schedule or something)
    - Practice readings in advance
- Censer
    - Use coals wisely - a weekday liturgy can usually be covered with two coals, and a Sunday liturgy with three coals
    - Learning how to properly hold the censer to present it to the father the priest - we will make a video on this topic
- Subdeacons
    - Altar Position #1 - Mind the Oblations in the Offertory; prepare them and then put them in place after the Offering of the Lamb
    - Altar Position #1 - Do the Book/iPad for Abouna - especially at the end of the Liturgy when the Father the Priest is handling the Body and Blood of Christ, he may have Pearls or Blood of Christ on his hands and cannot flip the page
    - Altar Position #1 - Feel free to distribute responses to other deacons in the sanctuary (#2, #3 and #4) during Matins especially on Friday and Saturday

2023-09-06 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting

Spiritual Topic:

Nabil Khalil

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/n6a4neakfxyzz7kppu4mq/2023-09-06-Preparing-for-Service-Nabil-Khalil.pdf?rlkey=oxpt54x4hq2oepcncblaw6q8z&dl=0

Administrative:

2024-01-17 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting

Spiritual Topic: Soldier Deacon

Jan Guirguis

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/5of5icyf99zq4einz19mn/2024-01-17-The-Soldier-Deacon-Jan-Guirguis.pdf?rlkey=k4cgepbkhrofovya599e5crhl&dl=0

Ritual Portion:

Absolution of the Ministers

> "Then the priest rises and kisses the altar, and proceeds to the north side of the altar, and the deacon who is serving prostrates before him, and the priest stretches forth his hand on the deacon and blesses him. Then both of them kiss the altar. Coming down from the altar, the priest and the rest of the deacons walk backward, their faces set to the East, and they put their left foot first. Then they prostrate themselves before the door of the sanctuary, and one of the priests who are present reads the Prayer of Absolution." - Coptic Reader

- Before the Absolution of Ministers, these are the ritual instructions given to us
- After the lifting of the Prospherine:
  - All deacons should be on the NORTH side of the altar
  - All deacons prostrate before Abouna and then take his blessing and kiss his cross
  - All deacons kiss the altar
  - All deacons leave the sanctuary from the main door walking backwards, left foot first
  - All deacons prostrate themselves before the sanctuary during the Absolution

Censer

- How to hold the Censer
  - Put your right hand on the top hook, and your pinky finger in the ring. When you raise your pinky finger, the center chain (dome of the censer) will be raised.
  - Put your left hand under the base of the censer
  - Raise the dome with your right pinky, and then lower your right hand to be level with your left hand. The chains should be extended and not left to dangle (or tangle)
  - Rotate your left hand to make sure there are no chains over the base

    - **A video will come soon**
- How many coals to put in the censer
    - In a typical liturgy, we use three coals
    - One in the morning before Matins
    - One AFTER the Agpeya Prayers which will endure through the Liturgy of the Word
    - One AFTER the Sermon which will endure until the Commemoration of the Saints
    - NO COALS should be added after Abouna says "was incarnate"
- How to deal with the ash on the coals
    - A small spoon will be added near the censer that can be used to remove ash from the top of the coal
    - DO NOT remove ash by blowing
    - DO NOT remove ash by shaking the censer

2024-04-24 - Subdeacons & Readers Meeting

Spiritual Topic: 1 Kings 8

- Everyone has a role to execute
  - From verse 1-8, you see that everyone has their role and responsibilities to execute
  - The Levites are the ones who carry the tabernacle and the ark and the furnishings; the priests are the ones who offer sacrifices, etc.
- "Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven" (22)
  - See Solomon's stance when he prays, how he spreads his hands toward heaven. This is a BIBLICAL stance. When we stand to pray, we should use these biblical stances. Others might cross their arms to resemble the Cherubim when they pray. These are good
  - Also be mindful of where your eyes are when you are serving the Sanctuary. Your eyes are toward the altar and the Gifts on the altar. They are not with the church doors and who is coming in or going out, but focused on the Sanctuary and the service of the Sanctuary
- Offering Sacrifices
  - In 1 Kings 3, we read that Solomon offered 1000 burnt offerings in a night... burnt offerings are a lot of work and not easy... slaying of an animal, skinning it, butchering it. It's not like mixing water, flour and yeast to make several orbanas. It's a very laborious task, and yet Solomon offered 1000 that night. And the Lord rewarded him with whatever he requested (which was wisdom).
  - See the dedication to the service - now, whenever we have any minor inconvenience, it is very easy to send a message in the group "I can't make it today" - and we justify to ourselves "there are many people who can cover me" - but we must be serious and dedicated in our service
  - See the dedication to the ritual - now, we may ask "who cares if I kiss the altar or don't kiss the altar when I leave before the absolution... it won't make a difference" - but we must be serious and dedicated to our rituals

Ritual Topic: Bright Saturday

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/f6dpqcay9sra09xz52bu0/Liturgical-Theology-Bright-Saturday.pdf?rlkey=whm9jk3qtepeoljzei46xionm&dl=0

Administrative Portion

- Pascha Languages

    - Early Morning and Evening Prayers are in English
    - Mid-Day Prayers are mixed language
    - Covenant Thursday and Good Friday are mixed
- **Readers:** make sure to clearly and completely say the conclusion of your reading... Some people say a few words and walk away "Do not love the world or the things in the world..." - Not so, but rather, read the WHOLE conclusion clearly in the microphone.
    - The conclusion to the Gospel of the Agpeya "Glory be to God forever. Amen." should be said by Abouna when he is present
    - In general, when Abouna is not present, it should be the highest rank (i.e. the subdeacon) who leads any Agpeya Prayers, says Glory be to God, etc.
- **Altar Service:** make sure the microphones are off when not saying a response. Make sure the microphones are on when saying a response.
- **Saturday Service:** Deacon Responses and Leaders outside should be using the wireless microphones. The condenser microphones are not made to be moved around, and are not made for individual use. Those are meant to pickup the voices of a group or chorus.
- **Subdeacons:** When distributing the Psalms of the Agpeya, distribute a psalm to each person from each hour. So for example when Abouna says "The Prayers of the Third Hour" then go and distribute all of the third hour psalms. After Abouna says "The Prayers of the Sixth Hour", then go and distribute all of the sixth hour psalms.
- Agpeya use: we will acquire some Agpeyas for the Elementary and Middle School deacons to pray their psalms

2025-08-13: Subdeacons Meeting

Agenda

- Role Adjustments (see below)

Role Adjustments:

- See what feedback the Subdeacons have about the roles
- Our Feedback:
  - #4 should NOT say "Let those who read" while he is holding the censer
    - Usually, it's not preferable that someone who is doing a specific function with the censer, candle, water, etc. is the one saying the response at the same time.
  - Updating to have #1 holding the wine cruet, saying the first and last confessions
    - Not everyone will be serving as #1, who distributes the responses
    - Position #1 requires someone who is always on-time, who is always focused and not getting lost in the liturgy, who is consistent in attending liturgies, etc.
  -

Small Rituals:

- Litany of the Gospel
  - Hold the cross in front of the gospel because the Cross came before the Gospel
  - Go in from the main altar
  - Then go around with Abouna and hold the gospel until reaching your spot to say □□□□□□

- The Procession of Incense
  - Vespers (Verses of Cymbals)
  - Matins (Verses of Cymbals)
  - Before Pauline Epistle
  - After Catholic Epistle
  - There are responses to be prayed here inaudibly

- Greet One Another
  - Don't say it from behind the altar, but say it from the #3 spot

- The Candles
- Communion - receiving the Body a second time, receiving the Blood a second time, drinking water from the Paten, and receiving the water of blessing... do a circle. Don't back up