



## **Concept of the Feasts in the Church**

### **Code: 9/CH/4**

#### **1. General Aims of the unit**

To understand better the holy feasts of the church with the aim of real spiritual participating in the Liturgical life of the church

#### **2. Special aims of the lesson**

1. To understand the biblical reason of the feasts in the OT and NT (to have joy in the lord)
2. To differentiate between the different types of feasts in the church ( Lordly feasts –Major & minor – Nayrouz and Cross feasts ,St. Mary's feasts , heavenly feasts and Saint's feasts )
3. To name the Lordly feasts, the occasion of each of them and the other famous feasts.
4. **To shed light on how we celebrate the feasts in the church and how to share these celebrations in a practical way.**

“The Coptic feasts have deep and sweet hymns, and splendid rites that inflame the spirit. Their aim is to offer the living heavenly and evangelic thought and to expose the Holy Trinity and Their redeeming work in the life of the church, in a way that is simple enough to be experienced by children, and: deep enough to quench the thirst of theologians.”

#### **3. Outcomes:**

**By the end of this lesson the teens are able to:**

1. Memorise the Lordly feasts and the occasion of each of them
2. Memorize the major other feasts as Nayrouz feast, Cross feasts , St Mary's feasts , Archangel Michael feasts and their dates in the calendar.
3. Discuss in groups the best way they may celebrating the feasts of the church and how they grow spiritually through these occasions

#### **4. Verses :** 1 Cor. 5:8 , Is. 35:10

#### **5.References :**

Attached “The Liturgical cycle”

I found this to be an excellent website which covered most if not all the points necessary for this lesson. I Highly recommend you have a look at it.

<http://lacopts.org/orthodoxy/coptic-orthodox-church/the-feasts-of-the-church/>

## THE LITURGICAL CYCLE IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

The word "Liturgy" in classic Greek means a "Public service undertaken on behalf of people" . It comes from

1. *Liow* means "People"
2. *Ergia* means "work"

The word is used in the epistle of Hebrews ( Heb. 8:6 , 9:21 ) to mean " the service of the alter" or " the priestly service"

The Church used the word from the Apostolic age, to cover all types of worship that is organised by her , and offered by her members or in their names. But, lately the word "Liturgy" is attached to the service of "Eucharist", although there are other Liturgies, as the Liturgy of Baptism, Liturgy of marriage, etc.

### The Coptic Liturgy mainly consists of :

#### ***1. "The Liturgy of Time" or " the Divine Service"***

It consists of the public ecclesiastic prayers , where the Church practices its liturgical life all the day , praising her Lord , honouring His servants and followers , and interceding for the salvation of the world. It is different than the Eucharist and Sacramental prayers. The aim of the **Divine service** is to devote all our time to the Lord , by singing psalms and hymns, enjoying recitation from the Holy Scripture,.....

In this service, the Church asks the whole world, visible and invisible , with all its creatures to praise the Creator. This service is considered the preparation for the sacramental life , as it leads to a concentrated mind and a zealous soul towards the fellowship with God.

#### ***2.The Eucharist***

It may be subdivided into three services :

- 1.The Offertory
- 2.The Liturgy of Catechumens.
- 3.The Liturgy of the Faithful "Anaphora"

### The Liturgy of Time (The Divine service)

There are four cycles of time :

**Jesus Christ** is the centre of all these cycles , because He is the aim of our praying , reciting and praising

#### **1.The Daily Cycle:**

This cycle includes :

- 1) *The Canonical hours;*** { see appendix 1}

- ❖ The morning prayer (1<sup>st</sup>. hour - 6 AM) : to remember the Resurrection of the Lord from the dead.
- ❖ The 3<sup>rd</sup>. hour prayer ( 9 AM ) : to remember the sentence of death to our Lord , and the descend of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost.
- ❖ The 6<sup>th</sup>.hour (12 noon ) : the remembrance of the crucifixion of our Lord , to save us from the penalty of our sins and to return us back to the kingdom of heaven.
- ❖ The 9<sup>th</sup>. Hour ( 3 PM ) at this hour Jesus Christ died on the cross and fulfilled all the requirements of Divine justice. His sacrifice is the fullness of our day.
- ❖ The sunset prayer ( 11<sup>th</sup>. Hour - 6PM) : the body of our Saviour was brought down from the cross . , and we have His promise that He will accept us if we returned back to Him even on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Hour.
- ❖ Before sleeping prayer ( 12<sup>th</sup>. Hour - ~9 PM) : the Lord's body was laid in the tomb, and we remember also our departure from this world .
- ❖ Mid- night prayer ( ~3 AM ): we remember the next coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to take us with Him and rewards each one according to his deeds.

## ***2)Raising of incense :***

- ❖ **The Morning Raising Incense ;**
- ❖ **The Evening Raising Incense**

Raising incense is considered a daily sacrifice of praise. It is taken from the temple. Note that at least the morning incense must precede the Eucharist.

## **2.The Weekly Cycle:** { see Appendix 2 }

### ***1)The weekly celebration of the Resurrection "Sundays" .***

There is no fasting on Sundays all over the year. Only the 3<sup>rd</sup>. and 6<sup>th</sup>. Canonical hours are prayed during the Eucharist as it is expected that the Liturgy to be finished by 12 noon.

### ***2)The weekly celebration of Crucifixion "Fridays"***

This is a fasting day ( till 3 pm.) all the year except on the all the major feasts of the Lord and the fifty days after the Resurrection . Normally the 3<sup>rd</sup>. , 6<sup>th</sup>. and 9<sup>th</sup>. canonical hours are prayed during the Liturgy of Eucharist (except during the great lent where the 11<sup>th</sup>. and the 12<sup>th</sup>. Canonical hours are also prayed ).

### **3)The weekly celebration of the conspiracy against the Lord “ Wednesdays”**

The same rule of Fridays applied here.

### **4)Psalmody :**

Which includes mainly ;

#### **❖ Praises**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>.Praise (Hoos) : The praise of the Israelites when they crossed the Red Sea (Ex. 15 , refer also to Rev. 15:3)
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Praise : Psalm 136 “ Give thanks to the Lord...”
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Praise : The praise of the three young men in the fire
4. 4<sup>th</sup>. Praise : Psalm 148 , 149 ,150,

❖ **Epsalias** (hymns on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ ) . There is a special epsalia for each day , and special ones for the feasts.

❖ **Theotokias** ( hymns for St. Mary the mother of the incarnated God , and her symbols in the OT) . There is a special Theotokia for each day .

❖ **The commemoration of Saints and Doxologies** : Glorification to the Saints who follow the Lord and pleased Him. This starts with the Doxology of Saint Mary.

#### **❖ The conclusion**

#### **Tunes of the Psalmody**

There are two tunes for the Psalmody.

❖ **“ADAM” tune** which is a short tune used on Sundays , Mondays and Tuesdays .

❖ **“VATOS” tune** which is a long tune( to suit the fasting days ) used on Wednesdays, Thursdays , Fridays , and Saturdays.

### **3. The Monthly Cycle (Coptic calendar):**

{see appendix 3}

On a monthly basis we celebrate the following commemorations:

**1.The birth , annunciation , resurrection of our Lord on the 29<sup>th</sup>. day of the month** (except Tuba and Amshir as they are not included into the pregnancy period ) . We celebrate it with “ Joyful Tune.” If this day is Sunday, the Church use the readings of - 29<sup>th</sup> Of Baramhat , otherwise the normal reading of the day is followed. ( 29<sup>th</sup>.Baramhat is the feast of Annunciation , 29<sup>th</sup>. of Kiahk is the feast of Christmas , and 29<sup>th</sup>. of Baramhat was the actual day of the Resurrection of our Lord )



6. The Feast of the entry of Christ to the land of Egypt  
24<sup>th</sup>. of Bashans [ 1<sup>st</sup>. of June ]

7.The Transfiguration Feast .....13<sup>th</sup>. Messra.  
[ 19<sup>th</sup>. of August.]

**[ Note that if any of the above feasts falls on a Sunday, its readings and tune supersedes the Sunday's. The Wednesday or Friday fasting supersede any minor feast of the Lord, however no prostration or abstinence from food .]**

### **b) The Month of Kiahk**

In this month the church celebrates the incarnation of Christ and glorifies St. Mary who accepted the Devine pregnancy . The praises of this month include the psalmody and extra praises on each part of it. It is practiced either on Saturdays till the morning , or on daily basis as in monasteries.

### **c) The feasts of Saints**

The day of departure of the saint is considered a feast in the Church , as one of her members overcome the world and ready to be crowned. .

St. Mary is queen of saints and the very honourable member in the body of Christ.

#### ***The Church assigned 7 feasts for St. Mary.***

1.The Annunciation to her parents ..... 7<sup>th</sup>. of Messra.  
13<sup>th</sup>. of August]

2.Her Nativity ..... 1<sup>st</sup>. of Pashans  
[ 9<sup>th</sup>. of May ]

3.Her presentation in the temple ..... 3<sup>rd</sup>. of Keiahk.  
[14<sup>th</sup>. of December-13<sup>th</sup>. in Leap years]

4.Her falling asleep ..... 21<sup>st</sup>. of Touba.  
[ 29<sup>th</sup>. of January- 28<sup>th</sup>. in Leap years]

5.The Assumption , or the appearance of her body to the Disciples  
16<sup>th</sup>. of Messra [ 22<sup>nd</sup>. of August]

6. Dedication of the church to her name at Phillipe & Atrib  
21<sup>st</sup>. of Baouna [ 28<sup>th</sup>. of June ]

7.Her Apparition in Zeitoun (Cairo -2<sup>nd</sup>. of April 1968)  
2<sup>nd</sup>. April

### **d) Other Feasts , as**

**1. The Feast of Nayrouz** Coptic new year (11 September , 12 September in Leap years)

**2. The Feast of the Cross (2 Celebrations) (for 3 days )**  
17<sup>th</sup>. of Tut [ 27<sup>th</sup>. of September -28<sup>th</sup>. in Leap years ,  
and 10<sup>th</sup>.of Baramhat [ 19<sup>th</sup>. of March]

**3. The feast of Apostles** ..... 5<sup>th</sup>. of Abib  
[ 12<sup>th</sup>. of July ]

#### e] Fasts

**1)The great Lent** ..... 40 days + 7 days preparation

**2)The Passion week** ..... at the end of the Lent

**3)Weekly fasts , Wednesdays and Fridays** (all over the year except the season of Pentecost , major feasts of the Lord )

**4)Baramon fasts** ..... the first previous fasting day of Nativity and Epiphany , non fasting day as Sundays and Saturdays are not counted.

**5)Nineveh Fast** .....3 days (2 weeks before the great Lent)

**6) Christmas Fast ( the Advent)\*** ...43 days from 25<sup>th</sup>. of November -24<sup>th</sup>. in Leap years - till the 6<sup>th</sup>. of Jnuary ( 40 days as Moses fasted to receive the commandments on the mountain + 3 days to remember the miracle of moving the mountain of Mokatom]

**7)Apostle Fast** \*vary in duration , between the day of Pentecost and the feast St. Paul and St. Peter (5 Abib)

**8)St. Mary's Fast \***.... 15 days ( 1 Misra - 15 Misra )  
[ 7<sup>th</sup>. to 21<sup>st</sup>. of August]

[ \* acceptable to eat fish as a matter of easiness ]

#### f] Tunes :

There are six tunes for the different occasions

##### **1. The Joyous Tune (Farayhee)**

- ❖ From 1Tut (El Nyrouz ) to16 Tut.
- ❖ From Nativity 28 or 29 Kyahk to the Feast of Circumcision 6 Tooba.

- ❖ From Epiphany 11 Tooba to the Feast of the wedding at Cana of Galilee 13 Tooba.
- ❖ From the Resurrection To the Litanies Of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Prostration of the Pentecost Sunday.
- ❖ During the Feasts of the Lord.
- ❖ On the 29<sup>th</sup>. of each Coptic month, except for the month of Tooba And Amsheer.
- ❖ On the weddings

## ***2.The Palm Sunday Tune (Shaaneenee)***

- ❖ The Feasts of the Cross (17-19 Tut, and 10 Baramhat )
- ❖ On Palm Sunday

## ***3. The Kyahk Tune (Keyahkee)***

- ❖ During the Month of Kyahk, until the day before the Baramon of the Nativity , as the Baramon is considered a normal day of the year.

## ***4.The Lent Tune ( Seyamee)***

- ❖ During the fast of Nineveh (3 days )
- ❖ During the great Lent ( there is a difference between the week days and the Sundays of the Lent - the tune of the last Friday of the Lent is following that of Sundays of the Lent )

## ***5. The Mourning Tune (Sad- Hazaynee)***

- ❖ During the Passion week
- ❖ During Funerals ( except those occur during the Pentecostal Season )

## ***6. The Normal Days Tune (Sanawee)***

- ❖ During the whole year except the above mentioned occasions.

## **The Church Readings**

The Church's fathers , through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit , set a system for the readings all over the year to flourish the spiritual life of the congregation through highlighting the events of Incarnation , Redemption , salvation , and the great love , care , and grace of our God to the human race .. The different reading are included in the following books:

***1.The yearly book*** which includes the readings of the Sundays and the different days.

***2.The great Lent book*** which includes the readings of the fast of Nineveh , and the Sundays and the days of the great lent.



**3. The Passover book** which serve the Passion week.

**4. The Pentecostal book** which includes the readings from the Resurrection feast till the day of Pentecost.

**5. The Sinaxarium book** which includes the daily feasts and saint/saints and a brief about the occasion.

**Any reading includes the following parts:**

1. **psalm and the gospel of the Vespers.** ( Evening raising incense )
2. **The psalm and the gospel of the Matins** ( Morning raising incense )
3. **The Pauline .** ( a part from the 14 epistles of Saint Paul), indicates the grace of the Lord to the believers .
4. **The Catholic epistle** ( a part from the 7 Catholic epistles written by St. James ,St. Peter , St. John and St. Jude ), highlight the spiritual struggle of the faithful and their Christian behaviour
5. **The Praxis** : (a part from the book of Acts ), enlighten the believers about the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.
6. **Sinaxarium** : The Commemoration of Saint / Saints or feast of the day , to emphasise the fact that the Holy Spirit still working in the Church to consecrate and sanctify people to live holy and pure life.
7. **The Psalm and gospel of the Liturgy.** The gospel is the good news of our salvation , and the psalm is the prophesy that match the gospel.

[ Notice that all the reading of the day have one theme]

**1. THE YEARLY BOOK**

**a) The methodology of the yearly readings:**

**1. Sundays readings:**

- ❖ The aim of the readings is to highlight the work of the Holy Trinity in the Church. There are four Sundays each Coptic month , and mainly they have one topic . If there is 5<sup>th</sup> . week in the month , then the reading will be “the gospel of the blessing - John

6:5: 14 for the first 6 months of the Coptic year and Luke 9:12 -27 for the last 6 months.)

- ❖ There are no readings for the months “ Baramhat , Baramoda , and two weeks of Bashans”, because this is the period of great Lent and the Holy Pentecost .

### The themes of the months:

- 1.Tut : The love of God the Father to the human race
- 2.Babah : The authority of the Saviour over His people.
- 3.Hator : The gospel of the Saviour to His people.
- 4.Kiahk : The preparations for the incarnation of the Saviour.
- 5.Tubah : The Salvation of the Saviour to the gentiles.
- 6.Amshir : The Saviour is the fullness of the believers.
- 7.Bashans : (the 2<sup>nd</sup>. half) The Lordship of the Saviour.
- 8.Baona : The communion and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- 9.Abib :The Support of the Saviour to His apostles and disciples to preach the good news.
- 10.Mesra : The care of the Saviour to His Church.
- 11.Nasei :The next coming and the end of the world.

### 2. The days readings { see Appendix 6 }

The readings follow the saint of the day. There are 70 different readings according to the different types of saints , Apostles , Patriarchs , Bishops , Priests Martyrs , Deacons , Monks , Prophets , Ladies ,Laymen ,etc.....

### 2.THE GREAT LENT BOOK

It includes the readings of the fast of Nineveh and the lent.

#### 1.Nineveh fast :

The main theme of the readings in the three days is “ ***accept the call of the Lord for repentance***”. In the day of the feast , the readings concentrate on the Passover of Jonah from the belly of the fish as a symbol of the resurrection of the Lord, and everyone who believes in it will be saved.

#### 1. The great Lent :

- ❖ All the readings of the seven weeks of the Lent are circled around ***the Journey to heaven*** , and the struggle in the way to heaven.
- ❖ The readings in the first five days of the week (Monday - Friday ) highlight the type of struggle required in the way of heaven, and the readings of Saturday and Sunday indicates the grace of the Lord to the strugglers

- ❖ Prophecies from the OT are added to the morning vespers in the days of the great Lent.( Monday to Friday )
  - There are no vespers in the week days ( Monday - Saturday ) , because the Liturgy ends at sunset. On Saturdays there is vespers , and evening Prayers on Sundays (similar to vespers except its gospel follows that of the morning readings , and not the following day as in vespers )

### 1.The Journey of the Great Lent

( refer to the flow chart -appendix 7 )

The great lent has a very special consideration in our Church as we remember the Lord’s fasting for forty days for our sake. Neniveh fast is considered as a preparation to this fast. This fast may be considered as a Journey to heaven, or the steps of spiritual struggle to reach heaven.

➤ **The readings of the Sundays are:**

- 1. Seek first the kingdom of heaven                                 Mat. 6:19 -33 .
- 2. The Victory of our Lord over the temptation of Satan  
   Mat. 4: 1- 11.
- 3. The Lost son   Luke 15: 1 -32
- 4. The Samaritan woman   John 4: 10 - 42
- 5. The healing of a man with infirmity for 38 years  
   John 5: 1 -18 .
- 6. The healing of a man who was born blind                             John 9:1 -41
- 7. The triumphal entry to Jerusalem                                     Mat. 12 :1-17,  
   Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-48 , John 12 :12-19

- The Journey starts by a reminder of the aim of the Journey “ seek the Kingdom” [ 1<sup>st</sup>. week ], but when you starts the way to heaven devil will tempt you by all his weapons as he tempted our Lord on the mountain. Remember that our Lord overcomes devil for our sake , so each one of us has entitled to the same victory of the Lord [ 2<sup>nd</sup>. week ] . When we win the battle we are entitled to go to heaven.
- If we fail in the trap of devil , then the chance to return to our Father is through “returning to our selves- repent-” as the lost son did when he discovers the misery of his life and decides to return to his father and asks for forgiveness [3<sup>rd</sup>. week ]
- When we reach the stage where our sins being habit and we are slaves for these habits , then the Lord will come to us and starts a dialogue with us leading us to discover our selves , our slavery, and leads us through His very gentle love to repentance then to witness His grace as He did with the Samaritan woman [ 4<sup>th</sup>. week ].

- If we reach a stage where our sins lasts for a very long time without remedy ( as the man who had infirmity for 38 years) , and there is no hope for our healing . Then the Lord Himself will come and asks us “ Do you want to be healed” , if we want , and trust in His power ,then He will order the sin to be out of our lives . At that moment we will be cured from our spiritual diseases and be ready to walk in the way of the kingdom of God [ 5<sup>th</sup>. week ].
- Still there is hope if we are completely blind (either because we are born so , or because of the effect of sins on our spiritual vision ) , that the Lord will come and give us new eyes if we obey His commandments . But , He then will ask us if we believe in Him , to be entitled to go to heaven [6<sup>th</sup>. week ].
- Now we are entitled to enter Jerusalem with our Lord Jesus Christ and Rejoice with all the disciples and believers “ Hosanna , blessed is He who comes in the Name of The lord ”. This was a symbol of the great entry of our Lord to the heavenly Jerusalem , when He entered with His own blood and appeared in front of the Father and redeemed us from all our debts and granted us eternal salvation [7<sup>th</sup>. week ] .

### 3.THE PASSOVER BOOK

- ❖ Starts with the readings of the Lazarus Saturday and ends with the readings of the Resurrection Sunday.
- ❖ The readings of Pascha were reorganised by Pope Gabriel Ebn Tereek in the 12<sup>th</sup>. Century (1131 AD) .

### 4.THE PENTECOSTAL BOOK

- ❖ Includes all the readings of the days and Sundays till the day of Pentecost.
- ❖ All the readings of this period concentrate on ***heaven and who is the King of this heaven***

#### The Journey of Holy Pentecost

- ❖ The Lord after His resurrection and for forty days , He was speaking to His disciples “...of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3) .The Church also talk to us through this period about the most important person in the kingdom , the King Himself , our Lord Jesus Christ .
- ❖ The readings of the Sundays :
 

1) Thomas Sunday	John 20:19 - 30
2) Jesus is the Bread of life	John 6:35 - 45
3) Jesus is the well of the live water	John 4: 1 - 42

- 4) Jesus is the Light of life            John 12: 35-50
- 5) Jesus is the Way                        John 14: 1- 11
- 6) Jesus is our intercessor before the Father John 16:23-33
- 7) Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit    John 15:26 -16:15



