



**In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
One God, Amen.**

Sunday November 9th, 2008

The History of the Orthodox Church

Introduction

Our Coptic Orthodox church is one of the oldest churches in existence. It is the oldest not just in years but also in traditions that have remained the same throughout the last two millennia. The reason behind this lack of change over the years is that God is the same, never changing, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Therefore what He instituted through the Holy Spirit two thousand years ago must still be valid today and for the rest of time. While other churches have changed and continue to change with the times the Coptic Orthodox church has remained steadfast to her beliefs and traditions established by the apostle St. Mark back in the year 61AD.

Church Timeline

29 AD: Pentecost.

49 AD: Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) - Dispute about the circumcision of the gentiles is resolved. St. James presides as bishop.

61 AD: St. Mark arrival in Egypt and the beginning of Christianity when Anianus the cobbler believed in Christ.

68 AD: The martyrdom of St. Mark in Egypt.

70 AD: The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Roman emperor Titus, after 4 years of Jewish rebellion against the Roman Empire. Today, only the Western Wall of the temple remains.

100 AD: The apostolic age and the first period of the Christian church ends.

249 AD: The beginning of vicious persecution against the Christians at the time of Decius. Yet, by the end of the second century, Christianity has spread across much of the Roman Empire.

300 AD: The great persecution during Diocletian and Galerius era. Several Christian communities and villages were wiped out in Africa, Egypt and Palestine.

313 AD: Constantine the Great issued the "Edict of Milan" granting freedom of worship to all religions and the first church was built.

325 AD: Counsel of Nicene.

251-356 AD: St. Anthony started monasticism in Egypt, which subsequently spread, to the whole world.

381 AD: Counsel of Constantinople.

431 AD: Counsel of Ephesus.

451 AD: Counsel of Chalcedon.

590 AD: in the East, Muslims pushed westward, ending Christian dominance in North Africa and Palestine the birthplace of Christianity.

1517AD: Martin Luther starting the Protestant reformation.

Our Unique Church

Among the many qualities of our Coptic Orthodox Church we can say that it is:

1. Blessed by Jesus Christ Himself: Who came to Egypt with His holy mother and father and blessed it.
2. An Apostolic Church: Founded by St. Mark who was not only a disciple of our Lord Jesus but also an evangelist who wrote one of the four gospels.
3. An Evangelic and Biblical Church: We use the bible to back all our beliefs and we believe in not just reading and studying the bible but living it as well.
4. A Church Of Martyrs: We can safely say that the Coptic Church gave the greatest number of martyrs who died in the name of Christ and continues to do so.
5. An Ascetic Church: St. Anthony founded the monastic movement and monasticism in general with its various kinds can be attributed back to the Coptic Church.
6. A Church Of Saints: Our church is rich with Saints who bless us, pray for us and befriend us.
7. A Knowledge-Loving Church: The first Christian school was founded in Alexandria that is focused on studying Theology. Many great theologians graduated from it.
8. A Preaching Church: That has gone out and continued to preach to those who don't know God in Africa and elsewhere and with churches all over the globe.

These are among many other qualities and descriptions. Our Church is a great church and we should be thankful to God for allowing us to be Christians in his holy church and for preserving the Coptic Orthodox church. We should also pray for the peace of the church so that God will protect it from all evil seen and unseen and lift up all troubles that may befall it from the evil one. As members of this holy church we should strive to maintain the traditions and beliefs that have been so painstakingly passed down to us through many generations and at the cost of much bloodshed. It is because of those martyrs and saints that we have our solid faith today. We should seriously think about what it means to pass this faith we have to the next generations and to those around us who may not know this true faith. Will we let thousands of years of persecution and hard fought struggles come to naught because of our slackness? We certainly cannot ignore this great gift and heritage that God has given us. If the gentiles see value in preserving the environment and the world which they consider part of their heritage and God's gift to them and which will eventually be wrought to nothingness how much more should we be actively protect and grow our faith and our church that Christ has died to protect? Those are the everlasting gifts that cannot be priced. The church is not only God's house it is our mother and turning our backs on it would be like turning our backs on our parents our own flesh and blood. Let us therefore contemplate carefully on what we prioritize and value in our life. Is it the love and desires of the world which have brought pain to many or the love of God and his house which have risen with the lowly and let them sit in the heavenly places? We should not cheapen our gifts or neglect them. We must treasure them and value them for the love of the world is enmity to God but those who do the will of God abide forever.

Glory be to our Lord God forever. Amen.