

B. Reader (Anagnostes)

Anagnostes (Anagnwtoc) is a Greek word formed of two parts: "Anagnwc" which means "chapter", and "toc" which means "related to him". So it means the chapter related to the reader, or the reader of chapters.

Qualifications

The Coptic Orthodox male members who are nominated for ordination to the rank of Reader (Anagnostes) must meet the following minimum requirements as well as the requirements of the rank of Chanter (Epsaltos):

General Conduct and Spirituality

- ❖ 16 years or older
- ❖ witnessed by everyone for his good deeds and manners
- ❖ recommended by the priest and congregation, without any objection from anybody.
- ❖ tested in good reading with understanding of the Holy Bible
- ❖ practices spiritual virtues and means of grace: confession, Holy Communion, attending the church and reading from the Holy Bible.
- ❖ read and study the bible continuously to be able to teach and read comprehensively
- ❖ practice spiritual exercises with guidance from his father of confession (prayers, fasting, metanoias)
- ❖ get used to have his own retreat time (quiet time) daily and annually.
- ❖ ready for the service
- ❖ humble and meek, not to be proud of his voice or service
- ❖ obedient to the priest for all that he asks of him, in order to be an example

Knowledge of Rites

- ❖ Knowledge of the books of the bible
- ❖ deaconship ranks, and the responsibilities of each rank
- ❖ church building symbols and iconostasis
- ❖ structure of the liturgy
- ❖ structure of the Agpeya Prayers
- ❖ rites of the vespers praises (Tasbeha Asheya), vespers (Asheya), morning praises, morning raising of incense (Tasbeha Baker), and the litanies said in matins and vespers.
- ❖ structure of the midnight praises (Tasbeha)

Knowledge of Hymns

- ❖ Altar responses for the Liturgy of St Basil
- ❖ Congregation responses for the annual liturgy
- ❖ Reading one of the epistles or the Acts of the Apostles in Coptic + the Psalm and gospel in annual tune
- ❖ Psalm in Mourning (Paschal) tune
- ❖ two of the 4 canticles, when oushot, and maren ounh

- ❖ Intro to doxologies, doxologies of St. Mary (vespers, midnight, matins) and St. Mark (church saints)
- ❖ Annual verses of the cymbals (watos and adam)
- ❖ ep ouro (procession)
- ❖ 2 hymns for the Glorification of Saints
- ❖ 3 of the major Pascha Week hymns (e.g. Evlogimenos , Agios sad tune, Ke-eperto, Ethvety anastasi, Tai shori, Ti shori, Fai etaf anf, Omonogenes , Gholghotha)

Knowledge of Theology and Church History

- ❖ Ecumenical councils and Orthodox Creed
- ❖ The Holy Trinity, Salvation and Redemption, Incarnation.
- ❖ The 7 sacraments of the Church
- ❖ Monasticism and Church Fathers
- ❖ The history of the church division

Coptic Language

- ❖ Alphabet, and fluent in reading
- ❖ numbers, days, months
- ❖ Our Father "Je-Peniot"
- ❖ Basic Grammar and some vocabulary

Memorization

- ❖ Thanksgiving Prayer, Psalm 50, Psalm 1
- ❖ Introduction to the Orthodox Creed, Orthodox Creed
- ❖ Hail to you, The Trisagion, Holy Holy Holy
- ❖ The Gloria, Let us praise with the Angels, Graciously accord O Lord (12th Hour)
- ❖ Psalms recited while dressing into the tunic (tunia): Psalms 29 ("I will exalt You..."), Psalm 92 ("The Lord has reigned...")
- ❖ Psalms recited on the way to Church: Psalms 26 ("The Lord is my light..."), 46 ("Clap your hands, ...") and 121 ("I was glad for those who said to me...")
- ❖ 2 absolution prayers for agepeya hours

Duties

- ❖ Daily Readings: Reading the daily readings in church: particularly the Epistles in Coptic and English. He should learn the introduction and end of each Epistle in Coptic and English. He should read with clarity and understanding and without mistakes. After reading the Epistle, the Reader (Anagnostes), kneels in front of the altar door, kisses the cross and the priest's hand, showing humility before God and the congregation, so that he might not be proud of his voice or his readings. Note that according to the canons of Nicea, there should be no kneeling during Sundays or the Holy 50 Days of Pentecost.
- ❖ Reading the names of the father Patriarchs, who have reposed in the Lord: After the commemoration of the saints, when the deacon serving inside the altar says: "Let the Readers (Anagnostes) say the names of our saintly fathers the patriarchs who have reposed, may the Lord repose their souls all and forgive us our sins." In the old days, the

names of the Patriarchs were written on many tablets, and after hearing this response, each Reader used to call out some of the names. This is not followed now, but it is encouraged if we return again to this tradition.

- ❖ Singing praises and hymns: He has a duty to learn the church's praises and hymns, and recite them during the Holy Liturgy and midnight praises.
- ❖ Preaching and teaching: As mentioned in ordaining the Reader: "Show your face O Lord, on Your servant standing before You, to teach Your holy sayings, and preach Your holy sayings, and preach your commandments to your people, and teach them your pure words, through which comes salvation of their souls and their redemption." In the commandment it is said to him, "You should learn the books of the Holy Bible, one by one, so that you may be able to teach the congregation." He practices teaching and preaching with the request of the bishop or priest.

Uniform

- ❖ He wears a white tunic because the white colour is appropriate for the service of God, who is dressed in light, and who's white garment shown as light at the transfiguration (Mark 9:3). White colour is also a sign of purity, a characteristic which should in a deacon, and all the other grades of priesthood.
- ❖ He wears the stole (Patrachel) in the form of a cross on his back, with it wrapped around the front as a belt, and with both ends hanging from over his shoulders.
 - "Patrachel" is a Greek word which means a grace or deaconship grade, that is, it is a grace taken by a person and carried on his shoulders.
 - It is in the shape of a cross because he is sharing in carrying the cross with Christ, as He says: "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt 16:24)
 - The stole is in the shape of a belt from the front, as a sign of getting ready for service, like John the Baptist, who used to gird his waist.

Rites of Ordination

- ❖ The ordination takes place after the prayer of reconciliation. The nominee stands before the altar without wearing his tunic (holding it folded in his hands) and stole (Patrachel), bowing in meekness and awe before the Lord, ready to carry the honour of the service. The Bishop stands at the altar door, facing the west. Behind him stands those who have nominated him, either priests or people from the congregation, they bow in repentance before the altar on behalf of him. They promise before God and the Bishop to look after him.
- ❖ The Bishop asks the congregation: "Do you agree that he truly deserves this rank?", they answer, "Yes, we approve that he deserves". The Bishop cuts five locks of hair in the sign of the cross: one in the middle of his head, the others on the four sides of his head, while saying: (.....) Reader in the church of (.....) Khen Efran.....Ekez Maro-oot...then he blesses him with the three blessings, after which the congregation says "Amen" after each blessing.
- ❖ Following this, they all line up in front of the Bishop who prays for them and commands them their responsibilities. The Bishop then prays the Thanksgiving Prayer, then offers incense in the four directions. He faces the west while praying: "We ask and entreat you, O

Lord, Master, the Almighty, accept your servant(s), Reader in your church, teach him/them your rights, grant him/them to be worthy to touch the utensils and be an honourable Reader before you.

- ❖ The Bishop then faces east, while praying: "O God the Great and Rich in His Gifts, Permit and fill him/them with every wisdom and understanding. Preserve him/them in your worship, without blame."
- ❖ After the prayers, the congregation responds: "O hear us, O Lord have mercy upon us, O Lord bless us". This response is said generally at the end of any prayer.
- ❖ The Bishop then turns to the west, holds his face, saying: "O God, Who holds everyone with your right hand...show your face on your servant(s)...to teach your holy sayings and preach your commandments to your people...grant him/them a humble heart to read and understand your law, to be of benefit for him/them and those who listen to him/them."
- ❖ The Bishop's hand represents God's hand, which holds the mind of man, making him able to understand, teach and preach the life-giving, strong word of God.
- ❖ The Bishop turns east and says: " O Lord, Master, who chose His servant Ezra, and granted him wisdom to read your law to your people...grant him/them the wisdom and spirit of prophecy to recite your holy sayings to your people without blame."
- ❖ It is very important that the Reader's life be without blame, his deeds corresponding to his words, so that he might not stumble with anyone. His words should be strong, his service pure and useful for everyone, as was Ezra the great writer.
- ❖ The Bishop (or the Archdeacon if available) then reads the following commandments:
 - Learn the books of the Holy Bible one by one.
 - Read with understanding, according to the Lord's commandment "let the reader understand"
 - Preach the congregation
 - Your life should be pure, as the lamp on the lectern, enlightening for those around you with your words and deeds.
- ❖ The Bishop then signs their service garments; they wear them; they join the chorus in the responses and praises of the Liturgy.
- ❖ At the end of the Liturgy, they partake of the Holy Communion. After the Bishop partakes of the Honoured Blood, and before drinking water, he blows on their faces, one by one, saying, "Accept the Holy Spirit"
- ❖ A procession is done for them in the altar and the church, everyone feels the holy rejoicing for their ordination.

Notes

- ❖ The hands are not laid upon him; only his hair is cut.
- ❖ It is very important that the Bishop asks the congregation "Does he deserve?", so as to have a public witness before God and the church that he is worthy. The Apostle St. Paul says, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).
- ❖ Cutting the hair symbolizes the cutting off of bad habits and evil thoughts.

- ❖ Cutting the hair in the arrangement of the cross, while mentioning the Holy Trinity points to the gifts and talents he gains from the Holy Trinity, through the blessings of Christ's death on the cross.
- ❖ The five hair locks are a symbol of Christ's five wounds, which are the three nails, the crown of thorns and the spear.
- ❖ A Reader can touch the altar's utensils with a veil, to dry them after the Holy Liturgy, and puts them back in their place.
- ❖ He can get married after this rank, and if his wife dies he can get remarried.