

C. Subdeacon (Epi-diakon)

Epi-diakon is a Greek word consisting of two parts: "epi" i.e. under or helper, and "diakon" i.e. deacon, so the meaning is *deacon's helper*.

Qualifications

The Coptic Orthodox male members who are nominated for ordination to the rank of Subdeacon (Epi-diakon) must meet the following minimum requirements, in addition to the requirements of the rank of Reader (Anagnostes):

- ❖ 20 years or older, under normal conditions, unless he is brilliant and outstanding in the church's service, is as wise as the elders and as honest as the saints.
- ❖ He is to be recommended by the people and priests.
- ❖ Everyone witnesses that he is of good manners and deeds.

Duties

- ❖ To guard the church's doors of heretics and animals.
- ❖ To organize seating in the church: men in their specific places, women in theirs, Sisters and Nuns in theirs, etc.
- ❖ To light the church's lanterns.
- ❖ To look after the church's books, and the priests and servants clothes.
- ❖ To prepare the censors.
- ❖ To help the deacon, or replace him in emergencies.

These duties are in addition to those for the rank of Reader, and do not cancel them, so he can act as a Reader if needed.

Uniform

same as of the rank of Reader (Anagnostes)

Rites of Ordination

- ❖ He bows before the altar before wearing his tunic (tunia), and after the Prayer of Reconciliation.
- ❖ The Bishop prays the prayer of Thanksgiving, then raises incense in the four directions.
- ❖ The Bishop faces the East while praying: "O Lord of Hosts.....accept your servant (.....) as Subdeacon, he who is standing here waiting for Your Heavenly gifts."
- ❖ The Bishop says: "the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, completing our weakness, may come upon this brother whose name was mentioned, to acquire the grade of Subdeacon."
- ❖ The Bishop, facing East, prays, "Yes O Lord, make him worthy to be a Subdeacon."
- ❖ The congregation responds: "O Lord hear us, O Lord have mercy upon us, O Lord bless us", or Kyrie eleyson (Lord have mercy) 3 times in the same tune.

- ❖ The Bishop faces west, holds the Subdeacon's face while praying: "O Lord the Master Almighty...show your face on your servant (.....), to become an Subdeacon. Fill him with your Holy Spirit to become worthy to touch the service utensils"
(note that the utensils are to be carried with a veil when drying them and storing them.)
- ❖ The Bishop faces East, and prays: "O Lord, look to our service, send your grace on your servant... to be worthy to live as Subdeacon without blame."
- ❖ The Bishop then signs his forehead with his right thumb saying: "We call you in God's Holy Church, Amen." The congregation responds, "Amen."
- ❖ The Bishop then says: "(...) a Subdeacon for God's Holy Church Amen. The congregation responds, "Amen."
- ❖ The Bishop signs the forehead 3 times with his right thumb (without laying of hands), while saying: "We call you (...) a Subdeacon for (...) church. Khen Efran... Efezmaroot...."
Then the second and third sign. After each signing, the congregation responds, "Amen."
At these signings, the Holy Spirit descends on him the gifts to carry out his service.
- ❖ The Bishop faces the east while praying the prayer of Thanksgiving for completing this ordination, saying: "We thank you O Master, the Almighty, grant him Your awe and purity so that he may be perfect in all the works of his service..."
- ❖ After signing the tunic (tunia) and the stole (patrachil), the Bishop dresses the Subdeacon with them, while saying: "Glory and honour...peace and establishing...Amen."
- ❖ Then he recites the commandment of Subdeacon: "My son, you have gained a good grade... to be a follower and assistant to the deacon in the service, to watch the doors of the church and keep discipline in the church."
- ❖ Then the Subdeacon stands with the chorus of deacons and joins in the responses and hymns of the Liturgy.
- ❖ He partakes of the Holy Communion at the end of the Liturgy, the Bishop blows on his face, he goes around the church in a procession rejoicing.

Notes

- ❖ The hands are not laid on him, nor is his hair cut, only the signings.
- ❖ He can get married after this rank, and if his wife dies he can get remarried, contrary to the higher priesthood ranks.