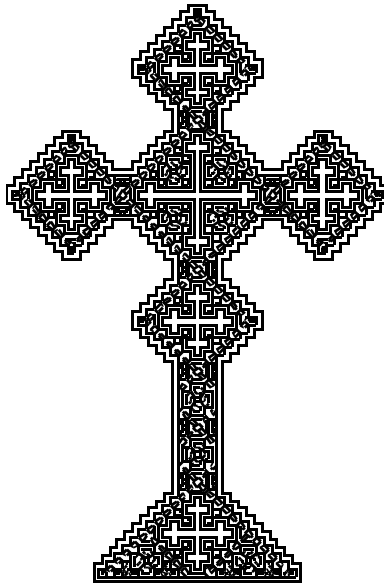


# THE AGPEYA



THE COPTIC ORTHODOX  
PRAYER BOOK  
OF  
THE HOURS

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## PREFACE

The Agpeya, the Prayer Book of the Hours, is composed of Psalms, Gospel passages, litanies and absolutions.

In this edition, the Lords' Prayer, the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the Gloria, the Intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Trisagion, Holy Holy Holy, the Introduction to the Creed, and the Creed are adopted (with some minor corrections) from St. Basil Liturgy book that was recently approved by H.H. Pope Shenouda III. The gospel passages and the Psalms are taken from the New King James version of the Bible, however the Psalms are arranged according to the Septuagint version.

The litanies and absolutions adhere to the original Coptic and subsequent Arabic text. This was accomplished by rendering the translation in a clear and accurate manner, with the least possible paraphrasing, to ensure optimum understanding yet conserving the originality and the spirit of the text. The words were traced and rendered to their biblical and/or patristic origin in order to provide reliable vocabulary, terminology and phraseology.

Biblical footnotes were introduced in this version to provide an internal witness to the worshiper and relate the prayers to their biblical origin, they refer to verse numbers in the New King James version. The worshiper is strongly urged to find those verses as they provide a pure source of contemplation on the word of God.

All the Churches of Montréal, Québec, participated in this edition, namely St. George and St. Joseph Church, St. Mark Church, and St. Mary Church. May our Lord Jesus Christ, use this work for the glory of his holy Name.

## INTRODUCTION

The Agpeya or the seven canonical prayers started as early as the Apostolic age during the earliest days of Christianity. The believers received this spiritual practice from the head of the Alexandrine Church: St. Mark the Apostle, who was also the first patriarch of Egypt.

This was done according to what St. Luke, the apostle, wrote in the Book of Acts: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meals with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:46-47)

Nevertheless, there was, at the beginning, some disagreement on the limits of adoration and the number of Psalms that should be recited. Then one day, while the faithful assembled to pray the Psalms, an angel appeared in their midst, and started praising the Lord and hymning Psalms. The angel recited eleven Psalms with a very nice tune, then added certain individual prayers. Finally, the angel ended his worship by reciting an additional Psalm. Therefore, the total number of Psalms was determined to be twelve.

The angel disappeared after he put an end to the dispute, and the holy fathers concluded that the matter was settled with divine proclamation. Consequently, the Agpeya became an ecumenical law to be observed by all the believers.

It was mentioned by John Cassian that the system of prayers in the Church of Alexandria was devised before the beginning of monasticism. He said, "These arrangements of prayers were observed by all the servants of God in Egypt."

When the clergy charged Saint Basil in Caesarea Philippi because of the Night-Watch system he proposed, he replied that this system was being observed in Egypt. Thus, it is not true, what some of the scholars claim, that praying the Agpeya in Egypt was a monastic practice.

Since the beginning of the Apostolic Church, the Copts served God with newness of Spirit, worshipping the Lord with such a spiritual stature, sometimes higher than the monks themselves. According to divine proof, Saint Anthony visited twice the outside world to look for the laity who surpassed him in holiness. Also, Saint Macarios, guided by the Spirit, went to visit the two women who exceeded him in sanctity and in their love for Christ.

Saint John Chrysostom had some nice comments about the fruits of prayer. He wrote: "He who visits the Egyptian desert will find that it has been transformed into "Paradise". Tens of thousands of angelic choirs live like "humans", accompanied by masses of "martyrs" (who are alive), and coexisting with flocks of virgins. The power of the devil has been crushed, and the Kingdom of Christ shines with abundant glory.

The land which once belonged to the wise men, the poets, and the magicians is now proud, only, with the group of fishermen and with that tent maker (Paul), taking refuge always in the cross. For truly, in every place in the land of Egypt, there are sheepfolds for Christ, saintly flocks, holy virtues, and heavenly powers. These spiritual movements are found not only

among men but also among women, for the Wicked One wages his war against men and women alike.

Thus, the wilderness of Egypt, with its monastic cells scattered all over, has surpassed in its beauty the sky dotted by so many twinkling stars."

**THE FAST OF THE NATIVITY  
TOUBA 1714  
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## INTRODUCTION TO EVERY HOUR

*The worshiper prays:*

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

Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord bless us. **Amen.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Lord, make us worthy to pray thankfully:**

Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our bread of tomorrow<sup>1</sup>, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. In Christ Jesus, our Lord. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. **Amen.**

### THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to Him, had compassion on us, supported us, and brought us to this hour.

Let us also ask Him, the Lord our God, the Pantocrator,<sup>2</sup> to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.

O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition. For You have covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to You, had compassion on us, supported us, and brought us to this hour.

Therefore, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Philanthropic One<sup>3</sup>. Grant us to complete this holy day, and all the days of our life, in all peace in Your fear. All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us and from Your people and from this holy place that is Yours.

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<sup>1</sup>according to the Coptic version

<sup>2</sup>Almighty, Who controls everything

<sup>3</sup> Lover of mankind

But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us, for it is You who have given us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, by the grace, compassion and philanthropy, of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through whom the glory, the honor, the dominion, and the adoration are due unto You, with Him, and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, who is of one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the ages of all ages. **Amen.**

Let us also ask Him, the Lord our God, the Pantocrator,<sup>4</sup> to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.

O Master, Lord, God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition. For You have covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us to You, had compassion on us, supported us, and brought us to this hour.

Therefore, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Philanthropic One<sup>5</sup>. Grant us to complete this holy day, and all the days of our life, in all peace in Your fear. All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us and from Your people and from this holy place that is Yours.

But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us, for it is You who have given us the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, by the grace, compassion and philanthropy, of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through whom the glory, the honor, the dominion, and the adoration are due unto You, with Him, and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, who is of one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the ages of all ages. **Amen.**

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<sup>4</sup>Almighty, Who controls everything

<sup>5</sup> Lover of mankind

## PSALM 50<sup>6</sup>

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the god of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise.

Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion, build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices or righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on Your altar. **Alleluia.**

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<sup>6</sup>Psalms numbers conform to the Coptic version of the Old Testament, which is based on the Septuagint.