

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
St. George & St. Shenouda
Coptic Orthodox Church
835 Bergen Ave.
Jersey City, NJ 07306

DEACONS' GUIDELINES

Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given too much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless." (1 Tim 3:8-10)

For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing. (1 Timothy 3:13)

General Instructions for Deacons and Church Attendance Discipline

- † That he prays the Lord's Prayer upon awakening.
- † That he prays Psalms 26 ("The Lord is my light..."), 46 ("Clap your hands, all you nations...") and 121 ("I was glad for those who said to me...") on the way to church.
- † That he be present early to the liturgy (25 minutes before the start of the Matins Raising of Incense) and that he prays the prayers of the First Hour and the Doxology of Matins.
- † That he crosses himself at the outside entrance of the church.
- † That he feels that he is entering heaven as he is entering the church.
- † That he walks quietly and slowly towards the sanctuary while saying, "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple" (Psalm 5:7).
- † That he bows before the sanctuary three (3) times while saying, "I worship You O Christ... with Your good Father... and the Holy Spirit for You have come and saved us."
- † That he receive the blessing from the priest and goes to stand in his place.
- † After he receives the blessings of the priest and the *Beshara* (the Gospel) at the end of the Matins Raising of Incense, he enters the sanctuary to prepare to wear his vestments.
- † While putting on his vestments he should be quiet while reciting Psalms 29 ("I will exalt You...") and 92 ("The Lord has reigned..."). After putting on the vestments he should exit, bow down before the sanctuary and take his place amongst the chorus of deacons.
- † That all deacons participate (serving inside and outside the sanctuary) in the prayers of the Psalms.
- † Wearing of the deacon vestments will be allowed until the Absolution of the Servants and not after (before the start of the Pauline).
- † During the liturgy, he must keep himself from excessive movement, from entering and exiting the sanctuary needlessly and to keep his conversation only to matters regarding the service with as quiet a voice as possible.
- † That he bows down in the known times for bowing during the liturgy and not sit down during prayer except for the times when sitting is allowed or by exemption from the lead deacon.
- † That he faces the altar while bowing down and praying for Christ (the Body and Blood) present on the altar.
- † That he enters and exits the sanctuary through the side entrances (if available) except while responding to the Litany of the Gospel and the Processions of the Feasts.

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- † After every reading, the reader shall bow down before the right-hand side of the main sanctuary entrance then proceed to the priest to receive his blessing while making sure to follow the proper discipline of entering and exiting the sanctuary (see previous points).
- † That he participates in all the responses and hymns for the congregation and deacons in one spirit and one voice.
- † That all responses be in accordance to the voice level and following the language in which the priest is praying.
- † That he should not raise his voice in prayers, except specifically the prayers of the congregation and the deacons. However, it is not wrong that his heart should rise (and not his voice) and that he participates in every prayer.
- † That he follows the deacon in charge in all the responses and that he not raise his voice above him even if his intention is to correct.
- † That all deacons, **without exception**, receive Holy Communion before the congregation.
- † That he not use the cymbals or the triangle except by permission from the deacon in charge and that he be aware that the cymbals and triangle are meant to keep the beat in a quiet manner and away from the microphone.
- † That he observes his behavior and maintains silence in the church.
- † That he looks towards the sanctuary during prayer except during the times of the readings during which everyone should look towards the *Katameros*.

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Instructions to the Deacon serving in the Sanctuary

- † That he be present in the church from the beginning of the Matins Raising of Incense and assist in organizing the altar and prepare for the service of the liturgy with the priest.
- † He is responsible (with the permission of the lead deacon in the Sanctuary) for arranging the *Eprospbareen* upon the altar - carrying the wine (during the Offertory) - laying the *Eprospbareen* after the Prayer of Thanksgiving (except in the presence of another priest) - rounding the altar during the Pauline - reading the Gospel (with permission of the priest) and removing the *Eprospbareen* after the Prayer of Reconciliation (except in the presence of another priest).
- † That he stands at the north side of the altar (with the permission of the lead deacon in the Sanctuary) and assist the priest with the pages of the liturgy book and distributing the responses amongst the deacons of the sanctuary in a discreet manner.
- † That he should be knowledgeable in the manner of presenting the censer in a ready state, emptying it of ashes and presenting it to the priest in the appropriate manner (with the permission of the lead deacon in the Sanctuary) for the service of the censer from the beginning of the liturgy.
- † Movement in the sanctuary proceeds counter-clockwise around the altar (from the right to the left).
- † That he stands during times of bowing down (with humility in his heart) to observe the Body and Blood, shielding them from anything that may fall into or upon them (if necessary).
- † That he maintains silence and conservation of movement in the main sanctuary and the side sanctuaries.
- † After the end of the liturgy, he and the other deacons of the sanctuary are responsible for reorganizing the altar and returning it to its original state (e.g. wrapping the vessels, disposing of the water and the contents of the censer, the lights, etc.)
- † That he not allow the presence of anyone who should not be there inside the sanctuary.
- † That he focuses only on the sanctuary deacons' responses and that he not raise his voice for responses outside the sanctuary.
- † That he keeps his eyes on the Body and Blood.
- † That he abstains from excessive movement, laughing, talking, or signaling and that all his movements should be performed in silence and meekness. Additionally, all his movements should only pertain to the service of the sanctuary and always with the knowledge of the lead sanctuary deacon.
- † That he assists the lead sanctuary deacon in arranging the altar before and after the liturgy.

Blessed be the obedient son