The Coptic Liturgy

Rites Of The Raising Of Incense
طقس رفع بخور عشية وباكر

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Components of the Divine Liturgy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps Lord Jesus performed in the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-30)</th>
<th>Steps of the Divine Liturgy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The disciples prepared the upper room</td>
<td>The raising of incense and furnishing the altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Jesus washed the disciples feet</td>
<td>Repentance, confession and absolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took Bread</td>
<td>Choose Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave thanks</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed it</td>
<td>The blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broke it</td>
<td>Fraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave it to His Disciples</td>
<td>Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sang hymns (Matthew 26:30)</td>
<td>Hymns for communion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of incense in the church is not a pagan ritual but a Biblical fact which represents the prayers and praises of the saints and angels:

“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne”

(Revelations 8:3)

Raising of Incense

The Raising of Incense may be performed on its own, not just as an introduction to the Liturgy, but as an offer of the sacrifices of prayer and praise to God through its sweet incense.

However, the Raising of Incense by laymen at home (without special prayers by a priest) is prohibited. Now PLEASE read the following verses.
"And the Lord said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord. Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people" (Exodus 30: 34 - 38)
The priest enters the Church and opens the curtain saying, “Have mercy upon us, O Father the Almighty, O Holy Trinity have mercy upon us, O Lord of Hosts be with us for we have no other supporter in our tribulations but You.” He then prays The Lord’s Prayer and prostrates before the altar saying, “We worship You, O Christ, with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit.”
The priest then stands reverently before the altar with the cross in his right hand. The priest begins praying the Thanksgiving Prayer. After praying the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the priest then enters the sanctuary with reverence, as he is entering the Holy of Holies.
The priest stands before the altar and the deacon brings the censer to him from the right side of the altar.

The priest places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer while making the sign of the cross the first three times only.

These five spoonfuls of incense represent the five righteous men of the Old Testament who offered acceptable sacrifices to the Lord, and the Lord smelled their pleasing aroma.

These men are:
1-Abel  2-Noah  3-Abraham  4-Aaron  5-Zacharias
While the priest places the incense in the censer he says:

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

- Blessed be God the Father, the Pantocrator. Amen.
- Blessed be His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Amen.
- Glory and honor, honor and glory to the All-Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Now and at all times and unto the age of all ages. Amen.
Then the priest prays the following litany during the Vespers Prayers:
O Christ our God, the Great, awesome and true, the only-begotten Son and Logos of God the Father, ointment poured forth is Your holy name, and in every place incense is offered to Your holy name, and a pure offering.

Deacon:
Pray for our sacrifice and those who have brought it.

Then the Priest continues:
We ask You, O our Master, receive our prayers to Yourself. Let our prayers be set forth before You as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. For You are the true evening sacrifice, who have offered Yourself upon the honored Cross for our sins, according to the will of Your good Father. With Whom You are blessed with the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, who is of one essence with You. Now, and at all times, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.

Raising of Incense

ثم يصلي الكاهن أوشية العشية التالية سراً:
 أيها المسيح إلهنا العظيم المخوف الحقيقي، الآب الوحيد وكلمة الله الأب، طيب مسكوب هو اسمك القدوس، وفي كل مكان يقدم بخور لاسمك القدوس، صعيدة طاهرة.
 هنا يرد الشماس سراً:
 صلوا من أجل ذبيحتنا والذين قدموها.
 ويكمل الكاهن ويقول:
 نسألك يا سيدنا، أقبل إليك طلباتنا ولتستمك أمامك صلاتنا مثل بخور، رفع أدينا ذبيحة مسانية. لأنك أنت هو ذبيحة المساء الحقيقية، الذي أصعدت ذاتك من أجل خطابتنا على الصليب العكرم، كارادة أبيك الصالح. هذا الذي أنت مبارك معه، ومع الروح القدس المحيي المساوي لك. الآن وكل أوان وإلي دهر الدهور كلها. أمين.
The priest prays the following litany during the Matins Prayers:
O God, who received to Yourself the offerings of the righteous Abel, the sacrifice of Noah and Abraham, and the incense of Aaron and Zachariah.

Deacon:
Pray for our sacrifice and those who have brought it.

Then the Priest continues:
Receive to Yourself this incense at the hands of us sinners, as a sweet savor of incense unto the remission of our sins and those of the fullness of Your people. For blessed and full of glory is Your holy name, O Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Now, and at all times, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.

Raising of Incense

وفي باكر، يصلي الكاهن الأوشية التالية سراً:
يا الله الذي قبل إليه قرابين هابيل الصديق وذبيحة نوح وإبراهيم وبخور هارون وزكريا.

هنا يرد الشماس سراً:
صلوا من أجل ذبيحتنا والذين قدموها.

ويكمل الكاهن ويقول:
أقبل إليك هذا البخور من أيدينا نحن الخطأ رائحة بخور غفراناً لخطائنا مع يقية شعيك. لأنه مبارك ومملوء مجدًا اسمك القدوس، أيها الآب والأبن والروح القدس. الآن وكل أوان وإلي دهر الدهور كلها. أمين.
The priest then goes around the altar three times with the censer, silently praying the Three Litanies, namely,
- The Litany of the Peace of the World and Church.
- The Litany of the Fathers
- The Litany of the Assemblies

Facing him on the opposite side of the altar is the deacon who holds the cross and responds silently to each Litany.

This is known as the Incense Procession.

At that time, the congregation sings the Verses of Cymbals.
أوشية الآباء:
اذكر يا رب بطريركنا الأب المكرم رئيس الكهنة البابا أنبا (…).
في حضور مطران أو أسقف قال:
وشريكم في الخدمة الرسولية أبينا المطران (الأسقف) المكرم الأنيب (…).

هنا يرد الشماس سراً:
صلوا من أجل رئيس كهنتنا البابا أنبا (…), بابا وطريرك ورئيس أساقفة المدينة العظمى الإسكندرية... وشريكه في الخدمة الرسولية أبينا المطران (الأسقف) المكرم الأنيب (…). وسائر أساقفتنا الأرثوذكسين.

ويكمل الكاهن ويقول:
حفظاً احفظهم لنا سنين كثيرة وأزمنة سلامية.

أوشية الاجتماعات:
اذكر يا رب اجتماعاتنا، باركها.
هنا يرد الشماس سراً:
صلوا من أجل هذه الكنيسة المقدسة واجتماعاتها.
ويكمل الكاهن ويقول:
أعط أن تكون لنا يخبر من مع ولا عائق، لنصنعها كمشيتك المقدسة الطوباوية.
بيوت صلاة، بيوت طهارة، بيوت بركة. انعم بها لنا يا رب واعيدهك الآتيين بعدنا إلى الأب. فم أيها الرب الإله، وليتفرق جميع أعدائنا، وليهرب من قدم وجهاك كل مبغضي اسمك القدويس. وأما شعيك فليكن بالبركة، ألطف ألوه وربوات ربوات، يصنعون إرادتك. بالنعم والرآفات ومحبة البشر اللواتي لا بتلك الوحيد ربينا واللهنا ومخلصنا يسوع المسيح.
After leaving the sanctuary, the priest raises incense before the sanctuary three times, saying in each time:

- We worship You, O Christ, with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit, for You have come (risen) and saved us.

وُقِبَتُ أدَّامًا لِبابِ الهيكل وَقَدْ أَعْطَى ثَلَاثَ أَيَدًا بِخَوْرٍ شَرَقًا فِي كُلِّ مَرَةٍ بِخَضْعٍ بَرَاسُهُ. فِي الْيَدَ الْأَوَّلَ يَقُولُ:

نسجَدُ لَكَ أَيَاهَا الْمَسِيقُ مَعَ أَبِيكَ الصَّالِحِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ الْقَدِيِّمَ لَكَ أَتَتَ (قَمَتِ).

وَفِي الْيَدَ الْثَّانِيَ يَقُولُ:

وَأَمَّا أَنَا فِي كَثِيرَةٍ رَحْمَتِكَ أَدْخُلُ بِيِّتِكَ وَأَسْجُدُ نَحْوُ هَيْكَلِكَ الْمَقْدُوسِ.

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; I will worship towards Your holy temple.

وَفِي الْيَدَ الْثَّالِثَةَ يَقُولُ:

فَطَلَامُ الملائِكَةِ أَرْتُلَ لَكَ وَأَسْجُدُ نَحْوُ هَيْكَلِكَ الْمَقْدُوسِ.

Before the angels, I will sing praises to You and worship towards Your holy temple.
He then raises incense once to the North of the sanctuary toward the icon of St. Mary, while saying:

We send you greetings with Gabriel the angel, saying “Hail to you, O full of grace, the Lord is with you.”

Then he turns and raises incense towards the West, while saying:

Hail to the choir of the angels, to my masters and fathers the apostles, and to the choir of martyrs and saints.

Then he raises incense to the South of the sanctuary where the icon of John the Baptist is always placed, while saying:

Hail to John, the son of Zachariah. Hail to the priest, the son of the priest.

The priest then raises incense once more towards the East, while saying: Let us worship our Savior, the Good One, and Lover of Mankind, for He has compassion on us and has come (risen) and saved us.
Raising of Incense

Raising of Incense
The Litany of the Departed

- This Litany is said during the evening Offering of Incense all year round.
- It is prayed at night reminding us that our sleep and end of day represent the short death and end of life.
- It is also said during all Saturdays (morning and evening), reminding us of the presence of the Lord in the tomb on Saturday.
- Praying for the departed is very important and a well established teaching in the Coptic Church (please read articles and listen to audio sermons at: saintbishoy.ca).
The Litanies of the Sick, the Travelers and the Oblations

- When raising the Morning Incense during weekdays, the priest prays the Litanies of the Sick and of the Travelers.
- On Sundays and on holy feast days, the Church anticipates that people would not be traveling, but rather, they are attending the Liturgy or celebrating the feast, bringing their offerings and oblations.
The Litany of the Oblations

- The Litany of the Oblations is said during the Morning Offering of Incense, instead of the Litany of the Travelers on Sundays and the feasts of the Lord.
- It is also said during the Morning Offering of Incense on weekdays if offering is present and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated directly after the morning Offering of Incense.
- If it is not said here (because the offering is not present), it should be said inaudibly before the Prayer for the Acts (Praxis).

If there are holy relics of saints in the church, the priest offers them incense
After offering incense before the icons to the North of the sanctuary, the priest proceeds Westward among the congregation, offering incense and blessing them.

While going into the second section of the church, he says the following Five Contemplatory verses in reverence and praise to the Lord Christ.
When the second incense is said, these five dogmas are praised:
Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever, in one hypostasis, we worship and glorify Him.

He, who offered Himself as an acceptable sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of our race.

His Good Father smelled His aroma in the Evening on Golgotha.

He opened the gate of Paradise and restored Adam once more to his dominion.

Through His Cross, and Holy Resurrection, He restored man once again to Paradise.
The Procession of Incense

The priest returns to the sanctuary during the evening incense, the morning incense, and the Pauline incense, reciting the following Prayer of Confession of the People inaudibly. During the Acts, however, he says it outside of the sanctuary door.

ويعود إلي الهيكل ويبحر فوق المذبح ويقول في بخور عشية وباكر والبولس سر اعتراف الشعب سراً (وسمي سر الرجعة). وأما في الأبركسيس فإنه يقوله خارج باب الهيكل.
Prayer of Confession

- O God, who accepted the confession of the thief upon the honorable Cross, accept the confessions of Your people and forgive them all their sins for the sake of Your holy name which is called upon us. According to Your mercy, O Lord, and not according to our sins.

The Procession of Incense

- The priest then goes once around the altar, raising incense, before getting out via the sanctuary’s main door.

- Standing before the sanctuary door the priest again raises incense in the four directions (as he has done before).

- During the Incense Procession, the deacons are chanting the appropriate Doxologies for the occasion and the Saints.

- The litany of the Gospel is prayed and the Vespers/Matins Prayer is concluded.
In conclusion...

If you come to church in reverence and awe and pray from all your heart, mind and soul, you will not only feel as if standing in the heavens praising God with His angels, but also you will teach unexpected “observers”.

...............see next slide.............
Lord, You are the only One who hears our groanings.

Amen.

Lord, Relief those who are troubled and afflicted. Amen.
It is painful to get hurt from those whom you care about and worry about their pain.

No one comforts you; as God does.
"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"  
(Matthew 16: 18)
"For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually."

(2 Chronicles 7: 16)