

THE COPTIC CHURCH IS:

+ **An Ancient Christian Church.** It is one of the most ancient Churches in the world, having been founded by Saint Mark the Apostle, the writer of the second gospel, in the first Century. The word 'Coptic' comes from the ancient Egyptian word 'hekaptah' meaning 'Egypt', and thus '**Coptic**' merely means 'Egyptian.' As a conservative Church, the Coptic Church has carefully preserved the Orthodox Christian Faith in its earliest and purest form, handing it down from generation to generation, unaltered and true to the Apostolic doctrines and patterns of worship.

+ **Trinitarian**-believing in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (being one God); and believing that our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, became incarnate, was born of the Virgin Saint Mary, died for us on the Cross that He may grant us Salvation, rose on the third day that He may grant us everlasting life with Him, and ascended to heaven after forty days, sending the Holy Spirit to His disciples as He promised them, on the day of Pentecost.

+ **Apostolic**-as it was founded by the apostle Saint Mark.

+ **Scriptural (Biblical)**-having as its main point of reference the Holy Bible, as depicted in current traditional translations such as, King James, New King James, and the Revised Standard Version.

+ **Traditional**-using the teachings of the early Church Fathers as well as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as its statement of Faith.

+ **Sacramental**-having seven sacraments, namely: Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), Confession, the Eucharist (Communion), Marriage, Priesthood, and Unction of the Sick.

+ **Conservative**-in that it does not change basic matters of Faith, Dogma or Tradition to suit current trends (this does not mean however that matters such as language and day-to day practices are not changed to suit conditions of ministry and the needs of the congregation). Holding on to such matters of Faith and practice has not been an easy task, as the Coptic Church has always lived persecution of one form or another since its establishment in the first century.

IT'S ESTABLISHMENT

Saint Mark the Apostle and Evangelist, one of the seventy apostles and writer of the oldest gospel, established the Church of Alexandria in about **55 AD**. In Alexandria, St. Mark structured the church worship; ordained one bishop and seven deacons; established the famous School of Alexandria; and was martyred there by the Romans in 68 AD.

It was at the house of Saint Mark that the Lord met with His Apostles and celebrated the Passover, where the Lord appeared to them after His Resurrection, and where the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, it is well known by all the Apostolic Churches as the first church in the world. Hence, the Coptic Church is one of the oldest churches in the world, spanning 20 centuries of history. By the end of the second century, Christianity was well established and very active in Egypt.

The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the five most ancient churches in the world and is called the "See of Saint Mark." The other four ancient sees are the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Antioch (Antiochian Orthodox Church), the Church of Rome (Roman Catholic Church) and the Church of Athens (Greek Orthodox Church).

HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

+ The School of Alexandria

Undoubtedly, the School of Alexandria was the earliest and most important institution of theological learning in Christian antiquity. It grew tremendously in the first four centuries of the world. After the Roman Empire officially accepted Christianity in 313 AD, Alexandria became a renowned center of learning, especially in theology. The School was essential in the education of both recent converts and future patriarchs of Christianity throughout the world. Many of the great deans of the school include **St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-254 A.D.)**, a gifted author, **Origen (185 A.D.-264 A.D.)** the brilliant scholar; and **St. Didymus the Blind**, who formed a system of engraved writing for the blind fifteen centuries before Braille.

+ The Ecumenical Councils

As a result of this great tradition of theology, there arose a number of theologians who were well respected and recognized in the Christian world. Many of these scholars played a critical role in the development of Christian theology in the three recognized Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD), and Ephesus (431 AD).

While still a young deacon at Nicea, **St. Athanasius**, the 20th Patriarch of Alexandria, defended the Divinity of Christ and was one of the writers of the Christian Creed, which is followed by most Christians today. Another Egyptian sage was **St. Cyril of Alexandria**, who stressed the unity of the Divinity and

Humanity of Christ in the third Council of Ephesus (431 AD). Although the Coptic Church has been unjustly labeled as being '**Monophysite**' (believing in only one nature of Christ), St. Cyril explained centuries ago that the Coptic Church believes in "**one incarnated nature of God the Word**"—that is, one union of two natures—one fully human nature and one fully divine nature.

+ **The Monastic Movement**

The Coptic Church is also famous for its asceticism and its monasticism, a long-standing tradition founded by St. Anthony the Great, the "Father of Monasticism" (251-356 AD), St. Pachomius, St. Macarius and St. Shenouda the Archimandrite. This monastic order, based on principles of poverty, obedience and chastity, became the foundation from which many of the western orders are based upon.

+ **Martyrdom**

As Christianity grew, the attempts to quash it became fierce. The Coptic Church is recognized as having suffered one of the most violent waves of persecution in Christian history, and thus our Coptic Calendar commences at the beginning of the reign of Roman Emperor Diocletian, at whose hands thousands of Christians died.

THE COPTS TODAY

The Coptic Orthodox Church is the largest Church in the Middle East, with about 12 million faithful in Egypt. Under the leadership of **His Holiness Pope Shenouda III**, the 117th Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, there is an increasing number of monasteries and convents in the deserts of Egypt, as well as new monasteries being established abroad in America, Europe, and Australia.

The Coptic Church is a dynamic church, always looking at the needs of her children, and trying to satisfy them to her best ability. Over the past thirty years, the Church has spread all over the world. Since his enthronement in 1971, H.H. Pope Shenouda III has established over 150 churches abroad in Africa, Europe, America, South America, Canada, and Australia.

In 1995, H.H. Pope Shenouda III called **His Grace Bishop Serapion** as the bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California and Hawaii.

However, the Church of Alexandria is by no means introspective or exclusive. At an official level, under the guidance of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the Church takes an active role in trying to restore the unity of the Christian faith. The Church is actively involved in official and unofficial dialogues with the major Christian Churches denominations. Additionally, the Church is currently a member of the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the All African Council of Churches, and other such international, regional and local bodies.

At a personal level, the Church promotes the peace, love and unity taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. She teaches her children to be holy, constructive, and peaceful members of society; and to have good relations with all of its members, regardless of race, color or creed, thus enabling us to be worthy ambassadors of Jesus Christ

For more information, please contact us at:

Diocese of Los Angeles

3803 W. MISSION BLVD. POMONA, CA 91766 (909) 865-8378
WWW.LACOPTS.ORG

+ **Los Angeles County**

Holy Virgin Mary Church, 4900 Cleland Ave Los Angeles, CA 90042, (323) 258-5555, www.theotokos.org

St. Mary and St. Athanasius Church, 17431 Roscoe Blvd. Northridge, CA 91325, (818) 342-4414

Archangel Raphael & St. Mina Church, 1750 W. Ave N, Palmdale, CA 93551, (661) 224-1605

St. Mark Church, 1600 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90035, (310) 275-3050

St. Peter and St. Paul Church, 1245 4th St. Santa Monica, CA 90401, (310) 917-1981

St. John Church 21329 Cienega Ave. Covina, CA 91742, (909)599-9075

St. George Church, 15725 Cornuta St. Bellflower, CA 90706 (562) 804-1929

St. Maurice Church, 3803 W. Mission Blvd. Pomona, CA 91766 (909) 865-8378

St. Mercurious and St. Abraam Church, 3645 Torrance Blvd. Torrance, CA 90503, (310) 316-6997

St. Mary of Egypt Church, 24353 Walnut St. Santa Clarita, CA 91321, (661) 253-0249

+ **Orange County**

Coptic Orthodox Christian Center, Saint Verena and The Three Holy Youth Church, 491 N. Hewes St. Orange, CA 92869, (714) 771-4777, www.thecocc.org

Archangel Michael Church, 4405 W. Edinger St. Santa Ana, CA 92704, (714) 775-1234

St. Mary and St. Verena Church, 1617 W. La Palma Ave. Anaheim, CA 92801, (714) 991-0110

St. Marina Church, 23672 Birtcher Dr. Lake Forest, CA 92630 (949) 951-5165

+ **San Diego County**

St. Demiana Church, 360 N. Granados Ave., Solana Beach, CA 92075, (858) 259-2585

+ **Riverside County**

St. Mina Church, 22700 Saint Mina Ct., Colton, CA 92343, (909) 442-1085
St. Antony and St. Abanoub Church, 2345 5th Street Norco, CA 91760, (909) 734-3890
St. Mary Magdalene Church, 34021 Date Palm Dr. #C, Cathedral City, CA 92234, (760) 883-5885

+ San Bernadino County

Holy Virgin Mary Church, 14647 Bonanza St., Victorville, CA 92392, (760) 241-6279
St. Justina Church, 12704 Foothill Blvd. Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739

+ Kern, Tulare, and Ventura Counties

St. Demiana Church, 3820 Wible Rd. #B, Bakersfield, CA 93309, (661) 832-9495
Archangel Michael Church, 110 Fremont St. Moorpark, CA 93020 (805) 523-8207
St. George Church, 400 N. Church St. Visalia, CA 93291 (559) 741-9115

+ Honolulu, Hawaii

St. Mark Church, Honolulu, HI, (808) 946-4173