

FIVE PILLARS OF MYSTERY

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has Five Pillars of Mystery through which it teaches and demonstrates its basic religious belief. They are called Pillars of Mystery due to the fact that they support and strengthen the faithful in religious teachings as a pillar supports a roof. These mysteries have Biblical foundation (1Cor. 14:19). Accordingly, the five pillars of mystery are expressed in the Creed, which is the confession of our faith.

A. Mystery of the Trinity

In this section, the mystery of Unity and Trinity of the Triune God is described.

The Holy Trinity is three in name, in person (Akal), in deed and one in essence, in divinity, in existence, in will.

(a) Three in name:- Father, Son, Holy Spirit

Three in deed:- the Father is the begetter
 the Son is begotten
 the Holy Spirit is the one who proceeds.

Three in person:- the Father has a perfect person
 the Son has a perfect person
 the Holy Spirit has a perfect person

The Father is the heart, the Son is the word, the Holy Spirit is the life (breath.)

The Father is the heart for Himself, and He is the heart for the Son and for the Holy Spirit. The Son is the word for Himself, and He is the word for the Father, and for the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the life (breath) for Himself, and He is the life (breath) for the Father and the Son.

Even though we say the Trinity are three in name, in deed and in person; the three are one in essence, in divinity, in existence and in will; we do not mean three Gods but one God. While the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit exist in their own perfect person, they are one in existence. (Abulidis, Faith of the Father's Chap. 40 Verse 4:6).

As Ignatius has said in the Book of the Faith of the Fathers (Haimanote Abew) the name of the Father is not changed to be the name of the Son or the Holy Spirit. The name of the Son is not changed to be the name of the Father or the Holy Spirit, the name of the Holy Spirit is not changed to be the name of the Father or the Son. The Father is called Father but not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is called Son but not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Holy Spirit but not the Father and the Son. The Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the

Holy Spirit. The three exist eternally in their own name and person. (Faith of the Fathers Ch. 11 part 1 Verse 7.8).

In their name of unity, the three are called Lord, God. Lord the Father, Lord the Son, Lord the Holy Spirit One Lord. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit One God. The three hundred eighteen fathers in The Book of Faith (Haimanote Abew) said “we believe in Lord the Father, in Lord the Son, in Lord the Holy Spirit. (Hai. Ab. Ch. 19 Part 1 Verse 30).

The Apostolic St. Athanasius Archbishop of Alexandria said “The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. They are called one God but not three Gods.” (Apostolic Athanasius Faith of the Fathers Ch. 24 Part 4 Verse 4).

It is stated in many places in the Old and the New Testament Books about the Oneness and Trinity of the Holy Trinity.

In the Old Testament

Gen. 1:26; 2:18; 3:22; 11:7; 18:1-8; Ps. 33:6; 146:5; Isa. 6:3,8

In the New Testament

Mt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Jn. 14:26; 2Cor. 14:13; 1Pet. 1:2; 1Jn. 5:7-8

B. Mystery of Incarnation

Mystery of Incarnation means the mystery of the descending of God the Son who is one of the Trinity from heaven and taking up flesh and rational soul from the Holy Virgin Mary. This is the mystery of God becoming man and man becoming God. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (Jn. 1:14).

The Reason for the Incarnation of the Son of God

God created Adam and Eve without sin and death. “God did not make death”. But, man, through his transgression brought on himself misery and suffering as well as sin and evil, and was condemned to death-death of body and soul, grave and hell (Gen. 3:19-24). “For God did not make death, He takes no pleasure in destroying the living. Do not court death by the errors of your ways, nor invite destruction through the work of your hands. To exist for this he created all things the creatures of the world have health in them, in them is no fatal poison, and Hades has no power over the world. But the godless call for death with deed and word, counting him friend, they were themselves out for him; with him they make a pact, working as they are to belong to him” (Wis. 1:12-16; Rom. 6:23). “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thes. 5:9). Adam and Eve disgraced and impoverished themselves. They were expelled from the Garden of Eden. They brought suffering and misery and were subject to the dominion of the devil. Death reigned from Adam to Christ, even to them that had not sinned. (Rom. 5:12-14). They knew that, all that happened due to their transgression and violation of the commandment of God. They

regretted and repented. They cried to their Creator seeking mercy. God in his forgiveness along with his judgment, hearing their cry, observing their tears and accepting their repentance, was pleased to redeem them, and gave them promise. (Isa. 63:8; Heb. 2:14-16).

When the appointed time had come forth, God sent His only Begotten Son, according to the promise. God the Son, descended from heaven and was born from the Holy Virgin Mary. He was born so that all who believe in Him would be saved. When it is said, that He became man, it is said to mean that He united to himself the body and soul of man. Then all the words of the prophets were fulfilled. (Isa. 7:14, 9:6; Mich. 5:2; Gal. 4:4).

Without separation of His Divinity from His humanity and His humanity from His Divinity, He became one person, one nature without change, without confusion, without separation and without division. "He is one Son and one Christ before and after His Incarnation" (Cyril. Faith of the Fathers Ch. 78 Part 48 Verse 9-18). St. Gregory of Nazianzum said "He is the only God the Son who became man and the only man who became God in unity" (Faith of the Fathers Ch. 61 part 4 Verse 23). John Chrysostom has written that the human body was honoured by the union of the Divine Word. The poverty in the nature of the flesh was abolished by the Unity of the Word of God with the flesh, and the flesh retained the glory of the word of God to itself by the unity. (Jn. Chrysostom, Faith of the Fathers Ch. 66 part 9 Verse 18-19).

After birth He grew like men, doing all human works except sin. He taught 33 years and 3 months in the world. For us men he died on the Cross, destroyed death by his death and saved the world. He was laid in the tomb for three days and three nights; rose from the dead on the third day; appeared to His disciples, stayed on earth for forty days, gathering His disciples and teaching them the Book of the Covenant. On the fortieth day, while the disciples beheld, He ascended unto heaven to the Father in glory praised by angels, sat at the right hand of His Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead, when every one will be recompensed according to his work. (Jn. 3:13; 1Pet. 3:22; Mt. 25:31; Eph. 4:8-10; Acts 2:30; 2Cor. 5:14).

Therefore, the teaching highlighted in the mystery of Incarnation is to believe that Christ is the Word of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, thus the Virgin Mary is the true Mother of God; the Mother of the Word. (Cyril Hai. Ab.).

C. Mystery of Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament given to all who believe in the Mystery of the Trinity and the Mystery of the Trinity and the mystery of Incarnation for the remission of sin, to obtain adoption from the Triune God, to inherit the kingdom of God. It is called mystery, because, when the priest recites the prayer of baptism over the water and blesses it, it will be changed and become the water that flowed from the right side of our Lord Jesus Christ and one can receive the invisible grace of the adopted sonhood of God (Jn. 19:34-35). Whosoever believes and is baptized shall get remission of sin. "We believe in

one baptism for the remission of sin” (Creed). Every person is born from God through baptism, and will be free from damnation. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:28). To be born of the Trinity is for inheriting the kingdom of God. Our Lord has taught us that we cannot enter the kingdom of God except through baptism. “Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (Jn. 3:5; Tit. 3:4-7).

There were prophecies and symbols foretold by the laws and the prophets about Baptism.

a. Prophecy:- Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.” (Ezek. 36:25; Mich 7:19)

b. Symbols

1) Circumcision:- Circumcision in the Old Testament was practiced as a sign of baptism. It was given to Abraham as a token of the Covenant.

Every one that was not circumcised on the eighth day after birth was to be cut off from his people, shared not from the promise and/or shall have no portion from the promised land. The uncircumcised were not considered as the nation of God. (Gen. 17:7-14).

In the New Testament, circumcision was replaced by Baptism. Every one that is not baptized was not born of God, and cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom. (Col. 2:11).

John the Baptist, at the end of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New Testament was baptizing with water. (Mk. 1:4-8).

The Ark of Noah and the crossing of Israelites across the Red Sea were symbols of baptism. (1Pet. 3:19; 1Cor. 10:2)

To fulfill the prophesy and to make the archetype real, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was baptized in the water of the River Jordan by the hand of John the Baptist. (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:9; Lk 3:21; Jn. 1:31). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church baptizes children, males on the fortieth day and females on the eightieth day. This signifies that the first persons obtained adoption from God. (Jubilee 4:2-15).

D. Mystery of the Holy Communion

Mystery of the Holy Communion is a supreme act of life through which we can hold intimate communion with God and that which makes us one with God. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son and Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” “Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, for it is a real food. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” (Jn. 6:53-57).

There are prophecies and symbols given about the Holy Communion.

a. Prophecy

- “Thou has put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine has increased”. (Ps. 4, 7).
- “Wisdom has builded her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars. She has killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table; she hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth up on the highest place of the city.” (Prov. 9:1-3).
- “The prime needs of human beings for living are water, wheat...and juice of grape”. (Sirach 39:26).

These prophecies were foretold about Jesus Christ, the Lamb of Passover, who was crucified on the cross as to give His flesh and blood in the form of bread and wine.

Symbol

When the children of Israel were liberated from the bondage and went out of Egypt, they were told to kill a lamb, eat the flesh, take the blood and sprinkle it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, in order to get security from the plague of the firstborn. This was applied as a symbol of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was crucified and gave his flesh and blood as a ransom to the children of men. “This is the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (Jn. 1:29). Melchizedek, who is the archetype of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered a sacrifice in the form of bread and wine. (Gen. 14:18).

To fulfill these prophecies and realize the symbols, examples, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Thursday evening at the Passover, took the bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, this bread which I give you is my flesh. In the same manner He took the cup, blessed it and gave it to his disciples, saying “this is my blood which will be shed for you and for many people, for the new covenant, for the remission of sin. (Mt. 26, 28; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19). This mystery is always performed in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

When the priest puts bread on a paten and the wine in a chalice and blesses them with the liturgical prayer, the bread and the wine are changed into the real flesh and blood of the Son of God. This was made clear by the scholar St. Athanasius-when he said “we believe, that the bread and the wine are bread and wine before they are blessed by the priest, but after they are blessed by the priest the bread and the wine are changed to the real flesh and blood of the Son of God.” (Ath. Faith of the Father Ch.28 Part 14 Verse 22).

Therefore, the Holy Communion which the disciples received on Thursday evening, that which was crucified on the cross on Friday, and that which is being practiced at

every corner to the end of the world is one and the same. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church believes and teaches, that the flesh and blood is not simply a memorial or symbolic but real flesh and blood of the Son of God. The pure sacrifice that the clergy offers is the same sacrifice that was given up on the cross on Calvary. (Jn. Chr. Liturgy 85).

E. Mystery of the Resurrection of the Dead

Resurrection is the Mystery of life after death. All those who have departed from the time of Adam, and will pass away until the second coming of Christ, will be risen in the union of body and soul. The souls of the righteous shall abide in paradise and the souls of sinners in hades until the end of this world. But on the last day, when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ shall come in His glory, to judge the living and the dead, the souls shall be united with their bodies on the day of resurrection and they shall rise from the dust of the earth. (Lk. 16:19-31).

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming; in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (Jn. 5:28).

Many passages could be cited from the Old and New Testament books about the doctrine of death and the after life. The word of God in Deuteronomy 32:39 “I kill, and I make alive” shows the hope of resurrection. Isaiah the prophet says “The dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isa. 26:19-20).

Daniel the prophet has written “... and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever”. (Dan. 12:1-3). Job said “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day, upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” (Job. 19:25-27)

The teaching of the resurrection of the dead is not only told orally. It has been proved in practice when many among the departed came forth out of the grave and appeared in public. The prophets Elijah and his disciple Elisha raised the dead. (1Kgs. 17:21; 2Kgs. 13:21). Jesus Christ the Lord, and his disciples raised the dead in their ministry during the proclamation of the gospel. (Mt. 9:25; Lk. 7:15; Jn. 11:14). Likewise, the Apostles also raised the dead during their Apostolic ministry.

On the day of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ the graves were opened and bodies of many saints came out. (Mt. 27:52). All these prove the truth of the resurrection. All those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall come to life at the last

judgment. Our belief in our resurrection is based on the resurrection of Christ. "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." (2 Cor. 4:14). The Church scholars Amoneos and Eusabios said "Christ is risen, in order to make it known to us that our body shall arise" (preface of the Gospel).

Resurrection is for all human beings. Both the righteous and un-righteous arise. The final resurrection awaits the last day at the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ shall come in His glory at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. (Ps. 50:2; Mt. 25:31-32; Rev. 1:7).

At that time, He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet. The dead shall arise. The earth will restore that which was entrusted to it. Then He shall set the righteous on his right hand, but the sinners on the left hand. All arise carrying their works which followed them from the earth; the righteous will be sanctified with the word of blessing, but the sinners will be rebuked with the word of accusation. The righteous shall shine as seven times as the sun, and inherit the kingdom following Christ, while the sinners shall go away into everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels. (Mt. 13:42-49; 25:31-43; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev. 20:12). Thus the religious teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is based on the five pillars of mystery mentioned above.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church serves the faithful through the seven sacraments. These sacraments are called mysteries because the invisible grace of the Holy Spirit is granted through them. The seven sacraments are:-

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| 1. Baptism | 5. Matrimony |
| 2. Confirmation | 6. Penance |
| 3. Holy Communion | 7. Unction of the Sick |
| 4. Ordination | |

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, taking the example of pillars as has been said in the Proverbs of Solomon as a starting point, teaches that there are seven sacraments (Proverbs 9:1). Of the seven, the six sacraments can be performed by a bishop and a priest. Ordination is conferred by a bishop only.

1. Baptism

Of the seven sacraments, Baptism is the first. Baptism is the sacrament through which we are reborn and enter the Kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:5). Baptism has a Biblical basis (Mt. 28: 19-20).

Through Baptism sin is forgiven (Acts 2:8). Cleansing and blessing is attained through Baptism. (1Pet. 3:21; Tit. 3:5-6).

In our church, we baptize children. In the Old Testament, children were considered as people of the covenant after they were circumcised. In the New Testament, children are baptized in their infancy and become members of the family of Christ. God has never isolated children from His grace. For example Jeremiah was blessed while he was in the womb of his mother. (Jer. 1:5). John the Baptist was likewise filled with the Holy Spirit while in the womb of his mother (Lk. 1:15). Our Lord and Savior during the period of His teaching has blessed children. This shows that the age of children does not prevent them from being brought to God (Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-15; Lk. 18: 15-17; Acts 16:33; 1Cor. 1:16). In the practice of our Church a boy is baptized on the fortieth day after birth and a girl on the eightieth day after birth.

In the Old Testament males entered the house of God forty days after birth. Females also entered the house of God eighty days after birth (Lev. 12:15, Lk. 2:21-24). Since children cannot confess their faith a godfather and a godmother are assigned to them respectively. Baptism is done by dipping and sprinkling. (Mt. 28:19-20). Those martyrs who shed their blood in martyrdom are considered as having been baptized by their blood (Mt. 10:32, 16:25).

Order of Baptism

It is performed in a baptismal lake (river) which is deep enough for immersion. If sufficient water is not available in a church courtyard, a pond or a wide basin is constructed which can immerse the whole body. Where water is not found which can immerse the whole body the available water is taken in three handfuls, or in a cup and is sprinkled over the whole body (Didas. 34, Fetha Negest Article 3).

The priest after completing the prayer makes the baptized person bow in the four directions by saying, I make you bow down to the Father, I make you bow down to the Son, I make you bow down to the Holy Spirit.

I baptize you in the name of the Father, I baptize you in the name of the Son, I baptize you in the name of the Holy Spirit, so saying he baptizes him/her. (Mt. 28:19-20).

- Before baptism, the hair is shaved and clothes are taken off.
- Immediately after Baptism, he/she is blessed and receives the Holy Communion, which is the culmination of the sacraments.
- If the one to be baptized is an adult, he is made to receive basic religious education (Catechism) and is baptized after having accepted and believed in the teaching.
- Males can only be godfathers to males and females can only be godmothers to females (Fetha Negest 3: Dida. 34; Nic. 24).

- If any unbaptized person is seriously ill and his life is endangered, he is baptized. (Fetha Negest Article 3).
- If the ones to be baptized are grown ups and can pray, they recite the creed.
- If the ones to be baptized are children, their godfathers and godmothers promise to teach and cultivate them spiritually.
- Children born of Christian families are baptized after forty days if male and eighty days if female. However, there is no restriction of age if the person believes in salvation in Christ.
- Baptism is in the name of the Trinity (Mt. 28:19).
- Baptism is not repeated for one person (Rom 6:3,4; Eph. 4:4-7).
- Baptism is by water only (Fetha Negest 3: Jn. 3:5).
- After his/her baptism, a cord is put around his/her neck. This is the sign or identification of a Christian.
- Baptism symbolizes the death and burial of Christ. The resemblance of death and burial is the partaking of death and resurrection of Christ (Didas. 34; Rom. 6:5,6). Furthermore, Baptism is performed according to the book of Baptism and Fetha Negest.

2. Confirmation (Myron)

It is the holy ointment which one is anointed after Baptism. Confirmation like Baptism is performed once and cannot be repeated. Through the sacrament of confirmation, the believer is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Apostolic times the baptized person was granted the Holy Spirit by the laying of the hands. (Acts 20:14-17). When the church expanded, however, the bishops who continued the works of the Apostles permitted the replacement of the laying of hands by the anointing of the Holy Oil.

The gift of the Holy Spirit with Myron, confirmation, has Biblical foundation. The believer is anointed with the Holy Oil immediately after Baptism. When the Apostles baptized children and grown ups, the baptized person was granted the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6).

Children should be anointed with Myron as soon as they are baptized so that they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Bible confirms that let alone after birth, there were children who were granted the Holy Spirit while they were still in the wombs of their mothers. (Lk. 1:15; Jer. 1:1-8).

The right to anoint was originally confined to the Apostles but later passed on to bishops, and then priests were also authorized to administer the sacrament.

3. Holy Communion

Holy Communion is the culmination of all sacraments of the Church. Holy Communion means offering of sacrifice. This is not an offering of man to God but the offering of God for man. The sheep and goats were offered as sacrifices in the altars during the Old Testament times. However, these were preceding examples of the offering of the flesh and blood of Christ during the New Testament. The offering of

bread and cup of grace which Melchizedek offered to Abraham (Gen. 14:18) and the sacrifices which the Israelites offered during the day of their liberation exemplify Christ our pascal lamb. Holy Communion has Biblical foundation (Mt. 26:26; 1Cor. 11:23-25). When the priest puts the bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice and conducts liturgical prayer, the bread is changed into the body of the Son of God and the wine into the blood of the Son of God. What is thus given in our Church is the body and blood of the Son of God.

When the priest administers the body, the deacon administers the blood with a cross-spoon. Those who, due to sickness, are not able to come to the Church receive the Holy Communion in their homes during liturgical service. The Holy Communion has to be administered on the same day; it cannot be spared for another time. Holy Communion should be taken after abstinence from food for at least fifteen hours. According to the doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church the Holy Communion is real body and blood of Christ. (Jn. 6:51, 52, 53, 55).

Like the other sacraments, the Holy Communion was originally performed by the bishops who succeeded the Apostles, but as the church expanded they authorized the priests to perform the sacrament. The deacons assist the bishops and the priests. The believers who have examined and cleansed themselves through penance can receive the Holy Communion. But those who have not cleansed themselves through penance even if they receive the Holy Communion unworthily it will bring damnation upon them. (1Cor. 11:28-29; Liturgy of John Chrysostom).

4. Ordination

This is the sacrament through which the clergy are entitled to perform the various services of the Church. This sacrament has Biblical basis. (Mt. 28:19, 20; Eph. 4:11; Acts 26:20).

There are three hierarchical ranks of Ordination. These are deacon, priest and bishop.

1. Deacon

- a) Deacons are ordained into this Order before marriage.
- b) After marriage, the deacons become priests but if they wish to be monks and be ordained priests they have to remain celibate.
- c) The duty of the deacons is to assist priests and bishops.
- d) They are ordained by bishops

- e) In our Church, there are three ranks under the diaconhood which qualify one to serve the church. These ranks are conferred through blessing and not by the laying of hands.
- f) No payment is made for receiving any of the Ordinations. (Acts 8:18-26).
- g) Ordination is not attained through inheritance but through a calling of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the canons of the Church.

2. Priest

The order of priesthood is conferred either after marriage or after becoming a monk. He can perform all the sacraments except, conferring Ordination, consecration of the Holy Oil used for sacrament of confirmation, consecration of the altar, the Ark of the Covenant, new church and new vessels. If he becomes a priest in celibacy, he can attain the rank of bishop, but if he is married, he will be limited to the rank of priesthood. A priest is ordained by the laying of hands and the breath of a bishop.

3. Bishop

This rank is conferred on a clergy who has restricted himself in celibacy. He is consecrated by all the members of the Holy Synod but in times of difficulties, he is consecrated by the laying of hands and breath of at least two bishops. Besides administering all the sacraments of the Church, he is a church leader and an overseer of the general affairs of the Church.

Those who are ordained as bishops must fulfill the following requirements. They should be:-

- Of good health
- Well educated to defend and profess their faith
- Of exemplary behavior
- Only males

Ordination is not repeated or renewed. Both those who reordain or are reordained are deconsecrated from their ordination. (Canon of the Apostles 68). Christ chose a certain number of persons for the Holy Ordination. (Lk. 6:12, 13: Jn. 20: 19-25). He also gave them special authority not given to others. (Mt. 18:18).

Before His ascension, Christ promised them that He will always be with them to the end of the world. (Mt. 28:20). He also appointed them with all ranks. (Lk. 24:51).

When Judas left his Apostolic ministry, the Apostles held a Synodical Meeting and chose Mathias as a replacement. (Acts 1:15-26).

5. Holy Matrimony

Christian marriage is one of the seven sacraments which is performed in a church by means of which the grace of the Holy Spirit is obtained. Holy Matrimony is based on the Bible. (Gen. 1:27, 28, 2:18; Mt. 19:4-6).

The Canon of the Church requires that before matrimony is effected the following conditions should be met.

1. Both couples should be Christians to obtain the grace of God.
2. Both should belong to the Orthodox Tewahedo Church. If any one of them is not a member, he/she should first be a member of the Church.
3. No pre-marital sexual relationship is permitted.
4. Both should consent to be united in marriage.
5. No marriage is allowed within seven generation so as not to break the rule of kinship that forbids marriage between close family relations. (Lev. 18:6-21; Deut. 7:3-4).
6. As the marriage of Christians epitomizes the unity between Christ and the Church, it shall not be broken. (Eph. 5:32).
7. In our Church one to one marriage only is allowed.
8. Re-marriage can not be conducted by any one of the two partners unless divorce is effected because of adultery or one of the partner dies. (Mt. 19:6-9).
9. The Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated by bishops and priests.
10. Matrimony is not performed without Holy Communion. (Fetha Negest Article 24:899).
11. Parents should be consulted and their consent should be secured.

6. Mystery of Penance

Penance means to feel remorse, repent and cleanse oneself from sin. Although Christians are reborn through Baptism, men are liable to commit sins. Therefore:

- Every Christian should have a father confessor (soul-father)
- Every one should go to the father-confessor and confess his/her sins. (Lev. 14:31, Mt. 8:4; Epiphanius Faith of Fathers Hai. Ab. 59:20). Those who confess their sins and return to God receive the grace of God and by receiving the Holy Communion they will enter to their former place of honour.

Confessions and remissions are performed only by bishops or priests. Penance is based on the Bible. (Mt. 16:19; 8:4). The confession of the penitent made in front of the father-confessor and the tears shed for the sins committed will enable them to be rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit. (Liturgy of Athanasisu). Penance is one of the Sacraments that are repeated. The main objectives of the teachings starting from the Prophets, of John the Baptist; Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and his disciples the Apostles is to enable people to inherit the kingdom of God through repentance, "repent ye: for the Kingdom of God is at hand." On the basis of this truth, the Church teaches the need and virtue of Penance. (Mt. 3:1-2, 4:17; Zach. 1:3).

7. Unction of the Sick

It is one of the Seven Sacraments of the Church. It is an annointment administered to the sick. It has Biblical origin and is administered by bishops and priests. (Mk. 6:13; Jas. 5:13-15).

In our Church, since Unction is proffered to cleanse sins of the flesh as well as of the soul, Unction is administered to one who afflicted by sin. Unction is performed by bishops and priests.

Each of the Seven Sacraments has its own book of prayer and system of application. The Seven Sacraments as a whole are considered as manifestations of the faith and tenets of the religion of the Church.

These Sacraments are all performed in the church. However, it is not also forbidden if they are performed elsewhere as and when conditions are met. The main aim of all the Sacraments is to redeem mankind.

HOLY SCRIPTURES

All Scriptures are written with the inspiration of the Spirit of God or are the breath of God. They are also described as Holy Books containing the word of God (Fiteha Negest Art. 2). Illustration that Holy Books are the breath of God or are written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God; the Apostle St. Paul states in 2 Tim. 3:17 "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Saint Cyril of Alexandria also wrote that "Holy Books are the breath of God" (Faith of Fathers 78:67).

Hence, all that is written in the Scriptures is the absolute truth. Nothing can be added or deducted from it. It can neither be modified nor changed. It was written by Holy Men guided by the Spirit of God. (2Pet. 1:2, Mt. 5:18, Lk, 16:17).

It is written that there were times when the Lord either revealed himself, made his voice heard or acted through the one that he willed and commanded "write down these words" (Ex. 34:27; Deut. 31:19; Isa. 8:1).

81 are the Old Testament and New Testament books which have been accepted as canonical books of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, as listed hereunder.

A. Old Testament Books

1 Genesis	1	5 Deuteronomy	1
2 Exodus	1	6 Joshua	1

3	Leviticus	1		7	Judges	1	
4	Numbers	1		8	Ruth		1
9	1 and 2 Samuel		1		28	Song of Solomon	1
10	1 and 2 Kings		1		29	Sirach	1
11	1 Chronicles	1		30	Isaias	1	
12	2 Chronicles	1		31	Jeremiah	1	
13	Jubilee		1		32	Ezekiel	1
14	Enoch		1		33	Daniel	1
15	Ezra and Nehemiah		1		34	Hosea	1
16	2 nd Ezra and Ezra	1		35	Amos	1	
	Sutuel						
17	Tobit	1		36	Micah	1	
18	Judith	1		37	Joel		1
19	Esther		1		38	Obadiah	1
20	1 Maccabees		1		39	Jonah	1
21	2 and 3 Maccabees	1		40	Nahum	1	
22	Job	1		41	Habakkuk		1
23	Psalms		1		42	Zephaniah	
	1						
24	Proverbs	1		43	Haggai	1	
25	Tegsats (Reproof)	1		44	Zechariah		1
26	Wisdom	1		45	Malachi	1	
27	Ecclesiastes	1		46	Joseph Ben Gurion	1	
					Total.....	46	

B. Books of the New Testament

1	Matthew	1		9	Galathians		1
2	Mark	1		10	Ephesians		1
3	Luke	1		11	Philippians	1	
4	John	1		12	Colossians		1
5	Acts	1		13	1 Thessalonias	1	
6	Romans		1		14	2 Thessalonias	1
7	1 Corinthians	1		15	1 Timothy		1
8	2 Corinthians	1		16	2 Timothy		1
	17 Titus	1					
	18 Philemon	1					
	19 Hebrews	1	1		<u>Books of Church Order</u>		
	20 1 Peter		1		The Order of Zion	1	
	1				2	Commandment (Tizaz)	
	21 2 Peter		1		3	"Gitzew"	1
	22 1 John	1	4		Abtils	1	
	23 2 John	1	5		Books of Covenant	2	
	24 3 John	1	6		Clement	1	
	25 James (Jacob)		1		7	Didascalial	
	1						

26 Jude	1		
27 Revelation	1	Total	<u>35</u>
1. Books of the Old Testament	46		
2. Books of the New Testament	<u>35</u>		
Grand Total...	81		

Even though there are variations in the number of Scriptures, the above are the 81 accepted by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and are cited in the interpretation of the “Fetha Negest”.

In addition, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has other books written by Holy Fathers based on the Old and New Testaments expanding the theological education and prayer; books on the hymns and chants of St. Yared and other related books.

St. Yared

St. Yared, an Ethiopian scholar and hymnologist rose to prominence by A.D. 505 (Ethiopian Calendar). St. Yared is well known throughout the world for his incomparable knowledge, mastery and composition of hymns and as a prolific “Qene” scholar.

St. Yared has four hymnal books to his credit- viz, “Digua”, “Zimare”, “Mewasit” and “Miraf”. He was also an authority on the interpretation of the Old and the New Testaments as well as on other important books. Carefully choosing parts from these important books for use in prayers and hymns, and harmonizing the basic with their interpretation; he arranged them in such a way that they can be prayed and sang in the four seasons of Fall, Autumn, Summer and Winter with all the beauty and passion he graced them with. He classified his hymns into three namely, “Geez,” “Izel” and “Araray”. This was the great Ethiopian scholar, Yared.

St. Yared prepared his hymnal works between 540-560 A.D. (E.C.). He spent 11 years teaching throughout the northern parts of the country.

Later on, he retreated into one of the monasteries in the northern mountains and spent his last year as a hermit. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has honored, as it still continues to do, St. Yared by having an Ark made in his name, by dedicating a church to him, and writing his life and work for his monumental and exceptional works in hymns and notations.

Over and above these, there are also books written by other Church fathers and other works of translation. Besides, the Church has also in its repository books attesting the miracles, purity and Holiness of the blessed Virgin and also the act, suffering martyrdom and miracles of Saints, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs.

TRADITION (TEWFIT)

Tradition (Tewfit) means that which has been told and which continues to be passed by the Church from ancient times either in writing or word of mouth from generation to generation.

Before the mastery of the written word, all generations throughout human history from Adam to Moses have been passing on their customs, culture and history, as a tradition, through word of mouth. This is the basis of this tradition.

Tewfit (Tradition) records the doctrine, education and history that are not recorded in Scriptures but have been handed down from the early fathers by word of mouth. "Tewfit" demonstrates these in deed. "Tewfit" does not contradict the meaning of the Scriptures nor their interpretation.

"Tewfit" embraces not only religion, church rites, culture and history; but also the rites of worship that have been handed down from ancient times without any distortions or changes.

In earlier times, the teachings and faith of the Church were given through the spoken word. It is written "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17).

Even though there were ones who taught by writing down the teachings of the prophets, there were also those who taught through the spoken word. The apostles taught by word of mouth when they were sent out by our Lord to preach the Gospel. (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 12:15).

The Holy Apostles have clearly said that what they wrote down was a small part of what the Lord taught. (Jn. 20:30, 21:25). Even the Apostles themselves have not written down all the miracles they performed or all that they taught. (2Jn. 12; 3Jn. 13-14).

The Scriptures give their testimony about tradition (Tewfit) in several places. (1Cor. 11:2, 23, 15:1-3; 1Thes. 2:13; Thes. 2:15). Hence "Tewfit" and the Holy Bible reinforce each other. "Tewfit interprets and supplements the Bible. To assert that, St. Paul in 2Tim. 3:8 says "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses...". However, neither in the Old nor in the New Testament are Jannes and Jamberes cited. In the same light, the words which our Lord said "It is more blessed to give than to receive," in Acts. 20:35 are found nowhere in the four Gospels. St. Paul wrote these from the traditional way of acquiring knowledge.

Besides, this is the way we have come to learn that the four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

St. Basil the Great also says, as written down in the Acts of Basil, that “the wearing of the cross, to cross oneself facing east and standing erect when praying, blessing the baptismal waters, marking the one being baptized, bowing in all four corners, anointing the one baptized with myron, and making him say “I reject you” to Satan and his ilk are all acquired through tradition. (The Works of Basil 27:26).

According to the teachings and rites of our Church:

- Kissing the Cross;
- To bow before icons and the cross;
- Wearing a thread around the neck;
- The burning of incense in churches;
- The utilization of different types of ecclesiastical objects in the conduct of services;
- The mode of construction of churches and their internal division;
- Religious vestments etc. are all done according to norms derived from tradition. (Tewfit).

Our church, being an ancient, historical and Apostolic Church has not only maintained but kept alive the tradition that has been handed down from our forefathers.

THE GLORY OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY

The holiness, virginity, covenant and intercession given to Our Holy Lady, the Virgin Mary is quite widely taught and deeply rooted in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Holiness

Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, who conceived and gave birth to Jesus Christ in virginity is free from the original sin derived from the descendants of Adam, clean from any sins of the flesh or soul; embedded in the conscience of God before the time of her birth, free and protected from human desires and frailties, and the choicest from among the chosen. Such is the Virgin Mary – Pure and Holy of Holies. (Song 4:7).

She is graced and honored by Saint angels as indicated in Lk. 1:28-30. Here it is written that the angel said to her “Greetings, you who are highly favored the Lord is with you.”

Our Lady, who is blessed in body, spirit and flesh, was chosen by God to be the abode of His Son and the dwelling of the Spirit. (Heryacos Liturgy 45; Ps. 132:13)

Purity of the flesh, purity of the soul and purity of the heart all belong and reside in Our Lady.

Virginity

One of the distinctive attributes of the Virgin Mary that makes her the select among the select and the honored among the honored is the fact that she conceived and gave birth to Christ in virginity. (Mt. 1:18-20). Our Lady the Virgin Mary is virgin before she conceived the Lord, during her period of conception, after conception, before delivery, during delivery and after delivery. Our Lady, apart from all women is pure and virgin in thought, word and deed. (Tewodotos 53:22). The word virgin rightfully denotes her sanctity and purity. No female, either past or present, has combined virginity with motherhood; as well as motherhood with virginity as Our Lady St. Mary.

Our Lady is a virgin in perpetuity (The Liturgy of Basil 73; Ezek. 44:3, Song 4:15) and the Evangelist Luke says "God sent the angel Gabriel...to a virgin...The virgin's name was Mary." (Lk. 1:27). Ephraim also says that Our Lady is the pride of all virgins. (Ephraim 6:3).

Honor of the Virgin:

Our Lady, the Virgin St. Mary, is the most prominent from all angels. She is pre-eminent in honor and intercession from all saints. Other ladies are honored for having given birth to prophets, saints and martyrs. But Our Lady is honored as the Mother of God. Hence, the honor accorded to the Virgin Mary is below the Creator, but above His Creatures. She is, therefore, revered as such. (John Chrysostomos). The Faith of the Fathers Ch. 28:36-39) Lk. in 1:30 says "...Mary, you have found favor with God."

Devotion

Several prophecies have been written about the honor and high esteem of Our Lady. Prophets have told about the virgin giving birth to Christ. (Ps. 132:13; Isa. 7:14; Ezek. 44:3).

Church fathers, have through the centuries glorified her guided by the Holy Spirit, about her ever sanctity and purity; and have also praised her in their writings and songs. Fathers such as St. Ephraim, Abba Heriakos, St. John Chrysostomos and Abba Giorgis of Gascha have venerated her greatly. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church reveres her by speaking and writing on her sanctity and purity. The life of Our Lady is associated with God's act of redemption.

As Noah's Ark became the cause for saving the lives of his family as well as himself and this saving the human race from extinction; Our Lady, the Virgin St. Mary, is also God's trusted repository for being the cause for God's act of redemption by giving birth to the Savior Messiah. According to the doctrine and faith of our Church, the Virgin Mary is venerated as being above God's creatures, but below God.

In our hymns and liturgy, we recite Mary's praise right after reciting the Holy Trinity's.

The sacrifices that Christ paid for the human race for himself becoming man; when we think of this in conjunction with the trials He went through, i.e., the fact that He was born in the manger, that He was shrouded in a rug, that He was banished, driven away from place to place, His suffering, His crucifixion and death; we cannot separate the Virgin Mary from these travails.

Who else, outside of Mary has been honored thus “Greetings, you who are highly favored...you have found favor with God...the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” (Lk. 1:28-35).

From among her relatives, St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit said to Mary “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!” Besides, she bore witness to the fact that Mary is the Mother of God by exclaiming “But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me!” (Lk. 1:43). She thus confirmed that what was said by God about Mary would be accomplished and that she would believe in and carry out God’s will.

When St. Elizabeth heard Mary’s greetings, the baby leaped in her womb (John) and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus was it confirmed that He who was born of the blessed Virgin Mary was God, the Son of God. Our Lady has herself said that “From now on all generations will call me blessed” (Lk. 1:48; Ps. 45:17). On this basis, all Christians who believe in Her Son, regard her as the basis of their purity, as a pride of their virginity, and a cause for their salvation.

The Covenant of Intercession

Our Church teaches about the covenant of intercession given to Our Lady with Biblical truth and absolute Apostolic tradition. Our Lady, the Virgin Mary has obtained the honor of motherhood and the covenant of intercession from her Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ performed the first miracle through the intercession of Our Lady, by changing water into wine at a wedding at Cana of Galilee (Feast of the First miracle). (Jn. 2:1-5). When the Lord was on the Cross, he said “Dear woman, here is your son” (Jn. 19:26). When he saw Our Lady the Virgin Mary standing there, and He also said “here is your mother” to His Disciple and thus gave her to the custody of the Church. She received an irreversible word from Jesus that all who beg for mercy and forgiveness in her name believing that she is the mother of Christ shall have their supplications answered.

Hence the Church, preserving the word of her Son, Jesus Christ, reveres St. Mary as:

- the abode for the Holy Spirit
- the Mother of God
- the Eternal Virgin
- the Holy of Holies
- and since the Holy Bible attests to these honors of hers, and since Holy Angels and the sons of Adam revere her, the Church therefore honors, thanks, and implores in her name (Liturgy of Jacob of Serough 99)

Our Lady, the Virgin St. Mary, departed on January 21 aged 64, according to the tradition (Tewfit) that has been passed on from the Apostles. Angels carried her body to paradise and placed it under the plant of life in paradise.

Having thus been there in paradise till Nehase (August) 14 of the same year, angels carried and gave her body back to the Apostles and they laid it to rest at Gethsemani. On the third day of her burial, i.e. on the 16th of August, she rose from the dead and her assumption to heaven in glory took place. Thus is what the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church believes and teaches about the death, resurrection and Assumption of the virgin St. Mary. August the 16th of every year is thus commemorated with great ceremony by the Church (Sinaxarium, August 16 E.C.).

THE HONOR ACCORDED TO THE SAINTS

The word Holy (Kidus) in Geez denotes being special, pure and esteemed. This prefix is an attribute to denote the nature of God since God is Holy by nature. Hence the word holiness is given to saints and blessed people who are at the service of Him who is Holy by nature.

We address angels as saints. We call them so since they are free from all evil things, act and go in God's way and praise Him. Blessed people who have attained angelic status are also called saints. God himself has said "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am Holy" (Lev. 19:2; 1Pet 1:15-16).

Prophets, Apostles, Saints and Martyrs have been accorded the honor of holiness and beatiudeness for they gave their lives for the sake of God, for they bore witness in His name, and served Him faithfully to the end of their lives with all their energies and capacities. It is written in John 17:17 that the Lord prayed for them "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth."

But above all these, the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is the incomparable saint; she is therefore called Holy of Holies.

A. The Honor Accorded to Saint Angels **Their nature**

Angels are from among those who were created on the Sunday (Jubilee 2:6-8). The Holy Bible says that angels are made from fire and wind (3 Mac. 2:10-11).

Angels do not reproduce, but remain as they were originally created. They are by nature thinking, speaking, living and powerful. They are free from affliction of sickness and death. Their number is not limited. They are divided into orders and chieftainship. They were divided in one hundred orders and into ten heavenly places.

Their Service

Angels are close aides to God. They are always by His throne praising Him. (Rev. 4:8-11). They are fast in their service (Ps. 103:4; Heb. 1:6). They ascend and descend between God and man (Jn. 1:52; Heb. 1:14).

When generally explained the role of Angels can be said:-

- Ministering between man and God
- To present man's prayers, alms and offerings to God.
- To bring God's mercy and bounty to men (Dan. 9:20-22; Lk. 1, 13; Acts 10:3-5)
- To bring before God the soul of men after death. (Lk. 16:22; Sutu. Ez. 6:6-20)
- To unflinchingly guard every creature (Mt. 18:10; Dan. 4:13)
- They are sent for exacting mercy or wrath (Rom. 9:22)
- They are sent to bring solace and help in times of suffering and hardship (Acts 12:7-11; Ps. 89:7)
- They are sent to separate the sinners from the righteous when the world comes to an end (Mt. 24:31; Rev. 7, 1-4)

Their Intercession

The interceding and helping task of angels in bringing to God the prayers and offerings of men is a favor given to them. As can be gathered from the Holy Bible, they present before God the prayers, offerings and alms of men and help them get rewarded. It is a grace given to them by God that they are the messengers who proclaim happiness, offer solace and serve as the harbingers of all good tidings. (Gen. 48:16; Dan. 10:10-12; Lk. 1:13; 28-30; Jude 9).

The intercession of Saint Angels is widely written in the Scriptures as can be understood from citations in the following:- (Enoch Ch. 10:7; Zac. 1:12; Ex. 23:20-23; Ps. 33:7)

That Angels take delight in the act of those who repent is written in Luke 15:10. This indicates the love and concern they have for men and their ministering role.

Veneration

- Saint Angels are favored ones who stand in the presence of God
- Saint Angels are devoted to their God.
- Saint Angels are defenders of God's creatures.
- Saint Angels are sent for mercy and wrath.

- Saint Angels help and intercede for people in times of adversity and sorrow; the Church therefore, venerates them. It honors them by dedicating churches, and having their services and miracles written. They are offered homage of veneration of grace. (Dan. 8:15-18; Gen. 22:31; Num. 22, 31; Jos. 5:13-15)

B. Saint Prophets

The Prophets have foretold, being inspired by the Spirit of God, about the Incarnation of the Son of God and His second coming. There are some from among them who have suffered all kinds of hardships to the point of death. Our Church therefore, honors them as saints and bears witness about them.

To honor and remember those prophets who rose up from the times of Adam to Christ and who have been teaching about the coming of Christ and that He would give His life to redeem the world, the Church decreed the "Fast of the Prophets" (Tsome Nebiyat) which is observed every year before Christmas.

C. Saint Apostles

"...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (Jn. 20:21). "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything. I have commanded you." (Mt. 28:19-20). With this commission, the Apostles went out around the world, taught the Gospel and proclaimed His Name. Thus, the Apostles were chosen and blessed by Christ Himself. All those who later on followed on the footsteps of the Apostles and bore witness to His Name are the inheritors of this honor.

D. Saint Martyrs

Those Martyrs who fearlessly and with confidence bore witness about Christ in front of people and kings and were therefore persecuted and suffered martyrdom are honored as saints.

E. Righteous

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Mt. 16:26). Those who gave their lives over to God, forsaken the world bearing the solitude of the wilderness and the danger of beasts and the temptation of the devil in asceticism and have kept themselves away from the distractions and trappings of the world, have been granted the honor of holiness.

The Church has preserved, as it still continues to do, the lives and deeds of the righteous irrespective of age, gender and race, who sacrificed themselves for the Glory of God according to the dictates of its dogma. Besides, it dedicates churches in their names and thus makes their glorious lives known from generation to generation on end.

F. The Covenant of Saints and Intercession

Saints are given favors by God because of their sacrifices made in this world. As they have been given spiritual powers to perform miracles while in this world such as making the dead rise, healing different ailments and driving out demons, one who implores by invoking their names, commemorates them and believes in their role of intercession shall be rewarded as has been confirmed to them by God. Our Lord has confirmed in (Mt. 10:41-42) “that if anyone receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward.”

Saints intercede not only in realms of the flesh but in realms of the spirit as the Scriptures testify for they are alive in soul. (Ex. 32:2-15; Enoch 12:33-40; Lk. 20: 37-40).

The word of God is living, it works on the living, His covenant never changes and He Himself has said that saints are also living. In accordance with these faith and teaching, the church believes in the covenant and honor bestowed on holy apostles, martyrs and righteous.

Covenant has been given to them that those who forsook all and followed Him by carrying His cross and received hardship for the name and glory of Christ shall sit upon the twelve thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel when the Son of man sits on His glorious throne. (Mt. 19:28)

The Church honors saints on the basis of the covenant that was given to them by God. The faithful beseech them. They build churches in their names, make their icons and commemorate their saintly lives.

G. Honor of the Relics of Saints

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church honors the relics of saint who departed after serving God in word and deed.

The Church keeps the relics of those saints who performed miracles through their teachings and prayers while alive and after death through their relics in a special place in a Church courtyard.

Christians of ancient times treasured the remains of Saint Apostles and martyrs in their cave dwellings and wanderings. God performs miracles through the relics of the saints and gives His bounty and healing as well. (2Kgs. 13, 20-21).

There is a Scriptural basis for the preservation of the relics of saints. The Israelites retrieved the relics of Jacob and Joseph from Egypt and preserved it in a place of honor. (Ex. 13, 19; Jos. 24:32; Acts 7:15). Tradition also tells that the remains of the

fathers from the times of Adam to Noah in the time of the flood were also preserved and passed down from generation to generation and that Noah took them inside his ship.

The Feth Negest (The Book of Law of Kings) also says in article 20 that if we revere the saints whose souls are in paradise, then we should also do s for the remains of the saints who bore hardships while alive.

Our Church reveres the relics of saints because God utilizes them as cures and symbols of grace. It also accords them a special place of honor (Ps. 33: 19-20).

The marks of the honor and saintliness of saints in the fact that they continue to perform miracles in places where they have shed their blood, where their bones have been lain to rest, where they have performed miracles, where they have toiled and labored, where places of worship have been dedicated to them and in all places where their names are recited. (Ps. 33:20; Lk. 24:47).

THE CHRUCH

The word Church has two meanings. One of these means a community of the faithful who are baptized believing in Christ, (Fet. Negest Art. 1; Mt. 18:17; Acts 20:28). As people of God in the times of the Old Testament were called House of Israel (Bete Israel); so are God's people in the New Testament times called Church. This means Christians; the community of Christians.

The second meaning denotes the building in which believers congregate to offer worship to God. The Ark of Noah, the Tent of Abraham, the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon had been examples of churches where offerings and worship to God were made. During the times of the New Testament, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Head and foundation of the Church established the Church with his own blood. The church as laid down by the church Fathers in "Tselote Hymanot" (Creed) is known as the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic".

The Church is :

- the abode of God
- a place of teaching, prayers and worship (Mt. 21:13; Jn. 2:7, Ps. 68:9)
- a place for the forgiveness of sin and intercession
- a place where the Gospel is preached, the Holy Communion is administered and Baptism is conducted.
- the final resting place of Christians
- a place where spiritual service is conducted for all irrespective of age, race and gender.

The attributes which make the Church different from all other structures are:

- Bishops consecrate it.
- It is anointed with myron.

- It is the place where the Ark of the Covenant is kept.
- The sacraments of the Church are conducted there.

According to the rites and tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the construction of a church follows a particular pattern, though the mode could vary. The pattern has three partitions:-

A. Qene Mahlet (Outer Ambulatory)

A place where choir men present worship and chant songs of praise to God.

B. Kidest (Surrounding Ambulatory)

This is the central part of the Church and is also the place where the faithful receive the Holy Communion.

C. Mekdes (Sanctuary/Holy of Holies)

This is the place where Liturgy is conducted and a revered area where the altar of the Ark of the Covenant is kept. Only ordained men are allowed to enter here.

According to the rites of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church the “Mekdes” has three main doors.

West:- Glory to God is recited and the Holy Communion is given here.

North:- the faithful men attend liturgy here and the priests perform horology.

South:- the faithful women attend liturgy and pray here.

A cross is fixed on the cupola of the Church- a cross being a distinctive symbol of a Church. Without a cross on it, it cannot be called a church.

On the eastern side of the church lies the “Bethlehem” while on the western side lies a hall called “Deje Selam” which literally means “the gate of peace”.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The Ark of the Covenant (Tabot) is the repository of the Holy Plate (Tsilat) on which the Ten Commandments were written in and given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. In our Church, the Holy Plate or Tsilat is called the Ark (Tabot). This indicates the Holy Plate which is kept in the Ark. The Ark is a means for the manifestation of God. We bow and pray in front of the Ark because the name of God and the Ten Commandments are written on it and God shows His mercy through it. (Ex. 25: 20-25)

Tabot was not abandoned after the Old Testament. Since the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Ethiopia, our country had long before Christianity accepted the Old Testament and offered worship to God. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had accepted and preserved the Old Testament and the rites contained therein. As the Lord said in the Gospel “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and

earth disappear not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these Commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 5:17-19). Accordingly, one of those that have been taken from the Old Testament and is practiced by the Church is the Ark (Tabot) which has God’s name on it. The Ark is the means by which the covenant made between God and man is kept. The ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church combines and uses the tradition of the Old as well as the New Testaments in Christian spirit.

Several miracles have been performed for the Israelites whenever they embarked on voyages or stayed at dwellings having the Ark of the covenant with them. They emerged victorious in all battles where they had taken the Ark with them. When they sinned, they were defeated for the grace of God was not with them. (1Sam. 4:11). The Ark is also the source of victory and Divine help. Hence, whenever foreign enemies arose, the Church has always been in the forefront with the Ark and has helped in carrying the day and defending the country. Thus, those who failed to pay respects to it and touched it without priestly ordination perished while those who believed in its laws and accepted and respected it were rewarded. (1Sam. 4:6; 2Sam 6)

In the New Testament in our Church, the Ark is used for the worship of God and the offering of the flesh and blood of Christ which is the real food. That is why we bow before it and honor it.

St. Paul, in 2Cor 6:15-16 teaches “what harmony is there between Christ and Belial. What does a believer have with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the Ark of the Covenant of God and idols?” Moreover, John the Evangelist says in Rev. 11:19 “Then God’s temple in Heaven was opened, and within His temple was seen the Ark of the Covenant.”

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhedo Church, therefore, gives honor to the Ark of the covenant and bears witness publicly and openly in God’s name. The Ark (Tabot) is for our Church the main manifestation for its faith and order. Arks are made in the names of the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, Saints, Angels, Prophets; Apostles, Righteous and Martyrs. If an Ark falls into unseemly hands, it is reconsecrated with the prayer and blessing of a bishop and is anointed with myron.

- Arks are made from time to time as per the instructions given to Moses to make new ones in the mold of the originals (Ex. 34:1).
- Worships are offered before the Ark for it has the name of God written on it. (Phil. 2:10).
- According to the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Arks are made from precious stone and from special wood resistant to pests and termites.
- The name of God is written on the four sides of the Ark.
- The pictures of Chirub, the Trinity, St. Mary and St. John the evangelist are made on it.

- It is consecrated by a bishop's prayer, and is honored being anointed with myron and rests in its place.
- No liturgy can be conducted at a church where the Ark is absent and it is not called a church.
- Those who have the authority to carry the Ark are bishops and priests.

FAITH AND WORK

Our Church teaches and believes that when religion and work are both found in a Christian life, they bring forth salvation. However, faith comes before work.

The great father of the Church St. John Chrysostom said "Faith is the basis, the rest are building and walls." Elucidating this point further, "as the foundation bears the building; faith also embraces deeds," i.e. as a building cannot stand nor be seen if it is without foundation, a Christian cannot become a Christian without good deed. (Homily of John Chrysostom 9).

Faith gives assertion to the things we hope for and explains the things that we cannot see. This was the testimony that was given to the fathers. (Heb. 11:1-2). Faith can attest to and explain those things that cannot be seen as concrete when it can be demonstrated in action and deed. In 1 Cor. 13:13 it is written "and now these three remain" faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love".

The Apostle St. James emphasizing the fact that faith and work should go together says "What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?.. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." He illustrates this with the examples of Abraham and Rehab." (Jas. 2, 14-26).

Hence, all good work is the fruit or result of faith. One who has a true faith does good deeds. (1 Cor, 13:2).

Our Lord Jesus Christ says that every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Mt. 7:19). Again it is written that, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in Heaven. (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 3:8). This shows that to be worthy of the kingdom of Heaven what one does should be rooted and manifested in faith.

On the day of judgment, one will be judged on what he did in faith and not on the basis of his faith devoid of good work, (Mt. 25:41-45).

What is written is that "...He will reward each person according to what he has done." (Mt. 16:27; Jn. 5:28-29; 2Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:13, 20:21, 22:12).

On this basis therefore the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church believes and teaches that faith should be practiced along with deeds and that faith as such by itself would not count for much.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the oldest Churches which have ancient religious order. Subsequently, Ethiopia has been called an “Island of Christianity.”

Prior to Christianity, Ethiopia accepted the Law of Moses and has since been called the Land of God. Accordingly, she has been observing the Sabbath, fasting two days a week, having a male circumcised on the eighth day of his birth, bringing children to the temple on the fortieth and eightieth days after their birth and dedicating them to God along with the offerings of young pigeons and turtledoves.

Observing Sunday with the Sabbath, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays instead of Esther’s and Judith’s fasts and circumcising male children on the eighth day of their birth are still practiced in accordance with the Order of Worship of our Church. But now instead of taking young pigeons and turtledoves to the temple, male children are taken to the church on the fortieth day and female children on the eightieth day of their birth for baptism.

God said to Abraham, “This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you; every male among you shall be circumcised,... and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.” (Gen. 17:9-11; Rom. 4:9).

In accordance with this covenant the uncircumcised cannot be counted as a member of Abraham’s family, neither inherit the promised land nor partake in the fulfillment of the covenant, nor is he considered a member of the people of God. (Gen. 17:7).

But in the New Testament, circumcision has been replaced by baptism. Unless one is baptized, one cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:5, Col. 2:11). This order of worship is given to preserve worship of God and evangelical works.

The order of praying, fasting and observing of festivals following the order of worship cannot be acquired through the Scriptures only; but it is a Holy Tradition which has come down from generation to generation.

THE ORDER OF FASTS

Fasting is abstinence from all things a body needs, and one has to fast from animal products and from any kind of food for a limited time until the period of fasting is over. (Fetha Negest 15, Mt. 6:16). In general, one has to abstain from any thing which the body desires.

The aim of fasting is to make the desire of the body to obey the will of the soul, to seek forgiveness of guilt and to increase the reward of the soul.

Fasting has perpetual relation with religion. Even though the way it is practiced differs from religion to religion, anyone who has religion practices fast. Especially in the Old Testament, fasting had a prominent place in the lives of the Jewish people. Whenever the Old Testament prophets sought to communicate with God, they neither ate food nor drank water. (Ex. 34:28). The wrath of God that comes about as a result of sin can be averted through solemn prayer and rigorous fasting. (Jon. 3:7-10; Joel 2:15).

In the New Testament also, fasting is not a law made by man. It is our Savior Jesus Christ himself who made it the beginning of His messianic ministry in his earthly life. (Mt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2). Our Savior Jesus Christ has taught that fasting has the power of driving away evil spirits. (Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:2).

The Apostles who were commanded to serve the church received guidance from the Holy Spirit while they were praying and fasting. (Acts 13:2). Priests and deacons who served as preachers of the gospel were inspired and ordained while fasting and praying. (Acts 13:3; 14:23).

It was through fasting and beseeching God that righteous people received what they needed and wished. (Ezra. 8:21; Ne. 9:1-3; Est. 4:16-17; Acts 10:30; 13:2-3).

As the theological interpretation of fast is beseeching God and asking him for the forgiveness of sin, it is therefore, mandatory to abstain from animal products and alcoholic drinks which incite lust. (Dan. 10:2-3). Fasting has been taught and practiced in the teachings of the apostles and Church Fathers. (The Law of Kings Art. 15; Didas. 29).

As it is said, "Blessed is he who fasts to feed the poor", if any fasting man gives what he has allocated for his lunch and supper to the organization of the disabled founded by the Church or to the poor, his fast will be more complete. (Isa. 58:6-11).

Fasting is not only abstinence from food. It will be a true fast if the eye is kept from seeing, the mouth from speaking and the ear from hearing evil things. (Mt. 5:21-30; St. Yared-Digua).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has its own laws and orders of fasting. Accordingly, there are seven fasting periods.

1. The Great Fast (Lent)
2. Wednesday and Fridays
3. Nineveh
4. Gehad (the eves of Christmas and Epiphany)
5. The fast of the prophets or advent
6. The fast of the Apostles
7. The fast of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary.

A. Lent or the Great Fast

May the Lord be praised; this is the fast that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fasted for forty days and nights after his baptism. (Mt. 4:1). The church observes this fast following the example of our Lord.

The Great Fast has 8 weeks which consist of 55 days. The first week is known as the fast of Eraclius, the Byzantine Emperor who lived in 614 A.D. This fast is dedicated to Eraclius for the following reasons.

During his reign the Persians invaded Jerusalem and took the Cross of the Lord. Eraclius made an expedition to Persia and having defeated the Persians he took the Cross back to Jerusalem. The Christians in Jerusalem who were very happy because of Eraclius's victory and the return of the Cross, dedicated the first week before Lent to be the fast of Eraclius and included it in their canons. Thus our Church has accepted and included it in her canon to be a part of Lent. (Fitha Negest Art. 15).

The last week of Lent is called Passion Week during which the Apostles fasted in commemoration of Christ's Passion. This is also regarded as part of the Great Fast.

Thus Lent is called great because firstly, it is the Lord's fast. Secondly, through this fast Satan's temptation (love of money, greediness and arrogance) are overcome.

All Christians, young and old have to observe the fast of the Lord. St. Yared, the Ethiopian hymnologist who wrote the hymn of our church has composed in his hymn book known as "Tsome Digua" (Hymn of Fast) songs for each Sunday of the Great Fast. So each Sunday during the Great Fast is named after the song of that Sunday.

The first Sunday of the Great Fast is known as the "Zewerede" ("Zewerede" means the one who descended from above). In the beginning of his hymn book, Tsome Digua, St. Yared mentions the descent, incarnation and crucifixion of the Lord. (Jn. 3:13).

The second Sunday is called "Kidist". Kidist means holy. It tells the holiness of Sunday.

We call the third Sunday "Mikurab". The word Mikurab stands for the synagogue. It reminds us that our Lord during his ministry taught in the synagogue.

The fourth Sunday is known as "Mesague," Mesague means one who is infirm. (Jn. 5:1-9). A hymn for the healing of the sick and giving sight to the blind by the Lord is sung on this day.

The fifth Sunday is called "Debre Zeit". Debre Zeit is the Geez word for Mount of Olives. A hymn of our Lord's second coming which he taught on Mount Olives is sung on this day.

We call the sixth Sunday “Good Servant”. The story of the good servant who received five talents and made a profit of five more talents is told and sung on this day. (Mt. 25:14-30).

The seventh Sunday is called “Nicodimus”. A hymn commemorating the coming of Nicodimus to our Lord during the night is sung.

The eighth Sunday is Palm Sunday. It is a commemorative day on which our Lord entered into the temple in triumph and during which the people sang “Hosanna in the highest”. The week from the eve of Palm Sunday to Easter is known as Passion Week. On these days, varieties of food are not eaten. Adoration is given to God. A book known as “Gibrehimamat” composed of different passages taken from the Scriptures and other religious books dealing with the passion and death of our Lord is read.

The altar is covered with a black cloth in remembrance of the dark centuries during which Adam was alienated from his Crator. The priests wear black vestments. As this week is a time of commemorating of the suffering and damnation of 5500 years, prayer for the dead and that of intercession are not said. Such prayers are said only on Palm Sunday.

Maundy Thursday

It is a day on which the Lord Jesus in absolute humility washed His Disciples’s feet, ate the Last Supper with them and revealed the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. On this day the Liturgy is celebrated. Before the Liturgy, the priest brings water in a basin and saying the prayer of thanksgiving, washes the feet of the faithful. When the Liturgy is over, the faithful leave for home after benediction.

On the morrow of Thursday, i.e. Good Friday, in remembrance of Chris’s crucifixion an Epitaphion (crucifix) is made and passages from the Scriptures and other religious books are read. The faithful prostrate every now and then. Good Friday is sometimes called a day of prostration. Towards the evening (at about 4:30 p.m.), the faithful approach a priest to be patted with small branches of olive trees. Patting the faithful in this way symbolizes the whipping of our Lord. Then the faithful say “God have mercy upon us” 400 times.

After hymns are sung and readings assigned for the day are read, the song, “Let us praise the Lord” is sung. With the exception of kissing of the cross, sinners confess their sins and after that absolution is said. Next prayer of intercession is conducted and the people are dismissed at 6 p.m. (Fetha Negest Art. 15 No. 601).

The Apostles did not eat and drink until they knew of the resurrection of the Lord. In accordance with this practice, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who have the strength to abstain from every kind of food for two days can fast on both Friday and Saturday. But

those who have not the strength fast on Saturday only. (Lk. 5:5-35; Fetha Negest Art. 15 No. 578).

On Saturday morning, the laity and the clergy gather in the church. After the appropriate morning prayer is over, the clergy singing the song “Christ made reconciliation by his crucifixion” give sedge to the people assembled, as a symbol of good tidings. The faithful tie the sedge round their heads.

The clergy wearing their vestments, holding a cross and ringing a bell go to the houses of the people who did not come to the Church and give them the sedge as a symbol of good news.

As the former Sabbath was the day on which God rested from His work after creating all creatures, this Sabbath is the day which Christ passed lying in the grave after completing his messianic ministry in three years and three months.

This day is called “Se’ur” (unobserved) Saturday. It is called so because once a year it becomes a fast day. It is also called Green Saturday for on this day the sedge is given out.

The fact that the sedge is the symbol of good news is related to Biblical history. As the Bible tells us, when the earth was covered with the water of destruction and Noah’s Ark was floating on the flood; to see if the flood had subsided Noah opened the window of the ark and sent forth a dove. The dove returned with an olive leaf and knowing that the water had abated Noah became happy and began to rest his ark.

As the leaf of the olive tree served as the sign of congratulation at the time of Noah, by the death of Christ, the water of destruction, sin and the punishment of soul is removed from mankind. (1Pet. 3:19-21). The Church, therefore, heralds the good news to the faithful by presenting sedge.

B. Next to the Great Fast is the Fast of Wednesdays and Fridays

Every week Wednesdays and Fridays are observed as fast days except during the fifty days (between Easter and Pentecost), and on the days of Christmas and Epiphany, when these festivals fall on these days.

The reason why Wednesdays and Fridays are fast days is as follows.

Wednesday

It is a day on which the Jewish Council made a consultation to crucify the Lord on Friday. (Jn. 11:46-53). Instruction is given that Christians should fast on this day always remembering the sentence of death made against Christ, the Savior of the World, who died for the sake of mankind.

Friday

As is well known, Friday is a blessed day on which the Lord is crucified in his flesh and the hope of redemption which was expected for a long time was fulfilled. (Jn. 19:17-30; Lk, 23:26-49). Thus it is canonized that except during the fifty days after Easter and during the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany when these festivals fall on these days, Wednesdays and Fridays should be observed every week in fasting and prayer. (The Law of Kings article 15; Didas. 29).

C. The Fast of Nineveh

This is a three days fast, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. It falls at one time in January and at another in February. Thus it is one of the rotating fasts.

The reason behind the decision of our Church Fathers, that this fast be observed is that as the people of Nineveh were saved from the wrath of God through prayer and fasting, so also the faithful will receive mercy and blessings through this fast. (Jon. 3:5-9; Mt. 12:39).

D. Gehad

This fast is observed on the eves of Christmas and Epiphany. On Christmas and Epiphany, the Holy Liturgy is celebrated starting at midnight until 3:00 a.m. In the morning people eat meat, milk products and so on even if the days are Wednesdays or Fridays. So if Christmas and Epiphany fall on Wednesday and Friday, Tuesday and Thursday will be fast days. These fast days are known as Gehad.

E. Fast of the Prophets (Advent)

It starts on November (Hidar) 15 and extends to December (Tahisas) 28. We observe this fast following the examples of the prophets who were fasting and praying in their times longing for the Advent of Christ. In the Law of Kings Article 15, instruction is given that we should observe this fast before we celebrate Christmas.

F. The Fast of the Apostles

The Apostles observed this fast after they received the Holy Spirit and before they set out to proclaim the Gospel. The Church has laid down a rule for the faithful to observe this fast starting from the day immediately after White Sunday. Because of the fact that the fast of the Apostles comes after fifty days from Easter, it sometimes goes beyond forty days and sometimes falls short of thirty days.

G. The Fast of Assumption of the Virgin Mary

The fast lasts from Nehassie (August) 1 to 15. Our Lady departed on 21 of Ter (January) in 50 A.D. While the Apostles were taking her body for burial at Gethsemani, the Jewish priests dispersed them. At this time the Angels took our Lady's body to paradise and put it under the Tree of Life (The Miracle of St. Mary, Sinaxarium Nehassie (August) 16 E.C.). According to these sources, St. John the Apostle, used to be taken to paradise to burn incense over her body. When he told this fact to the Apostles, they went for retreat and fasted for two weeks, praying to God to reveal this mystery to them. On the fourteenth day of their fast the angels brought our Lady's body and gave them to bury it.

On the third day, on the 16th of August E.C. her Assumption took place. From that time onwards, the Apostolic Church observes the fast of our Lady's Assumption.

In Ethiopia, this fast is being observed by all Orthodox Christians including children. During these 15 days, members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church even children fast and partake of the Holy Communion.

In these 15 days many elderly people go for retreat leaving their homes, abstaining from nutritious food and subsisting only on cereals and water. They spend all the fifteen days fasting and praying.

During the fast of the Assumption, the religious devotion manifested by the old and the young testifies that Ethiopia is a land dedicated to our Lady.

In the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the canon demands that all its followers above the age of seven should observe all the fasts mentioned above. Except on Saturdays and Sundays in the fasting periods, liturgy is celebrated in the afternoons.

THE ORDER OF PRAYER

Prayer is a word by which man communicates with his Creator in Faith, thanking and beseeching Him for the forgiveness of his sin. (Fetha Negest 14:528). The basis of prayer is the divine word which runs "Ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you". (Mt. 7:7).

For prayer, there is a particular time and place. The time during which the clergy and the laity go to church are mornings and evenings.

Canonical Hours of Prayer

Prayers are said seven times a day:- (Ps. 118:164).

- a) In the morning
- b) At the third hour
- c) At noon
- d) At the ninth hour
- e) At sun set
- f) At bed time

g) At midnight

The faithful and the clergy have to go to the church every morning and evening. But in the remaining hours they can pray wherever they are. (Fetha Negest 14; Resta 48,47; Didas12).

There are three kinds of prayers. These are:

- a) Private prayer
- b) Family prayer
- c) Public prayer

Private Prayer

Private prayer is said at home and at any appropriate place. It is a solemn prayer made to God privately by shutting his room so as not be seen and heard by any one, and lifting his heart to the Creator to be seen and heard by Him alone. (Mt. 6:5-13).

Family Prayer

As the word indicates family prayer is a prayer offered by all the members of a family together. For this the prayer of Cornelius the Centurion will be an example. (Acts 10:2-6).

Public Prayer

It is a prayer to be said by the clergy and the laity, men and women, old and young gathered together in the church and in all convenient places.

We read in the Scriptures that the faithful in the Old Testament used to go to the temple and pray. (1 Sam. 1:9-13; Ps. 12:1; Lk. 18:10-14).

Also at the time of the New Testament, the apostles and their followers used to pray in the upper room and at the house of Mary, St. Mark's mother, which served as the first Christian gathering. They used also together and pray at the first church of Antioch (Acts, 1:14, 25, 3:1, 12:12, 13:1-3).

According to this, our Church has laid down rules that the clergy and the laity together praise the Lord in prayer, hymn, liturgy, horology (Saatat). Saatat is conducted throughout the year in monasteries and big churches, on Sundays and holidays. Saatat is also performed for the dead during the night.

For the day time also, there is Saatat. It is said daily at every hour during the time of fast. (Abba Georgis' Saatat).

Cantillation (Hymn) is a song performed in union by the clergy with prayer sticks, sistrums and drums; the hymn of Lent is sung without sistrums and drums; it is sung with prayer sticks only.

Prayers that are conducted by priests with participation of the laity are:-

- prayer of the dedication of a new church
- prayer of Baptism
- prayer of Ordination and Consecration
- prayer of Matrimony
- prayer of Litany
- prayer for the Dead
- prayer of Liturgy and the like

Liturgical prayer

It has three parts:

1. From “O my brother, think of thy sin” upto “How awful this day” which is the preparatory service.
2. From “How awful is this day” upto “Go forth, Ye catechumen” which is the first part of the Eucharist.
3. After this the main part of the Holy Liturgy which comes after “Go forth, Ye catechumen” is said.

The procedure for carrying out this is given in detail in the Holy Liturgy and the Fetha Negest Article 12.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has fourteen anaphoras by which it celebrates the Holy communion. These are:

1. The Anaphora of the Apostles
2. “ “ “ the Lord
3. “ “ “ John, Son of Thunder
4. “ “ “ St. Mary
5. “ “ “ The three Hundred
6. “ “ “ St. Athanasius
7. “ “ “ St. Bassilios
8. “ “ “ St. Gregory, Brother of St. Bassilios
9. “ “ “ St. Ehiphaniu
10. “ “ “ St. John Chrysostom
11. “ “ “ St. Cyril
12. “ “ “ St. Jacob of Serough
13. “ “ “ Dioscorus
14. “ “ “ St. Gregory Second

The Performance of Private and Public Prayer

In the time of prayer one has to follow these orders.

- a) Standing erect on two feet without leaning on a pole or a wall and without holding a cane as a support. (Ps. 5:3).
- b) Girding the loin, wearing clothes down over the shoulders and round the waist. (Lk. 12:35; the Fetha Negest Article 14).
- c) Standing up turning the face towards the east without moving to and from and without looking left and right. It is essential to pray stretching the hands and lifting up the heart. (Ps. 133:2; Jn. 11:41).
- d) At the beginning and closing of prayer, one has to cross himself with the pointing finger placed in such a way that it makes a cross in relation to the three joined curved fingers. Crossing oneself is done from the forehead downward and from left to right. At the time of crossing it is necessary to remember Christ's suffering. (Lk. 11:20).

- e) Whosoever prays shall say his prayer humbly and silently not to be heard by others except to his ears. He does this for his past sin and transgression. (1Sam. 1:3).
- f) Whosoever prays steadfastly and faithfully shall communicate with God. He shall put all his thoughts before God and neglect worldly thoughts.
- g) Whosoever prays while crossing himself shall say first "In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God, I cross my face and all my body in the sign of the Cross."
- h) As to the sequence of prayer, first we say Our Father who art in Heaven, followed by the Psalms. Next to Our Father, the prayer of our Lady Mary (magnificent) is recited, the creed, (prayer of confession) and at last the Lord's prayer including Hail Mary, Kyrie Eleison is said 41 times. All Christians should pray. It is obligatory for one who doesn't know how to pray to learn to do so. But the clergy are ordered to say all the prayers. (Eph. 5:19-20 Mt. 7:2-13).
- i) When one is praying, he should weep with deep feeling of remorse for his transgression and sin.
- j) Whosoever prays should not talk at all with any person interrupting his prayer. However, if he is faced with a problem that forces him to interrupt his prayer he should say the Lord's prayer and talk. When he finishes his talk, he should resume his prayer from where he had stopped.

Prayer of Litany

It is a prayer which we should pray to God to alter his wrath with mercy, his anger with patience. This prayer is also conducted whenever there is drought, plague, war and when chastisement is manifested. (Num. 16,46-50; Jon. 3:5-10; Joel 2:12-19; 1Kgs. 8:25-55).

Therefore, Our Church teaches that when a particular problem is created the faithful shall beseech God in fast and prayer in every parish church in the morning and evening.

Prayer for the Dead

Prayer for the dead is a prayer offered to God that the dead might be released from the bondage of sin. The Church orders that prayer for the dead should be conducted. This prayer enables the deceased to receive forgiveness of sin, mercy and

rest for the soul. For the righteous it brings grace upon grace and joyous life. It is through prayer that the dead and the living communicate. "The living pray for the dead and the dead for the living (Enoch 12:34), because their souls are alive. (Mt. 22:31-32; Lk. 20:37-39; Barock 3:4).

The Holy Apostles have commanded that prayer should be conducted for the dead both in the Church and burial places and offering should be presented for them.

For the sake of your brother Christians and martyrs who died in Christ, Gather in the Church without wickedness, bring offerings for them when you take them to the church and the burial places and pray the Psalms of David. (Didasc. Art. 33). The Fetha Negest in its spiritual part affirms what is quoted in Didasc. Art. 22.

According to this, our church prays and presents a Psalm of Praise for the dead from the moment of death, upto the laying down in the grave, from home upto the church.

The commemoration for the dead is from the day of death upto a year and beyond.

1. On the day of death
2. On the third day
3. On the seventh day
4. On the twelveth day
5. On the thirtieth day
6. On the fortieth day
7. On the eightieth day
8. In the sixth month
9. A year after the day of death.

The church orders that on these days prayer should be conducted, incense should

Be burned, offerings should be given, commemoration should be held, and alms should be offered (Fetha Negest Art. 22).

Along with all these the Church prays:-

- for the sick
- for the travelers
- for the rain
- for the fruit of the earth
- for the water of the rivers
- for the dead and the living
- for the catechumens
- for the unity of the church
- for the peace of the country and the world
- for the leaders and the clergy of the church and the needy

- for the immigrants
- for the sad and the sorrowful
- for the imprisoned
- for the transgressors
- for the strengthening of faith
- for the faithful men and women

In general the Church prays for the whole world. Therefore, it has several prayer books. (The Book of Liturgy).

THE ORDER OF ALMS GIVING

Alms giving are among the most important religious deeds. The basis of alms is "Give your bread to the hungry, bring the homeless poor into your house, don't be indifferent to the hungry in your house, blessed are those who have compassion". (Is. 58:6-8; Mt. 5:7).

Alms are given in two ways:

- a) As the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount: "... Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing..." (Mt. 6:1-4). Alms should be given without the knowledge of a second person.
- b) As it is ordered in the religious part of the Fetha Negest, Article 16, alms are given in and through the Church.
 - Alms giving pave the way to perfection. (Mt. 19:21-22).
 - Alms giving is above all good deeds. (Hos. 6:6; Mt. 12:7).
 - Alms have apostolic tradition. (1Cor. 16:1-4; 2Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:9-10; Heb. 13:16).
 - From among the Church Fathers, St. John Chrysostom has taught that alms should be given to the needy without distinction. (Jn.4:24).

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church practice, the order of prostration is divided into three. These are:

- a) prostration
- b) kneeling
- c) bowing

Prostration:- Means touching the ground with the forehead.

Kneeling:- means touching the ground with the knees.

Bowing:- means to stoop the head in homage.

In our Church, the moments of performance of prostration are:

- a. while entering a church (Ps. 28:2)
- b. when commencing prayer
- c. in the middle of prayer when one comes across a word that requires prostration
- d. at the end of prayer (Fetha Negest Article 14:35-37).

During Sundays, Pentecost, Feast days of Our Lord, Our Lady, other major holidays

and after receiving Holy Communion except kneeling and bowing, prostration is not allowed (Fetha Negest 14:5-37).

There are two types of prostration. These are:

- a) The prostration, kneeling and bowing of worship which are offered to God.
- b) The prostration made before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is prostration of worship to God. (Josh. 7:6; Philip. 2:10)

The prostration, kneeling and bowing that we perform for

- a) Our Lady
- b) Angels/Saints
- c) The righteous and martyrs
- d) The cross and icons are carried out not for worship but to pay homage and give due honour.

ORDER OF CHURCH FEASTS

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church has its Order of celebration of church feasts. Above all, it celebrates Saturdays and Sundays. The celebration of Saturdays is the Order of the Old Testament. (Ex. 20:8).

In the era of the New Testament the Orthodox Church teaches that the observance of Saturdays should not be as strict as that of the Jews. "Christians should not be idle on the Sabbath like the Jews." But they should work as Christians. (Fetha Negest 19).

Sunday is the day on which Christ rose from the dead. It is, "The Day of Our Lord" in the New Testament. (Rev. 1:10; 1Cor. 16:1). "He celebrated it (Sunday), adored it, made it the day of light and of all days he glorified it," (Saint Yared's Degua Ze Fasika).

"And our rest is not to sleep like a suffering one in his disease, but to watch day and night that we may show our love for this day." On this basis, the Church teaches the people to celebrate or observe Sunday by going to church to pray, give alms to the poor, visit the sick, and settle quarrels, as written in the Liturgy of Athanasius.

In accordance with the canon of the Church, there are nine major feast days of Our Lord. These are:

1. *Tsinset*: (Annunciation – Feast of Incarnation) This holiday is celebrated on Megabit 29 E.C. in observance of the announcement of Saint Gabriel that the Virgin Mary shall bring forth a Son who will save his people from their sins. So, this is a day of forgiveness of mankind.
2. *lidet*: (Christmas) The annual festival of Christ's birth, is celebrated on Tahisas (December) 29 E.C. and on leap year on Tahisas (December) 28 E.C. This is in fulfillment of the prophecy that the Virgin Mary shall give birth to God the Word who will save His people from their sins.
3. *Timket*: (Epiphany) Jesus Christ started his Messianic ministry after being baptized at the age of 30. The Lord was baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. When Jesus stepped out of the water the heavens were opened and God the Father spoke "this is my beloved Son in whom I am

well pleased and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove.” (Mt. 3:1u-u17; Mk. 1:4-12; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:29-34)

On the eve of the Epiphany, the Ark of the Covenant (Tabot) is carried from the church to a river where it is made to stay in a tent or a shade for the night. During the night, the praise of the Lord and hymnal services are performed and liturgy is conducted. In the morning, at the edge of the river prayers are recited, verses from the four Gospels are read; the water is blessed and sprinkled on the people not to repeat Baptism but to commemorate the Baptism of Jesus Christ and receive spiritual blessing.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church celebrates this feast every year in order to teach and bear witness to the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ performed to fulfill the prophecy, to give power to Baptism, to bless the water, to manifest the humbleness he displayed and thus serve as an example to us. Epiphany is celebrated on Tir (January) 11 E.C.

4. *Transfiguration:* (Debre Tabor)

This is the day in which Our Lord Jesus Christ during his ministry, manifested the light of his God-head on Mount Tabor. It is celebrated on Nehase (August) 13 E.C. (Mt. 17:1-9).

5. *Hosanna:* (Palm Sunday)

It is the Sunday that comes one week before Easter. Its history is written in the Bible. (Mt. 21:9-15). Hosanna means salvation. On this day Jesus Christ Our Lord entered into temple in triumph. On His way people praised him by saying Hosanna, Hosanna, in the highest!

On Palm Sunday, Palm leaves are blessed and distributed to people who in turn tie them around their heads and place them in their houses. People chant Hosanna, Hosanna, in the highest! by waving palm fronds. On this day the hymn of Saint Yared is sang and verses from the four Gospels are read at the four directions of the Church.

6. *Crucifixion:*

This is the day on which Jesus Christ Our Lord was crucified to redeem mankind.

7. *Easter:*

It is celebrated in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead after His crucifixion on the cross in order to save mankind from sin. Easter for Christians is a day of spiritual victory and freedom.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Easter is celebrated with great joy and deep spirituality. On the eve of Easter, on Saturday, the children, elders and youth gather at churches and prayer services are conducted.

After the performance of prayer services and covenant, in accordance with the canon of the Church, the priest carrying his cross and the faithful say the following:-

Priest – Christ is risen from the dead!
 People – By the highest power and authority!
 Priest - He chained “Satan”!
 People - Freed Adam!
 Priest - Peace,
 People – Henceforth
 Priest - Joy and Peace shall Prevail!

Thus after the above good tidings and witness heralding Easter is made, the kissing of the cross continues. The Liturgical service which starts at the middle of the night is wound up at 3 a.m. The days of the week between Easter and the next Sunday are considered as Easter days.

8. *Ascension:*

After Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He appeared to the Apostles and taught them for 40 days. On the 40th day of His rising, as He had told the Apostles before, He gain told them of the descending of the Holy Spirit and ascended to Heaven. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the day is celebrated with prayers and hymns.

9. *Paracletos: (Whit Sunday)-*

It is the day after the 10th day of Ascension and the 50th day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is also the day on which the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Paracletos means comforter.

The Jews celebrate Paracletos after their Passover. Pentecost means fiftieth day and this day was known as the Jewish harvest festival day. Since the Paracletos descended upon the Apostles on this day, it is celebrated as the Feast of Pentecost.

After the 10th day of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, at 9:00a.m. in the morning, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, and what the Lord told them was Fulfilled. The Apostles, after receiving the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, a new chapter was opened for the Christian Church. As John Chrysostom said, “this is the birthday_of the Christian Church.”

Pentecost is celebrated on the 50th day after Easter. The origin and celebration of the nine major feast days is as described above and they are observed by refraining from any physical activities. Among these, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day and Pentecost have rotating days of observance in the calendar. However, Palm Sunday, Easter and Pentecost fall on Sunday; crucifixion on Friday and Ascension on Thursday. On the other hand, the others such as the Day of Annunciation, Christmas, transfiguration and Epiphany have no fixed days of observance.

Apart from the major nine feast-days, there are other nine minor feast-days, these are::

1. Sibket – (the First Sunday before Christmas) The feast to commemorate the preaching of the prophets that the Messiah will come to redeem his people from bondage of sin.
2. Birhan- (the 2nd Sunday before Christmas) The feast to commemorate Our Lord’s coming to give light to the world.
3. Nolwai- (the 3rd Sunday before Christmas) the feast of Our Lord as “Good Shepherd.”

4. Genna – This feast is observed on the eve of Christmas to celebrate the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This day is observed on Tahsas (December) 28 E.C. as an annual feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His mother, the Holy Virgin Mary.
5. Gizret – (Circumcision) This feast is observed on Tir (January) 6 E.C. as written in the Laws of Moses (Lev. 12:3) in commemoration of Christ's circumcision on the eighth day of His birth. (Lk. 2:21),
6. Lidete Simeon – This is the feast to commemorate the presentation of Our Lord in the temple 40 days after his birth. The day is called "Lidete Simeon" in remembrance of the rejuvenation of Simeon when carrying the baby Lord Jesus in his arms. It is observed on Yekatit (February) 8 E.C. (Lk. 2:29, 32; Lev. 12:6).
7. Kana Ze Gelila – (Feast of Cana of Galilee) It is the feast when the Lord turned water into wine at a wedding in Cna. (Jn. 2:1-12).
8. Debere Zeit – It is a feast commemorating the second coming of our Lord and where the resurrection of the dead is taught. (Mt. 24 and 25).
9. Mesekele – (The Day of the Holy Cross) the Meskel holiday is celebrated on Meskerem 17 (27th of September) and Megabit 10 (19th of March). The word Meskel means, Cross, and the feast commemorates the finding of the True Cross by St. Helena. The story in brief is that after the crucifixion of the Lord, the sick were healed by touching it and rubbing their bodies against the Cross. Attracted by these miracles, many became Christians. Seeing this, the Jews threw the Cross into a rubbish disposal pit and after a long time this place grew into a hill. Christians knew the area despite their inability to dig out and retrieve it.

During the invasion of Titus, (70 A.D.) all Christians left Jerusalem and long after the site of the city was changed, it became difficult to locate the place where the Cross was buried. Because of this it remained buried for more than three hundred years.

In the 4th century, (327 A.D.) the mother of King Constantine, Queen Helena, made a trip to Jerusalem to find the Cross. But she could not trace the place for no one could tell her the exact location. Since the finding of the Cross was God's Will, a certain old man by the name of Kiriakos (Kirakos Yared's Hymn Book of Helena) sympathizing with her search, advised her as follows: - "You need not tire out yourself and others in vain. Make people gather wood and pile it. Put incense on it and burn it. Following where the smoke drifts, dig and you will find out the Cross." (Synaxarium Megabit (March) 10 E.C.). She did all that she was told. The site where the Holy Cross was buried (Yared's Hymn Book of Helena). She then dug and found out the Cross. The Ethiopian Hymnologist, St. Yared has praised this event with the verse, "The Wooden Cross which was buried at Golgotha by the Jews is found today." (Yared's Hymn Book of Helena). This event is also celebrated every where in the Christian world. But in Ethiopia it is celebrated with great spiritual feeling and traditional sentiments. The Meskel Holiday falls during the beginning of the Ethiopian spring and this makes it very colorful. On Mekerem 16 (September 26th), in the cities, villages and the surrounding areas, people bring torches of twigs called 'Chibo' and wood to 'Meskel Square', to form the 'Demara' (bundles of branches of wood and twigs). The priests perform prayers in

front of the Demera and sing,” Meskel has illuminated, and it decorated the sky with stars circle the Demera followed by a huge procession with circles it singing, “lyoha Abeyaye Meskerem Tebaye.” (Behold, Meskerem has dawned and the flowers have blossomed). People at home also light ‘chibbos’ and make merry. On the 17th morning the Demera is lit. However in Addis and in some other places, it is lit on the evening of the 16th. Since prayers have been said over the demera, people make a sign of the cross on their forehead with the ashes and spray it over their cattle. Since Helena started digging on Meskerem 17 (September 27th) and found the Cross on Megabit 10 (March 19th) these holidays are observed as the same holiday.

In addition, thirty three feast days of the Virgin Mary have been observed in Ethiopia since ancient times. Every month also on the 29th the Holiday of the Lorad and on the 12th of St. Michael as well as the days of death of the Apostles are observed.

Yearly holidays in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are celebrated by taking out the Ark of the Covenant from the Holy of Holies and carrying it on the head of a priest and going around the Church three times in procession (oudet) to the accompaniment of songs and hymns fitting each particular occasion. The celebration is wound up after a sermon is given.

This happens when the church service is conducted in the morning. However, on other feast days, the liturgy is performed after the Ark of the covenant is returned to the temple where, again the ceremony is concluded after a sermon.

The days on which feasts and holidays fall are calculated by a set of rules as laid down in a book called “Bahre Hasab” or “Merha Iwur.”

Regularly recurring holidays are declared on the first day of the Ethiopian New Year which is also known as St. John the Baptist’s Feast Day. Ethiopian New Year falls on Meskerem 1 (September 11th) except in a leap year when it falls on September 12th. The beginning of the New Year is believed to be the beginning of the bating of the flood of destruction and the covenant God made with Noah that they shall come in cyclic succession. (Gen. 8:13-22; Jubilee 7:19-30). The Hebrew and Copt new years also fall in September. Since our Church is ancient and follows the tradition of the Old Testament, she observes and maintains the order of reckoning the new year in accordance with this tradition.

ICIONS

Since ancient times, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has had a rational for the veneration of icons. Icons were known to have been venerated by the Jews prior to Christianity.

As told in the Old Testament, God Himself ordered Moses to make a picture of the ‘Cherub’, on the Ark of the Covenant. (Ex. 25:19, 37:7; I kgs 6:23 I kgs 6:2-17; Ezek. 9,3, 10:3; Eno. 14,11). These pictures of the ‘Cherub’ are drawn on the Covenant because the Ark of the Covenant is the manifestation of the glory of God. The picture of ‘Cherub’ too, is the symbol of the ‘Cherub’ who carry the throne. The picture is in the form of cocks with their wings spread out.

Icon making has a historical basis in the Church. As is known in church history, the first Christians maintained and spread their faith by digging holes, carving rocks,

making caves and catacombs for preserving their materials and protecting themselves from enemies. In these catacombs, they used to collect the relics of their martyrs and pray and teach. During these times, people started joining their congregation. Since they had no freedom of movement and could neither find nor produce books, they resorted to teaching by using parables from the Bible in pictures such as:

- a shepherd carrying his sheep to show that Christ would save those who die believing in Him and that He is a king and a trusted shepherd.
- Others started their pictures from stories of the Old Testament. For example, they drew how the first persons, Adam and Eve, were tempted by the serpent. (Gen. 3:1-7).
- They drew a devoutly praying believer to depict Noah in his ark (Gen. 7-1-24).. They also depicted the story of the New Testament as follows:-
- The annunciation of St. Gabriel to Our Lady.
- The birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ in the district of Juea; in the city of David in bethledhem in a place called 'Efrata'. The wise men paying homage and presenting gifts to the baby Lord Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem.
- The Baptism of the Lord and His teachings for three years and three months along with the miracles that He performed.
- The first miracle performed at Cana in the district of Galilee.
- The Lord's crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension and His second coming.
- Our Lady with her beloved Son and on the left Isaiah pointing towards her, saying, 'behold! The Virgin will conceive a child and will give birth to a Son.' Pictures like these are found in the ancient Christian hiding caves and these were

utilized to teach religion.

On the other hand, there are many stories and oral traditions about the Lord's picture. One of the narrations is Apostle St. John. The Evangelist John drew the Lord as he saw Him on that Friday. The voice from the icon was heard as saying, "as the Jews, crucified me here in Jerusalem, will you crucify me for the second time in Rome?" Immediately, he drew him wearing a purple raiment (kelemeda). This was the beginning of this type of pictures. After finishing the picture, John the Evangelist kissed the picture and his lips remained stuck to it. All these miracles were performed by the picture.

The picture of Our Lady was first drawn by the Evangelist Luke. The prayer and hymn books of our churches also state that the picture of Our Lady was drawn by the Evangelist Luke.

"Salutations to your icon as Luke one of the wise evangelists drew it by his hand" (Melke Seil – a hymn about the Icon, Synaxarium of October 22, E.C.)

In the Church, an icon conveys two types of messages. One is to teach those people who are unable to read the miraculous stories of the Holy Scriptures and the other is to learn about the lives, devotions and struggles of the martyrs and also to subdue the carnal temptations and overcome evil spirits and also to honour the righteous and through the pictures show love and honour to those represented in the icons.

To pray before an icon is to seek grace, bounty and intercession from the saint or angel represented in the picture. To venerate and kiss an icon is to express one's

love and respect to the one represented in the picture. This is a tradition that has been practiced by the Church ever since its establishment.

The Church believes and teaches that we should say grace, give honour, bow, kneel down and beseech for mercy through the consecrated icons of the Lord, Our Lady, Angels, Saints and Martyrs.

“I bow down before your icon and I submit to the icon of your Son, Mary the Virgin, Mary the mother of God.” (Melka Seil – Hymn of Icons)

THE HOLY CROSS

The Cross is highly venerated in the life of the Church and there are prophecies and symbolic representations about it. Prophecy “The grape-vine, cut from Hasisson and planted in Gologtha became my cure.” (Songs of Solomon 5:1-2).

“Thou has set up a banner for those who fear thee, to rally to it from the bow that thy beloved may be delivered. (Ps. 59:4).

Symbol: The wood with which Noah built his ark (Gen. 7:1-6). The staff of Moses (Ex. 4:2-9). The bronze serpent (Num. 21:9). All these are symbols of the Cross.

Before the crucifixion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Cross was the symbol of penalty, curse and humiliation (Deut. 21:23; 2Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13).

But after the crucifixion of Our Lord, the cross has become a sign of spiritual freedom and a throne of peace. As such it has become a sign of freedom and victory for all Christians (Ps. 2:15-17).

The Cross which Constantine the Great saw in the form of light lives as a symbol of victory. As St. Paul stated, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God”. (1Cor 1:18; Phil. 3:18).

The Cross of Christ has become an instrument of punishment for the death and satan. As St. Yared stated in his hymn for the departed, the Son who created the world drove away His enemy by His Cross.

The faithful believing in Christ and crossing themselves in the sign of the cross overcome demons and evil desires. The cross has also become the symbol of all Christian art. The Christians make a symbol of the cross on their clothings, books and household utensils. In Ethiopia needle works, embroidery and jewelry are adorned by the sign of the cross. Some Christians tattoo the cross over their foreheads and hands.

The faithful not only wear crosses in their life time but it is also kept with them after death. A cross made out from wood, metal or stone is planted over their graves. This is done to show that the cross is not only the symbol of death and suffering, but also a sign of resurrection and life.

Since the icon and the cross occupy a prominent place in the spiritual life of Christians, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church serves the faithful with consecrated icons and crosses.

In Church services the cross is used for blessing. Priests always keep the cross with them, give blessings with it and it is kissed by the faithful.

In accordance with this, the church sings and prays as follows:-

“The Cross is our power,
The Cross is our strength,

The Cross is our ransom,
The Cross is the salvation of our soul,
The Jews denied, but we believed,
We, who believed are saved by the power of His Cross.”

As the Psalmist said “We will worship at His footstool.” (Ps. 131:7); it is therefore fitting to prostrate, to kneel down and to bow for the cross in reverence and grace.

This reverence is also based on the Hymn of St. Yared (Tsome Digua) which runs, “O Master, we prostrate for Your Cross and praise your Holy Resurrection.” This is in accordance with the teachings of our Church.

ECCLESIASTICAL OBJECTS

The ecclesiastical objects are those with which the priests administer the sacraments of the Church. There are different objects used for administering these sacraments.

These are:

- a) The Paten (Tсахil) – on which the Holy Body of Christ is sacrificed.
- b) The Chalice (Tsiwa) – in which the precious blood of Christ is poured.
- c) The Cross-Spoon (Erfe Meskel) – by which the Precious Blood of Christ is given.
- d) The Corporals (the coverings) (Mahfed)- the cloth with which the Holy Communion is covered symbolizing the shroud over Christ’s Body.
- e) The Golden Basket (Mesobe Werq) – in which the bread of the Communion is carried from the Bethlehem into the Church.
- f) Censer (Tsina) – used for burning incense.
- g) The Bell (Kachil) – the bell is rung at the beginning of the Liturgy, when the deacon says, Go forth, ye catechumen; when the priest says “Lord have Mercy upon us,” when the clergy come out from the Holy of Holies to offer the Body and the Blood of Christ to the people and on other occasions of Solemn prayers and services.

All these ecclesiastical objects are used for the above mentioned services after they are consecrated with prayer, Holy Oil and blessings.

The order of prayers and the anointing of the Holy Oil for blessing the ecclesiastical objects is found at the beginning of the Book of Liturgy.

The Vestments (Libse Tekihino)

Vestments which the clergy wear to administer the sacraments of the Church are clothings blessed with prayer, specially woven, and they are kept in a particular place befitting the spiritual service.

- a) Liturgical Vestments should be kept in a vestry of the Church in a clean condition. It is forbidden to wear them in other places for other purposes and by other persons. (Ezek. 44:17-19; Fetha Negest Article 12).
- b) It is commanded that the chasuble which the clergy put on their robes should have five hanging strips.

- c) The vestment worn for Liturgy by priests must extend from their necks upto their ankles. (Fetha Negest, Article 12, Basil).
- d) The priest must choose the vestment that fits him before he puts it on. He should not take the vestment off once he puts it on. If it is long he should use a girdle. (Ex. 28:2-43; Fetha Negest, Article 12, Basil).
- e) Before the priest puts on the vestment it must be blessed by a bishop if there is one. If there is no bishop, the priest himself shall bless and put it on. Also the deacons' vestment must be blessed. After all the ecclesiastical objects and vestments are dedicated to a church and consecrated, they should neither be taken out of the Church nor used for other purposes. (Ezek. 44:14-19; Fetha Negest, Article 12).
If anyone takes these objects and vestments out of the church and uses them for non-spiritual purposes, he will bring wrath and chastisement upon himself like Uzziah and Belshazzar (2Chron. 26:18-20; Dan. 5:1-31).

