Curriculum

Initial Meetings

- Exchange Contact Information
- Setup a few initial meetings to get to know him/her
  - What notions or ideas do they have about God/Christianity/Orthodoxy
  - Why are they seeking the Church? What are they looking for?
  - Who is their family, what kinds of friends, school/work, family attitude about religion, about God, etc.
  - What kind of support system do they have (if any)
- Give them a tour of the church
  - Church and Chapel
  - Church service calendar
  - Who is Pope Tawadros, HE Metropolitan Youssef, HG Bishop Basil, our priests, etc.
- Attend multiple liturgies
- Q&A
- When the time is right, offer for them to start Catechumen classes and explain what that means and what that timeline looks like.
  - REMEMBER: there is no pushiness in Orthodoxy. There is only the Truth. We are not looking for quantity, but for quality. If numbers were the main goal, to fill our pews, then we could compromise the Truth in order to obtain followers. But that is not the case. See John 6.

Meeting Structure

1.5 hours

1. Prayer (in Church/Chapel)
2. Follow-Up
3. Pressing Questions (Q&A)
4. Lesson

Spiritual Canon

The Spiritual Canon is the MOST important part of Catechism.

Prayer

Everyone starts at a different level, but if someone is at zero, I usually go in this order:

1. Pray the Lord's Prayer until it's memorized. Pray extemporaneous prayer after.
2. Add the Thanksgiving Prayer
3. Add Psalm 50

4. Up to twice a day (morning and evening) if not already
5. "Come Let us Kneel Down" (with prostrations) in the mornings
6. Add Gospel of 1st Hour in mornings, 12th Hour in evenings

Scripture

Use NKJV, can read one section at a time or continue through a chapter.

Use Coptic Commentary app to address difficult verses. If you have any question, write it down and bring it to next meeting (or send it to Abouna).

Start with the Gospels as is mentioned below in the pre-catechism.

Fasting

Liturgical Experience

Divine Liturgy

Vespers & Matins

Pascha Week

Part of the benefit of a long catechism is the chance to experience the entirety of the liturgical year/calendar

Curriculum

We may be tempted to use catechism as a way to equip ourselves to "win debates" (even under the guise of "being sure about the Church") but this is temptation by Satan. Satan tempts us to devalue the faith part, and increasingly value arguments, logic, data, etc.

Once I commit to catechism, I commit to obedience to the father the priest and the Church with regards to doctrine, teaching, etc.

Introduction to Catechism

1. Intro to Catechism
    - What is it
        - Preparation for Christian Life - NOT preparation for baptism
    - Discipleship
    - Components
        - Spiritual Canon
        - Liturgical Experience
        - Catechism Class
    - Expectations
        - Commitment

    - Reverence
    - ASK QUESTIONS
  - Misconceptions

2. Introduction to Coptic Church
  - Coptic Orthodox Church
    - Apostolic
    - Martyrs
    - Ascetic
    - Modern
  - Orthodoxy is NOT a denomination
  - Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern US
  - Church Calendar
  - Recommended Websites, Apps, Books, etc.

Unit 1: Truth (10 Weeks)

Accompanying Scripture:

- Gospel of Matthew
- Gospel of Mark
- Gospel of Luke

Recommended Reading:

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Recommended Viewing:

- HE Metropolitan Youssef: "Why Truth is Important"
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGTdSbdmHxs
- HE Metropolitan Youssef: "Inspiration/Inerrancy of Scripture"
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq6lMuuGgY8

Truth

- The point here is to establish a baseline... there is such a thing called Truth. And Truth is important (imperative). And discovering or knowing the Truth is the point of catechism.
  - Some things are unknowable
  - Some things require faith
  - Here, some preliminary ideas can be mentioned as the truth, to "get them out of the way" - homosexuality is sin, transgenderism is sin, abortion is sin
- There is only One Truth
  - You may not know what the below words mean, but just know that the Truth cannot be and at the same time "not be"
  - Either God exists (Theism), or He does not (Atheism)

    - Either Christ is God (Christianity) or He is not (Other Religions)
    - Either the Eucharist is the Mystical Real Presence of Christ; His Flesh indeed and His Blood indeed (Apostolic Christianity), or it's not (Protestantism)
    - Either the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (Orthodoxy), or He proceeds from the Father and the Son (Catholicism)
    - Either Christ is One (Oriental Orthodoxy) or Christ is Divided (Eastern Orthodoxy)
- How Truth is Revealed
    - Nature
        - "For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20)
        - The Church is NOT against Science or the Scientific Method but...
    - Scripture
    - Tradition

Tradition

1. Intro to Tradition & Orthodoxy
2. Benefits of Holy Tradition
3. vs. Sola Scriptura
    - Be careful of Sola Patristica

Scripture

1. Authenticity and Reliability of the Bible
2. Biblical Interpretation
3. Infallibility of the Bible
4. How to Read the Bible

Unit 2: Foundations of Christian Life (Pre-Catechism)

The idea of pre-catechism is to introduce who Jesus Christ is, and to start to establish the Spiritual Canon. We will read the four gospels, the Book of Acts, Genesis, and select Pauline Epistles.

Catechumens should download the app "Coptic Commentaries" and read "St Marcos Commentary" for any passages that are difficult to understand.

For each book, maybe we can have the Bible Study/worksheet.

1. Gospel of Mark
2. Gospel of Matthew
3. Gospel of Luke
4. Gospel of John
5. Acts
6. Genesis
7. Exodus 1-20

- Moses
- Plagues
- Passover
- Red Sea, Bitter Waters, Manna, Water from a Rock
- Ten Commandments

8. Galatians
    - St Paul's apostleship, grace, faith, promise to Abraham
9. 1 Corinthians 11-15
    - Lord's Supper
    - Spiritual Gifts
    - Love
    - Spiritual Gifts (Tongues)
    - Resurrection
10. Ephesians
    - Church as the Body of Christ
    - God's Plan for Salvation
11. Philippians
    - Life of Christian Discipleship
12. Colossians
    - Christ's Supremacy
    - Fullness of Life in Christ

Catechism Readiness Checklist

1. Who is Jesus Christ?
2. What did Christ preach about the Kingdom of God?
3. What did Christ preach about Christian behavior?
4. Why did humanity need salvation? What happened through the Fall?
5. What do Christ's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection accomplish for humanity?
6. What happened at Pentecost?
7. How did the Church grow?
8. Who is St Paul?
9. How did St Paul become an apostle?
10. What do the Scriptures teach about baptism, Eucharist, life in the Church?
11. How do the Old Testament promises and events relate to Christ and the New Covenant?

Unit 3: Salvation in the Orthodox Understanding (20 Weeks)

Salvation by Grace, Faith, Works (5 Weeks)

Accompanying Scripture:

- Gospel of John
- Genesis 1-11

- Exodus 1-20
- Romans

Recommended Reading:

- Salvation in the Orthodox Understanding
  - HH Pope Shenouda III
  - https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/g80ptvvlcjvo580oigj0t/Salvation-in-the-Orthodox-Concept-by-H.H.-Pope-Shenouda-III.pdf?rlkey=jmog2uvp5bfp6xy5frcuskyz2&dl=0
  - https://www.amazon.com/Salvation-Orthodox-Understanding-Pope-Shenouda/dp/B0FCLPFMCV
- The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment
  - HH Pope Shenouda III
  - https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/64ch0dioguo9wum5upw08/The-Heresy-of-Salvation-in-a-Moment-HH-Pope-Shenouda-III.pdf?rlkey=3rficdxk1jcs7498nq7buaaw4&dl=0

Recommended Viewing:

Notes:

Curriculum:

1. The Need for Salvation (Creation and Fall of Man)
   - Who is God?
   - Who is Man?
     - "in the image of God" (Humans) vs. "the image of God" (Christ)
   - Genesis 1 and 2 Understood
   - Image and Likeness of God
   - Genesis 3: The Fall of Man and the Need for Salvation
   - Sin, Death, Corruption
     - Original Sin
     - Death is the common problem that every religion, philosophy, ideology, etc. is trying to solve

2. What is Salvation?
   - Atonement from **sin**
   - Eternal Life (rather than **death**)
   - Perfection of the Likeness of God in Eternal Life (rather than **corruption**)
   - False Ideas of Salvation
     - Universalism - "All will be saved"
     - Limited Atonement - "Only the Elect" (Mormon, Jehovah Witness, etc.)
     - Pluralism
     - Protestantism - one extreme: By Grace through faith

    - EO response to Protestant ideas (e.g. in PSA, Original Sin, Theosis) during the neopatristic movement

3. Salvation by the Blood of Christ
    - Atonement
        - Qualities of the Savior
        - Ransom
        - Punishment? (PSA) - see fraction "O only-begotten Son"
    - How the Lord Prepared the World for His Incarnation
    - No Salvation without the Blood of Christ
    - Conditions for Accepting the Blood of Christ
        - Faith
        - Works

4. Faith
    - Living Faith
    - Faith Working Through Love
    - See Fr Reweis Sermon 10/11/2026

5. Introduction to the Sacraments
    - The point in this unit is NOT to deep dive sacraments (or address questions about baptism, Eucharist, Original Sin, Theosis, etc.
    - Redemptive vs. Non-Redemptive
    - Efficacious Sign (Visible Sign, Invisible Grace)
    - Redemptive Sacraments according to the Scripture
    - Repentance & Confession, include these points:
        - Evil works lead to death
        - Judgment according to our works/deeds

Mysteries of Christian Initiation [Sacraments I] (5 Weeks)

Scripture:

Recommended Reading:

- Comparative Theology
    - HH Pope Shenouda III
    - https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/gsuz0hh4jari1xsqhqke1/COMPARATIVE-THEOLOGY-HH-Pope-Shenouda-III.pdf?rlkey=eplgm0u8r08sx91mbx2pe8sn2&dl=0
    - https://www.amazon.com/Comparative-Theology-Orthodoxy-vs-Protestantism/dp/B0H8FXNJ2L

Recommended Viewing:

Notes:

Curriculum:

1. What is Baptism?
    - Meaning
    - Institution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
        - Water as the Material Element
        - Three Immersions
        - Declaration of the Faith
    - Conferred Grace
        - Death and Resurrection with Christ
            - *Special Topic: Right-Hand Thief*
        - New Creation (Born Again)
        - Forgiveness of Sin (Original Sin)
        - Adopted into God's Family (Membership in the Body of Christ)
        - Put on Christ
    - Special Topics
        - *Special Topic: Baptism of Infants*
        - *Special Topic: One Baptism*

2. Baptism Prefigured in the OT
    - New Creation
        - Primordial Waters
        - Deluge
    - Covenant and Incorporation into God's Family
        - Circumcision
    - Salvation Through Water
        - Noah's Ark
        - Crossing the Red Sea
        - Crossing the Jordan
    - Cleansing and Consecration
        - Ritual Washing
        - Naaman Washing in the Jordan
        - Elijah's Sacrifice
        - Ezekiel's Cleansing and New Heart

3. Baptism in the NT and Early Church
    - In the New Testament
        - 1st Century Judaism
        - Baptism of St John the Baptist
        - Christ's Baptism
        - Baptism in the Gospels
        - Baptism after Pentecost
    - In the Early Church
        - Sources (Egeria, Tertullian, Didache, etc.)
        - Sunday before Lent: Preparation, Examination, and Enrollment

    - Lent Period: Photizomenoi
    - Sunday before Resurrection: Renounce Satan & Profess Christ
    - Resurrection Vigil: Baptism

4. What is Confirmation?
    - Meaning
    - Insititution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace
        - Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
    - Confirmation in the Book of Acts
    - Work of the Holy Spirit in My Life <-- needs its own lesson?

5. Contemporary Rite of Baptism & Confirmation
    - Absolution of the Woman
        - Only for an already-Orthodox mother who just gave birth
        - *Special Topic: 40 and 80 Days*
    - Preparation (Baptismal Font, Materials, Priest, Parents)
    - Sanctification of the Water
    - Renunciation of Satan & Declaration of Faith
    - Baptism
    - Holy Myron
        - Brief History of the Holy Myron oil
    - Crowning
    - Commandment
    - Procession
    - Loosing the Girdle

Mysteries of Christian Life & Renewal [Sacraments II] (5 Weeks)

Scripture:

Recommended Reading:

- Comparative Theology
    - HH Pope Shenouda III
    - https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/gsuz0hh4jari1xsqhqke1/COMPARATIVE-THEOLOGY-HH-Pope-Shenouda-III.pdf?rlkey=eplgm0u8r08sx91mbx2pe8sn2&dl=0
    - https://www.amazon.com/Comparative-Theology-Orthodoxy-vs-Protestantism/dp/B0H8FXNJ2L

Recommended Viewing:

Notes:

Curriculum:

1. The Mystery of the Eucharist
    - Meaning
    - Institution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace
    - Readiness/Preparedness/Worthiness

2. The Eucharist: Prefigured in the OT

3. Eucharist in the New Testament & Early Church
    - Mystical Real Presence
    - Eucharist in the Fathers

4. The Mystery of Repentance & Confession
    - Meaning
    - Institution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace

5. Life of Repentance & Good Works
    - Evil works lead to death
    - Judgment according to our works/deeds
    - Life of Virtue

Non-Redemptive Mysteries (5 Weeks)

Although the Unit is called "Salvation in the Orthodox Understanding" and these are non-redemptive Mysteries, yet without the Priesthood, the Redemptive Mysteries cannot be administered! And those who are given to Matrimony, are married for their salvation! And the Unction of the Sick is a prayer for the physical and spiritual healing! So it is necessary that we learn them as a part of this unit.

1. Mystery of Priesthood
    - Meaning
    - Institution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace

2. Priesthood in the Scripture
    - OT Priesthood
    - Order of Melchizedek
    - "General" Priesthood
    - Ordination of Women

3. What is Matrimony?
    - Meaning
    - Institution of the Mystery
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace
    - What God has joined together, let not man separate

4. Contemporary Rite of Matrimony
    - Rings
    - Girdle
    - Vestments
    - Oil
    - Crowns

5. Mystery of Unction of the Sick
    - Meaning
    - Institution
    - Visible Sign
    - Conferred Grace

Unit 4: Who is God

Recommended Reading:

God the Trinity

1. Trinitarian Faith
    1. Introduction
    2. Analogies
    3. Biblical Foundations
2. Attributes of God
3. Trinitarian Heresies

Christology

1. Nature of Christ
2. Christ and our salvation

Unit 5: Comparative Theology

Eastern Orthodox

- The Nature of Christ
- The Neo-Patristic Movement
    - Original Sin
    - Penal Substitutionary Atonement
    - Theosis

Roman Catholic

- All of the above +
- Filioque
- Papacy/Papal Infallibility
- Purgatory
- Immaculate Conception of St. Mary

Protestantism

1. All of the above +
2. Salvation
    1. Mysteries
3. Saints
    1. Intercession
    2. Icons
4.

Non-Christian

Do not believe in the Holy Trinity, or Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity Incarnate.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses
2. Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
3. Seventh Day Adventist
4. Judaism
5. Islam
6. Paganism

Unit 6: Church Rituals

Divine Liturgy

1. Introduction to Ritual & Liturgical Prayer
    1. What is Ritual
    2. Use of Matter (Icons, Candles, Incense, etc.)
    3. What is Liturgy
2. Divine Liturgy
3. Vespers & Matins

Sacramental Rites

1. Rite of Initiation: Baptism
2. Rite of Initiation: Chrismation
3. Crowning Ceremony

Unit 7: Church History

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