

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 pillar supports a roof. These mysteries have Biblical foundation (1 Corinthians 14:19). Accordingly, the five pillars of mystery are expressed in the Creed which is the confession of our faith.

1. Mystery of the Trinity

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

- 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, and 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. 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 Chapter 40 Verse 4:6).

Old and New Testament verses about the Oneness and Trinity of the Holy Trinity:

Old Testament

- Genesis 1:26; 2:18; 3:22; 11:7; 18:1-8
- Psalms 33:6; 146:5
- Isaiah 6:3,8

New Testament

- Mathew 3:16-17; 28:19
- John 14:26
- 2 Corinthians 14:13
- 1 Peter 1:2
- 1 John 5:7-8

2. 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” (John 1:14).*

3. Mystery of Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament given to all who believe in 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 (John 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 (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:28).

4. 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 of 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, for it is a real food. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him.” (John 6:53-57).

5. 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 (Luke 16:19-31).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church., Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations. Second Edition. (2004). Addis Ababa: Tensae Publishing House. Pp 24-34.

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