



Coptic Orthodox Christianity

Monasticism

Fall 2018

8



Coptic Monasticism

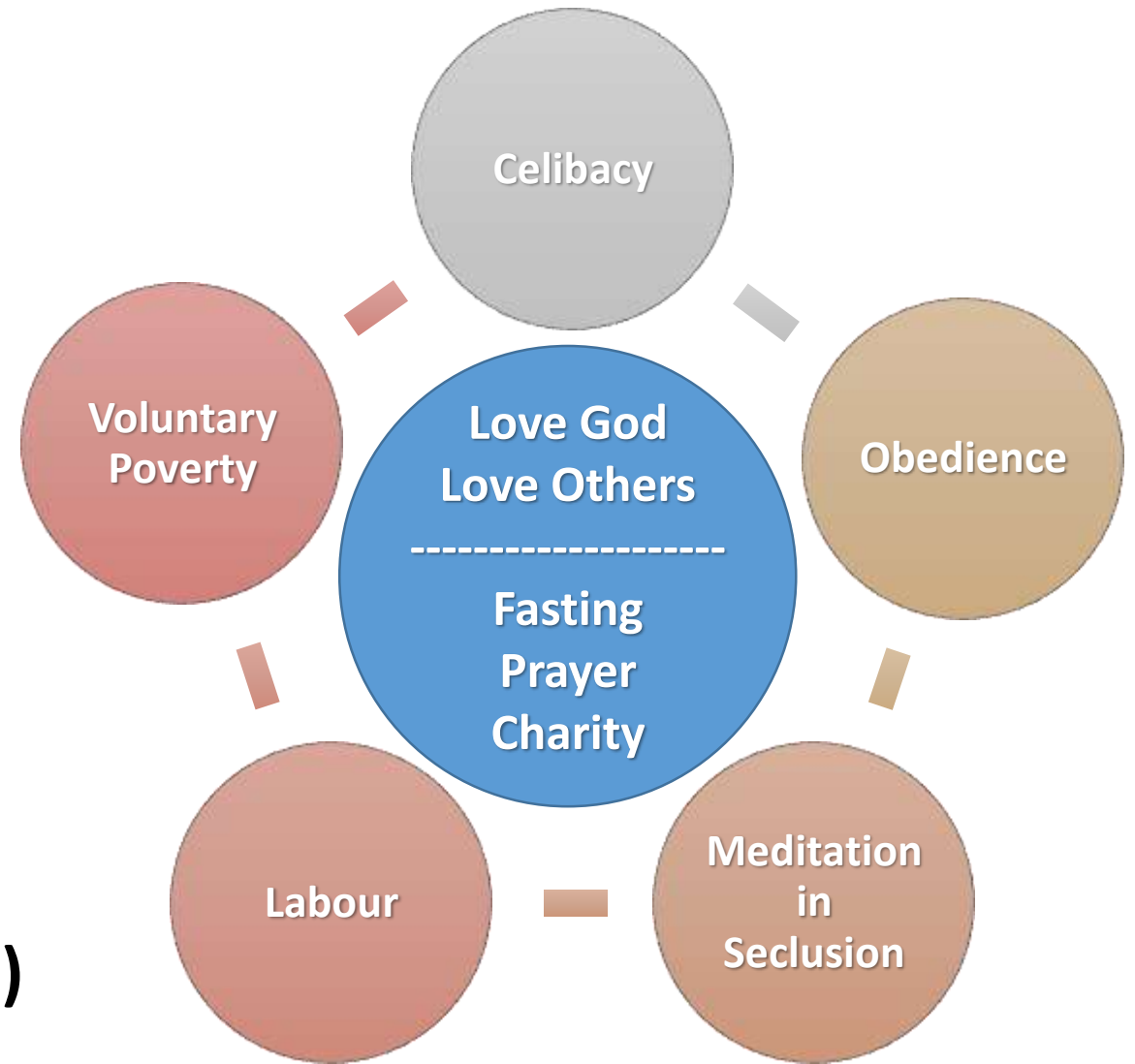
The Coptic Church is blessed with many **Monasteries & Convents** in Egypt, and now abroad through the grace of God where many dedicate their lives to devout worship serving the Lord in **fasting, prayer, celibacy & asceticism**: praying for all of us to come closer and closer to our loving God.

The Coptic Church is well-known for its **Monastic** movement, and has been blessed with great Monastic leaders and icons, including **Saint Paul of Thebes** (known as the first Anchorite), **Saint Anthony** (known as the father of Monasticism), **Saint Shenouda** the Archimandrite, **Saint Macarius** the Great, **Saint Pachomius** (the father of Monastic Communities) and **Saint Mary of Egypt** (known as one of the great ascetic penitents).

Coptic Monastic Rule

Coptic monastic regulations observe the following principles:

- (a) Celibacy**
- (b) Obedience**
- (c) Meditation in Seclusion**
- (d) Physical Labour (Work)**
- (e) Voluntary Poverty (Asceticism)**



**These principles are derived from
the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible.**

Monastic Progression

Coptic Monasticism has undergone three phases:

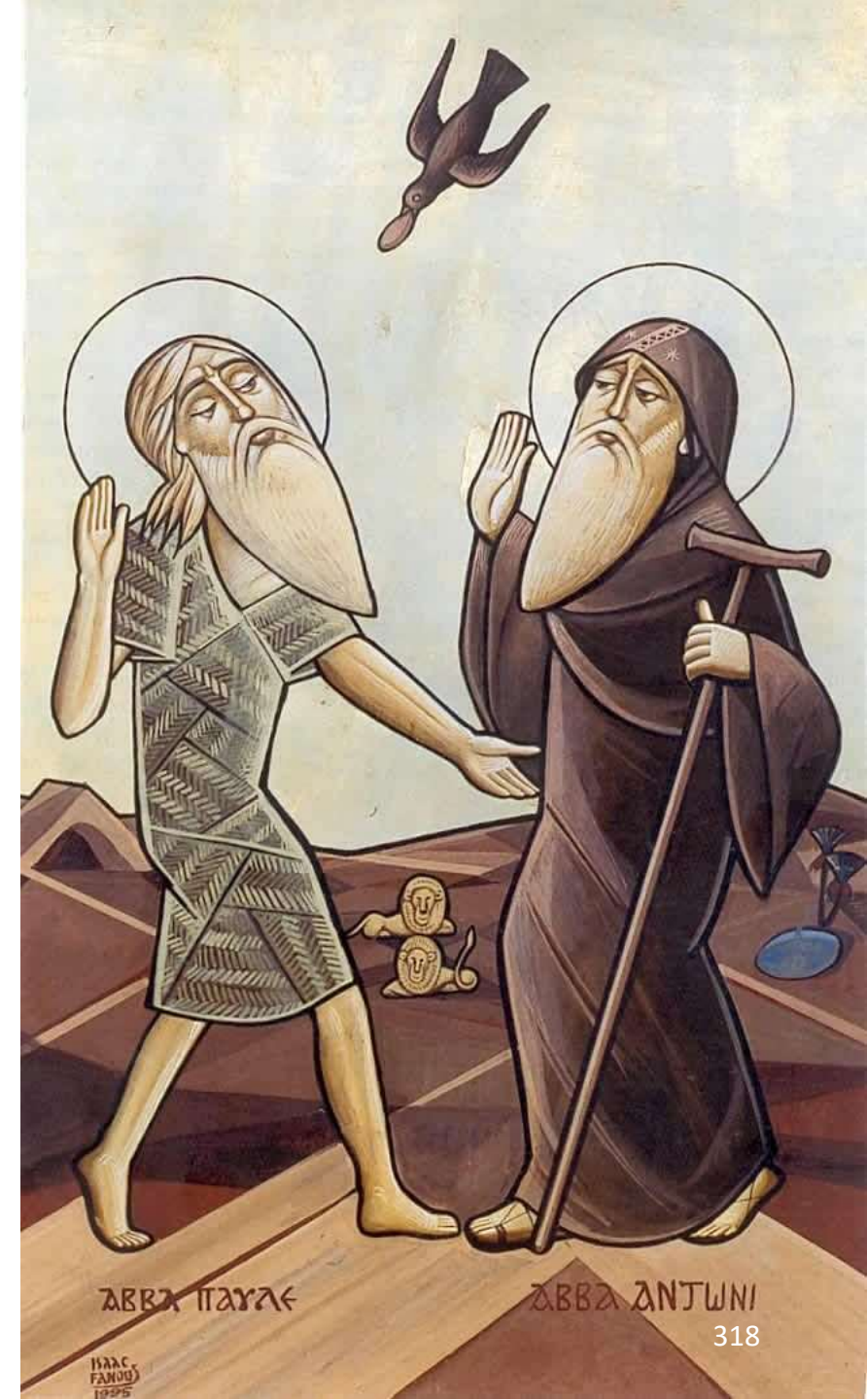
- **Initially**, anchorites or hermits lived in complete isolation. Each hermit organized their own prayer, clothing, food and work. Some hermits entered deep into the inner deserts, settling there for decades in complete isolation. ***St. Paul the Anchorite*** is known as the first hermit.
- **Hermitic**: monastics lived in separate hermitic caves or cells and assembled occasionally for divine service or spiritual meetings. This was established by ***St. Antony the Great*** who is known as the “father of all monks”.
- **Cenobitic**: monastics lived in a community inside the walls of the monastery in association with each other, governed by an abbot and a set of rules. The cenobitic (also known as communal) movement was founded by ***St. Pachomius the Great*** in Upper Egypt.

Christian Monasticism: Early Days in Egypt

- As early as **150 AD**, it is written that a wealthy man of Alexandria named Frantonious left for the nearby dessert and with him seventy others.
- In **250 AD**, **Saint Paul of Thebes** left for the Eastern dessert.
- He was followed by **Saint Anthony the Great** in **270 AD**, who established a system of hermitic monasticism and became known the Father of all the Monks all over the world.
- In **320 AD**, **Saint Pachomious** established the life of Cenobitic (Communal) Monasticism in upper Egypt, which many orders of monasticism still follow, including the Benedictine, whose motto is '**Prayers and Labour together**'.
- In **330 AD**, **Saint Macarius the Great** set down a monastic rule which had the advantages of the two previous rules. Monks lived individually but near one another and assembled together every Saturday evening, until Sunday, for spiritual talks; they also celebrated the Liturgy, which was followed by an 'agape' meal which they shared before returning to their cells.

Saint Paul the Anchorite

- **Saint Paul of Thebes (227 – 341 AD)**
- “Anba Bola” is known as the first anchorite or hermit.
- His biography was written by **Saint Jerome** in a book, “**Life of Saint Paul the First Hermit**” in Latin.
- According to Saint Jerome, Saint Paul fled to the desert as a young man during the persecution of Decius and Valerianus around **250 AD**.
- He lived in the mountains of the Theban desert in a cave near a clear spring and a palm tree, the **leaves** provided him with **clothing** and the **fruit** provided him with his only source of **food** until he was 43 years old, when a **raven** started bringing him **half a loaf of bread** every evening.
- Stayed in that cell for the rest of his life, **over 90 years**
- Was **visited by Saint Anthony** ... on that evening, the raven brought a **full loaf of bread** instead of half!



Saint Anthony the Great

- **Saint Anthony of Egypt (251 – 356 AD)**
- Revered for his importance among the Desert Fathers.
- In **270 AD**, Anthony decided to follow the words of the Lord who had said: **“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me.”** (Matthew 19:21).
- Anthony gave his wealth to the poor and needy, and placed his sister with a group of Christian virgins (like a convent).
- He is revered as the **“Father of Monasticism”** although Christian monasticism was already being practiced in the deserts of Egypt at the time. Ascetics commonly retired to isolated locations on the outskirts of cities. However, Saint Anthony is notable for being one of the first ascetics to attempt living completely cut off from civilization in the harshness of the inner dessert (wilderness).
- **“The Life of Anthony”** is Saint Anthony’s biography, written by **Saint Athanasius** and translated into several languages.



Saint Mary of Egypt

- **Saint Mary of Egypt (344 – 421 AD)**
- At the age of 12, ran away from home and lived an extremely dissolute life (like the prodigal son).
- At the age of 17, visited Jerusalem while still living an impure life ... attempted to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre but was unable to, being stopped by an unseen force.
- Realizing that this was because of her life of impurity, she was struck with **remorse**.
- Seeing an icon of the Virgin Mary, she prayed for **forgiveness**, promising to repent and give up the world to become **ascetic**.
- She attempted again to enter the church, and this time was able to enter.
- She crossed the Jordan and retired to the desert to live the rest of her life, over 60 years, as a **hermit in penitence**.



Christian Monasticism: Spreads to the West

- Monasticism spread throughout the Eastern and Western deserts of Egypt; from the Northern coast to Nubia.
- Before the Arab conquest of Egypt (641 AD), there were **around five thousand** monasteries and convents.
- Monasticism spread from Egypt to **Ethiopia** in the fourth century, it was also spread to **Palestine** and **Syria** by Saint Hilary of Gaza.
- Monasticism spread to the West through the Coptic monks who were preaching in **Ireland**, and from there to **Scotland** and the rest of **Europe**.
- It also spread through the Western travellers who visited Egypt and lived in its monasteries and among their monks, from whom they adopted the spirit of Coptic monasticism and transferred it to the West, through their books or by example of their lives.

Monasticism: Role in Civilization

- Coptic monasticism and monasteries were a centre of spiritual **illumination**, **civilisation**, and **culture** in Egypt throughout the ages, especially the Middle Ages, when they were practically turned into small universities.
- In the West, the role of monasteries and monasticism in preserving **knowledge**, **science**, **culture**, **civilisation**, and **education** was instrumental.



Monasticism: Modern Day Revival

There has been a revival in Coptic monasticism in Egypt and abroad:

- **Monastic life** is seen as a good **spiritual** example to follow.
- **Church leaders** have shown a sincere interest in building and renovating monasteries and encouraging monastic life.
- **Visitors** are allowed to enter monasteries; spiritual retreats are planned for youth and church groups to visit the monasteries.
- **Travel** to the monasteries is now easier (paved roads).

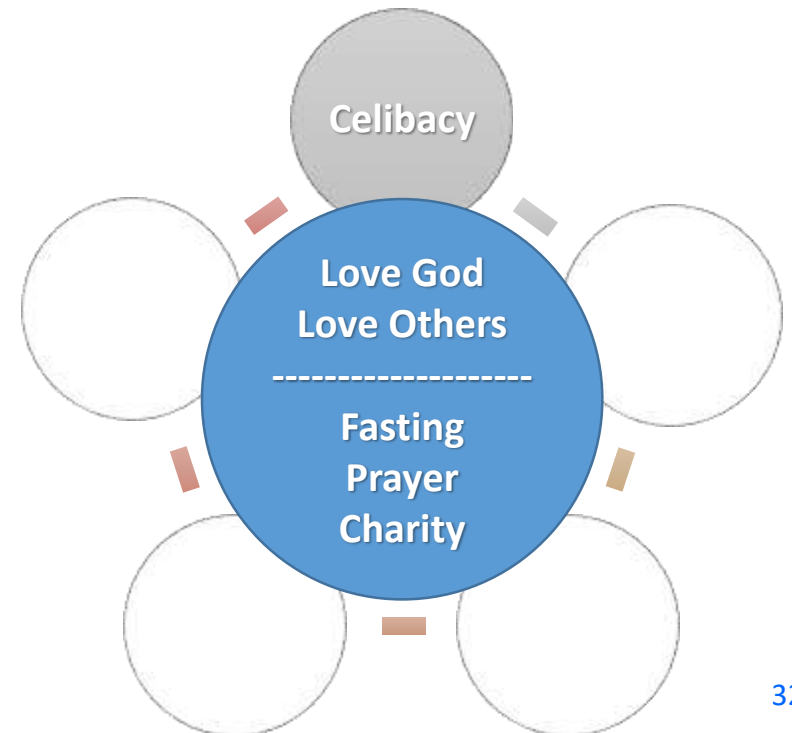


Monastic Rule



Monastic Rule of Celibacy

- Our Lord Jesus Christ lived a life of celibacy
- The Lord also spoke about
“... **those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God** ...” (Matthew 19:11)
- Saint Paul the Apostle also spoke about celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7



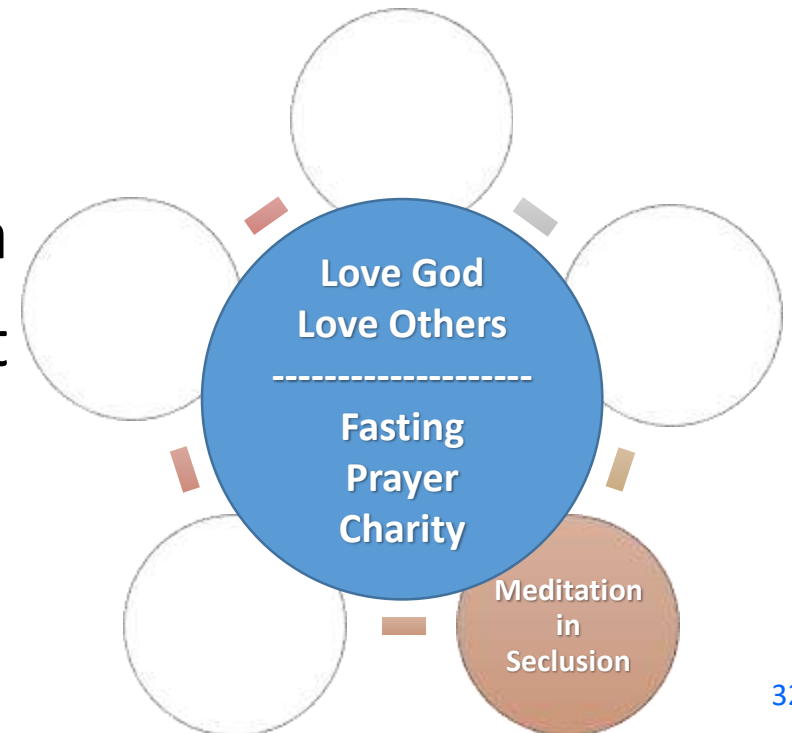
Monastic Rule of Obedience

- Submission to God
- Obedience to God's Word
- Obedience to God's Ministers
- The Bible said about Jesus,
**“though He was a Son,
yet He learned obedience
by the things which He suffered”**
(Hebrews 5:8)



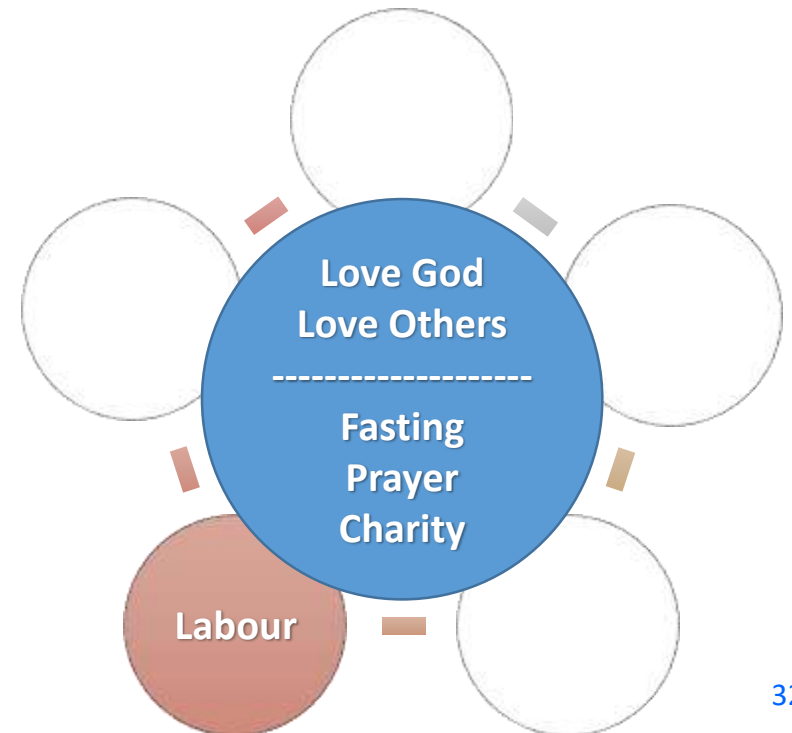
Monastic Rule of Meditation in Seclusion

- Our Lord said about Himself,
“... **the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head** ...”
(Luke 21:37)
- Meditation in Seclusion
- Meditation in the Wilderness
- In this way lived the prophets Elijah and Elisha
- Thus also was the life of Saint John the Baptist
- We live as strangers (sojourners) in this world because our true citizenship and permanent home is in Heaven



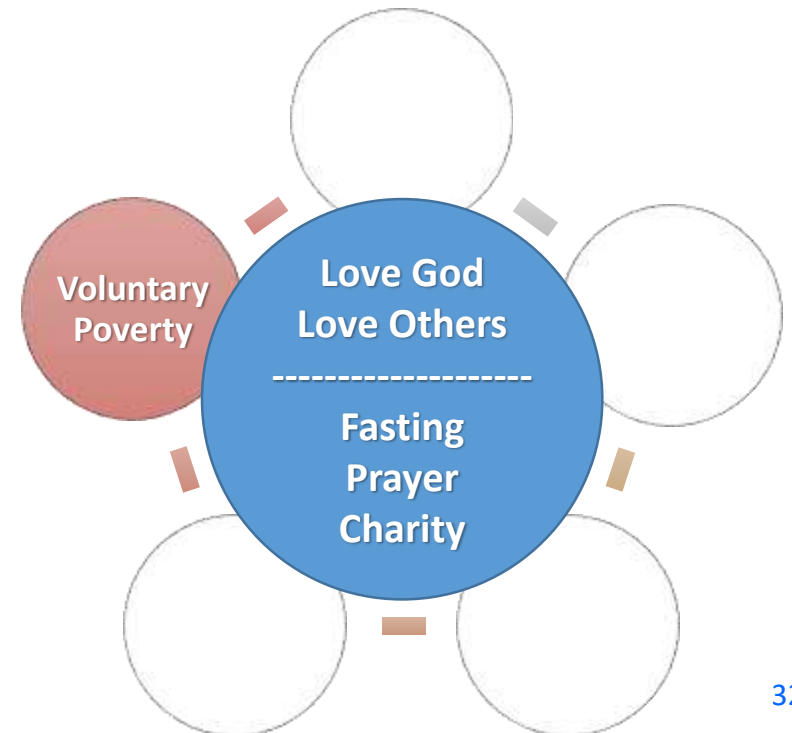
Monastic Rule of Labour

- Our Lord said about Himself,
“... **the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve ...**”
(Matthew 20:28)
- God called His prophets & disciples while performing their work
- Balanced life of both meditation & labour:
Learning from the sisters of Lazarus:
As Martha cannot live without Mary;
Mary also cannot live without Martha
(**Mary = meditation; Martha = labour**)



Monastic Rule of Voluntary Poverty

- About voluntary poverty, asceticism and hermetic life, Jesus said, **“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”** (Matthew 19:21)
- Saint Anthony, upon hearing the above verse read out at church, left all earthly possessions behind.
- **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”** (Luke 12:33)



We can Learn from the Monastics



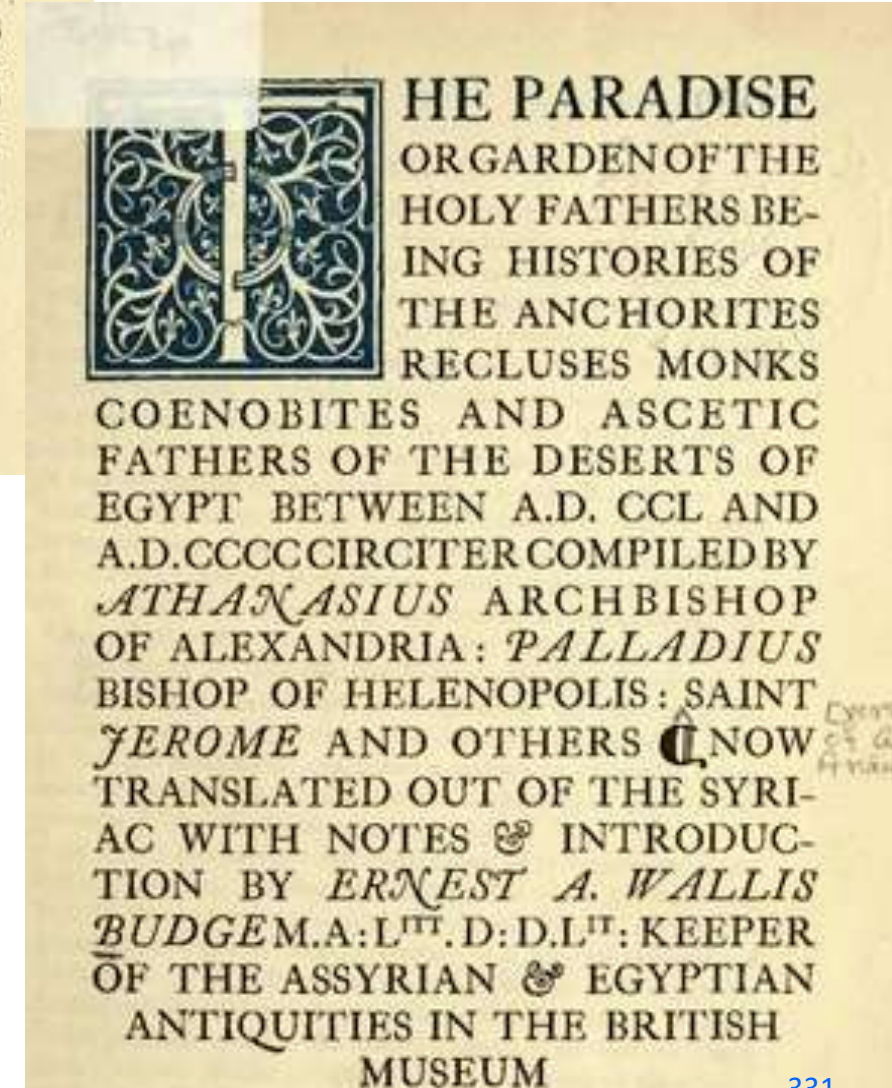
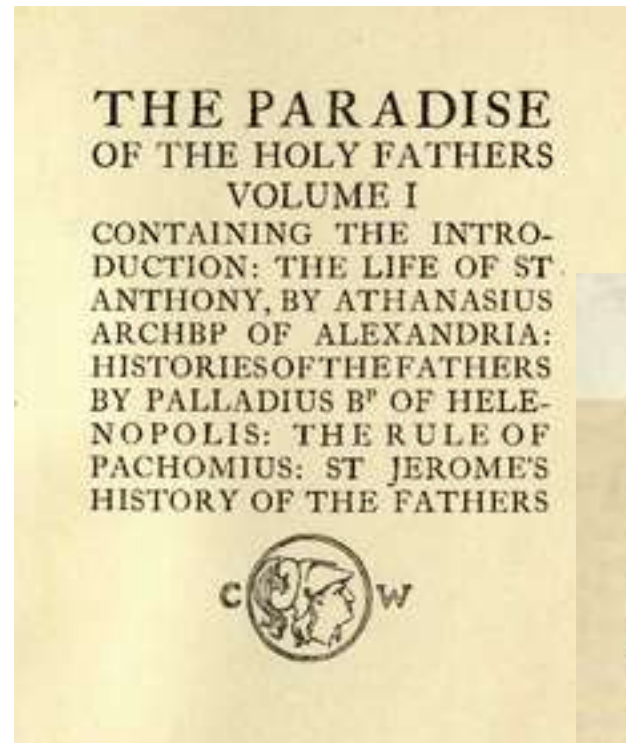
The Paradise (Garden) of the Desert Fathers *“Bostan el Rohban”*

We have ***much to learn***
from the ***lives and sayings***
of the *Desert Fathers and Mothers*.

Online versions available:

<http://www.coptic.net/articles/ParadiseOfDesertFathers.txt>

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/paradise1.i.html>





*"if we keep remembering
the **wrongs** which men have
done us, we **destroy** the power
of the remembrance of God"*

*Abba Macarius the Great
on the importance of Forgiveness*



*"just as the most **bitter** medicine drives out **poisonous** creatures, so prayer joined to fasting drives **evil** thoughts away"*

*Amma Syncletica
on fasting & prayer*

There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town; they are wasting their time ...

*it is possible to be a **solitary** in one's
mind while living in a **crowd**, and it is
possible for those who are **solitaries** to
live in the **crowd** of their own **thoughts**.*

*Amma Syncletica
on true (inner) solitude*



*Someone asked Abba
Anthony,
"What must one do in order to
please God?"*

*Saint Anthony replied,
"whoever you may be, always
have God before your eyes"*

*Abba Anthony the Great
on pleasing God*



" A *teacher* ought to be a *stranger* to the desire for *domination*, *vain-glory*, and *pride*; one should not be able to fool him by *flattery*, nor blind him by *gifts*, nor conquer him by the *stomach*, nor dominate him by *anger*; but he should be patient, gentle and humble as far as possible; he must be tested and without partisanship, full of concern, and a lover of souls. "

Amma Theodora

Amma Theodora said that neither asceticism, nor vigils, nor any kind of suffering are able to save. Only true humility can do that.

There was a hermit who was able to banish the demons.

And he asked the demons: "What makes you go away? Is it fasting?"

They replied: "We do not eat or drink."

"Is it vigils?" They said: "We do not sleep."

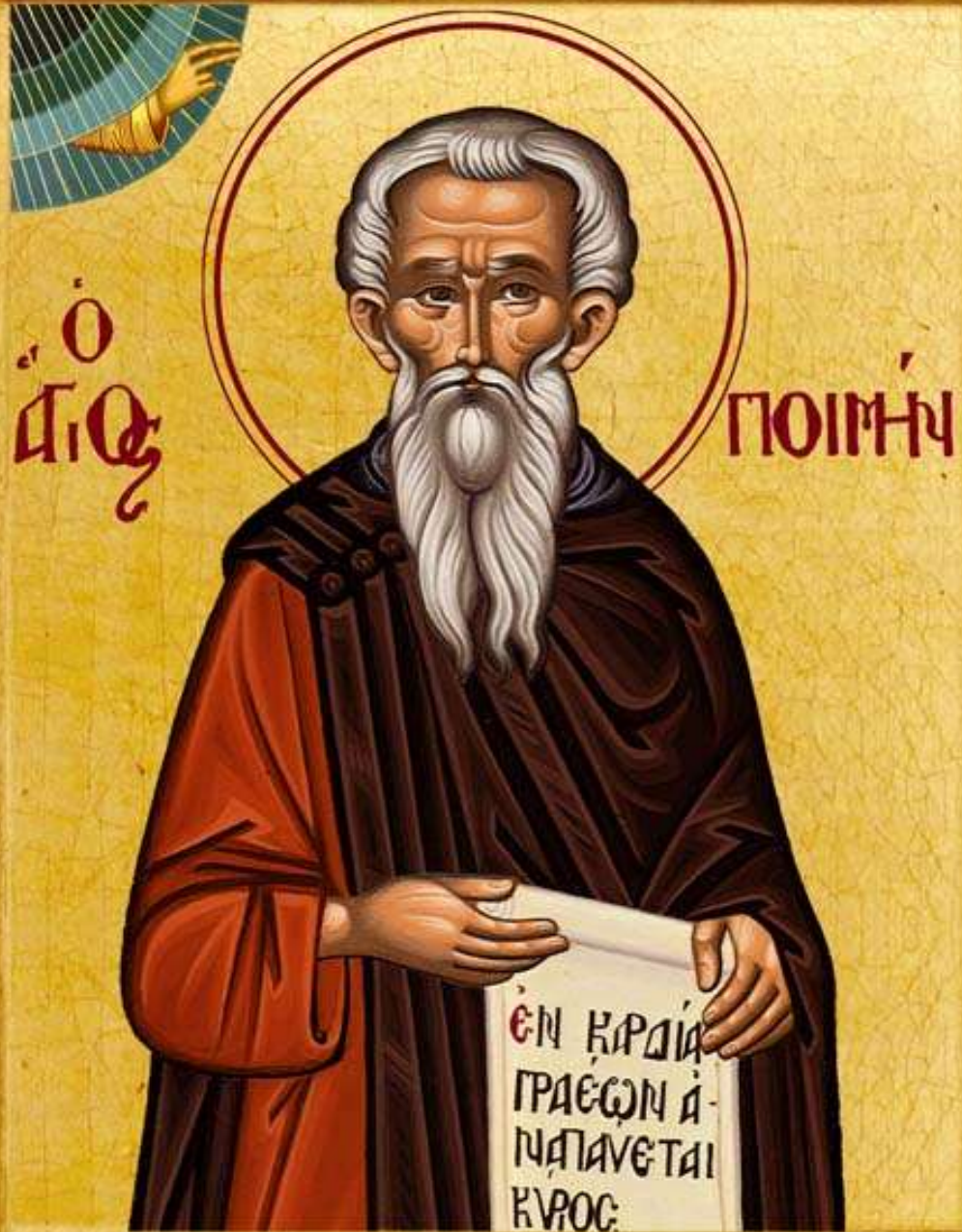
"Then what power sends you away?"

They replied: "Nothing can overcome us except humility alone."

Amma Theodora said:

"Do you see how humility is victorious over the demons?"

Amma Theodora on the importance of humility



*"do not give your
heart to that
which does not
satisfy your heart."*

Abba Poemen the Shepherd

SAINT

SARAH



*"One must **not** accept the following two thoughts: **fornication** and **judgment of one's neighbor**. When the enemy presents one of these we must rise up and pray; and pray again, with tears to God, and God will deliver us."*

Amma Sarah

Tasabīh (Praise)

*Excerpt from Coptic Midnight Psalmody
Chanted in Monasteries & Convents worldwide*

Christian Unity Day of Prayer 2015

"I sought after You" from Coptic Midnight Psalmody

Hosted at Saint George & Saint Anthony Church, Ottawa

Organized by the Christian Council of the Capital Area (CCCA)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3wuP34wqGE&t=434>



I sought after You: from the depth of my heart.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Loosen for me: all the bonds of sin.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Be a help to me: so that You may save me.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

May Your goodness: come speedily to me.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Overshadow me: with the shadow of Your wings.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

In six days You have made: all the creation.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Seven times every day: I will praise Your Name.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

All the creation: glorifies Your Name.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Yours is the lordship: and the authority.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Make haste, O my God: so that You may save me.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Ever knee: bows down before You.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

All the diverse tongues: together bless Your Name.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Turn away Your face: from all of my sins.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Blot out, O God: all my iniquities.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

You know my thoughts: and You search my depths.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Create in me: a clean heart.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Your Holy Spirit: do not take away from me.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Incline Your ears: make haste and hear me.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Set before me a law: in the way of Your justice.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Your Kingdom O my God: is an eternal kingdom.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

You are the Son of God: I believe in You.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

You who carries the sins of the world: Have mercy upon me.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Forgive me the multitude: of my iniquities.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

All of the souls: together bless Your Name.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Have patience with me: do not hasten to destroy me.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Early in the morning: I will rise and bless Your Name.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Your yoke is sweet: and your burden is light.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

In the accepted time: hear me.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Oh, how beloved: is Your holy name.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Disperse away from me: all of the devils.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Sow within me: the seed of Your righteousness.

My Lord Jesus: help me.

Grant us Your true peace: and forgive us our sins.

My Lord Jesus Christ: help me.

Coptic Personalities

H.H. Pope Shenouda III (1923 – 2012)



- 117th Patriarch of Alexandria (Nov 14, 1971 to March 12, 2012)
- Former US President Barack Obama said that *“we will remember Pope Shenouda III as a man of deep **faith**, a **leader** of a great faith, and an advocate for **unity** and **reconciliation** ... a **beloved** leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for **tolerance** and religious **dialogue**.”*
- H.H. is the author of 106 spiritual books, many translated into English from Arabic, many available online (as PDF or e-reader formats)
- Consecrated **Ottawa Church of St. Mary in 1989**, and the **Church of Sts. George & Anthony in 2008**



COPTIC MONASTICISM

by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

The text of a speech given by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Delivered at the Opening of the exhibit, "A Still, Small Voice: Sixteen Centuries of Egyptian Monasticism," at the Washington National Cathedral, March 15, 1992.

I want to tell you now about Coptic monasticism. Egypt is considered the motherland of monasticism. The first monk in the whole world was St. Anthony, a Copt from Upper Egypt. He was born in the year 251 and departed in the year 356; he lived 105 years. During this period he established monasticism and all the leaders of monasticism in the whole world were his disciples or the disciples of his disciples.

Read full article here:

- <http://becomeorthodox.org/the-orthodox-christian-church/coptic-monasticism/>

Sample Books by H.H. Pope Shenouda III

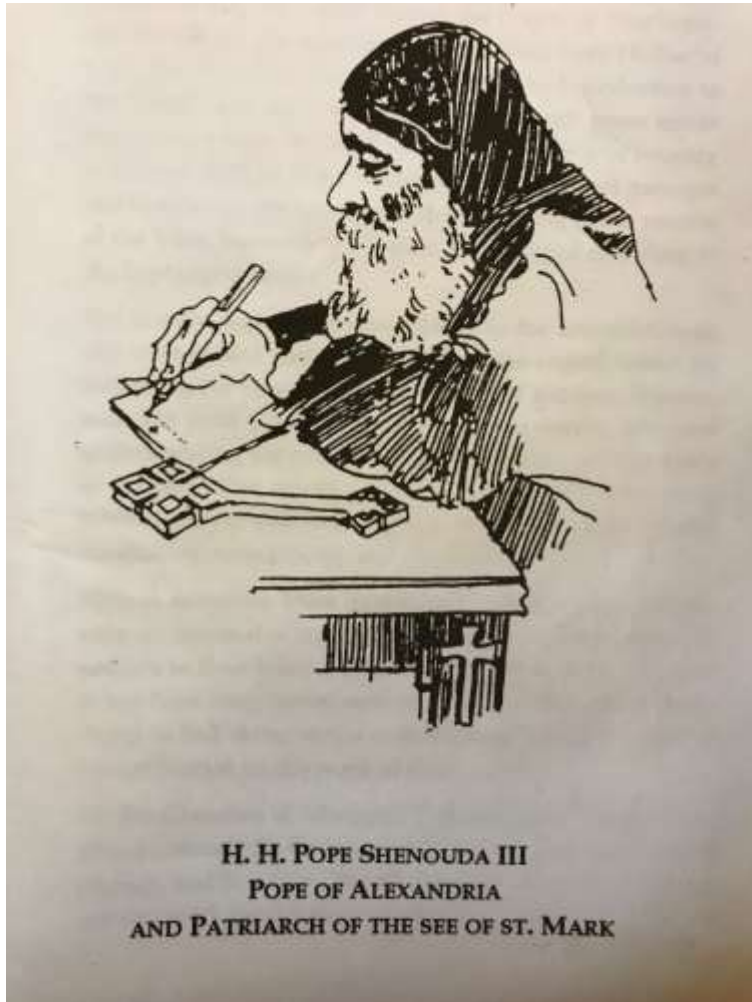


O LORD, DO NOT REBUKE ME IN YOUR ANGER
Contemplations on Psalm 6

Author: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
Print: 3rd, 2003 ISBN: 5345-26-X
Translation: Fr Macarius Wahba
Diocese of Melbourne November 14, 2005
34th Enthronement Anniversary of H.H. Pope Shenouda III

H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Faithful Shepherd, Author, Poet, Scholar



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20119626>

Egypt's Copts vote for successor to Pope Shenouda III

29 October 2012

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A council of Coptic Christians in Egypt has named three candidates to succeed Pope Shenouda III, who died in March.

They chose two bishops and a monk from a short-list of five to become the 118th head of the region's largest Christian minority.

The three names will be written on pieces of paper placed in a box on the altar of St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo.

A blindfolded child will be asked to draw one of the names on 4 November, thereby picking the new Pope.

The individual chosen will be enthroned in a ceremony on 18 November.

Late on Monday, acting Pope Pachomios said more than 93% of the council, made up of some 2,400 people, had voted.

Those who voted were picked by the Church and included leading members of the church, public figures and a handful of representatives of the Ethiopian Church, which has historic links to the church in Egypt.

They selected Bishop Raphael, a 54-year-old former aide to the late Pope and a member of the Church's Holy Synod, the Coptic Church's highest authority; Bishop Tawadros, a 60-year-old auxiliary bishop to acting head of the Coptic Church as well as being a member of the Holy Synod; and a monk from Alexandria, Father Raphael Ava Mina.

Aged 70, Fr Raphael Ava Mina is the eldest of the three candidates.



Succession of Coptic Patriarchs

1. *Saint Mark*

2. *Pope Anianus*

...

20. *Pope Athanasius the Apostolic*

...

116. *Pope Cyril (Kyrillos) VI*

117. *Pope Shenouda III*

118. *Pope Tawadros II*



Succession of Coptic Patriarchs

Church Doctrine Preserved

- Coptic Church teachings based on **Jesus Christ** as the chief **Corner Stone**
- No deviation in 20 centuries ... regardless of how world ideology changes
- **Christ's doctrine preserved**, proclaimed, passed down through generations
- Preserved by **Apostles** and **Patriarchs** from **St. Mark** to **H.H. Pope Tawadros**



Father Lazarus el Anthony

Father Lazarus El Anthony
Anchorite, Coptic Monk

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqPOPkj4_T8 (5-minute video)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_zxtRrvTXA (2-hour video)

Coptic Personalities

Tamav Irene (1936 – 2006)

On February 9, 1936, in a small town that lies on the banks of the Nile in Upper Egypt, Yassa & Genevieve gave birth to their beautiful eldest daughter Fawzia.

*Ever since her birth, she was a chosen fruit, and her mission was clearly assigned: “**She is not yours; she is ours, but look after her and bring her up properly**” were the words of the Virgin Mary to her mother in a vision while in labour.*

*In her younger days she showed a passionate interest in monastic life; in her **teens**, she joined the **convent** of St. Philopateer Mercurius (Abu Seifein) in Old Cairo and was named **Irene**.*



Tamav Irene

*In October **1962**, after the departure of the mother superior of the convent, Irene, the **youngest** of all the nuns, was pushed to church to be ordained as the **new mother superior** during the time of Pope Cyril VI.*

*So exceptional was this nun in the Pope's eyes that he entrusted her to be the abbess of the convent. In her, he recognized the **exemplary reflection of God's love and holiness and the profound ascetic self-discipline that she exercised in her monastic life.***

*Tamav Irene lived a life full of **spiritual depth**. She lived a life that is unparalleled in our modern times. This great saint departed to her heavenly abode on October 31st, **2006** after 44 years of service as mother superior of the convent of St. Philopateer Mercurius.*



Tamav Irene

- **1936** born eldest of 7 children on February 9
- **1954** became youngest nun in the Convent
- **1962** assigned as Abyss of the Convent
- **2006** departed in the Lord on October 31

She is recognised amongst Copts for her intimate relationship and communion with the Saints. She is known to have been visited by, and to have communicated with, Saints of the Old Testament, Saint Anthony the Great and Saint Philopateer Mercurius.

As with other nuns in her order, Tamav took a vow of **lifetime poverty**.

Her life was to be focused on **vigil, prayer, fasting and struggle, purity, poverty, solitude and stillness.**



Tamav Irene

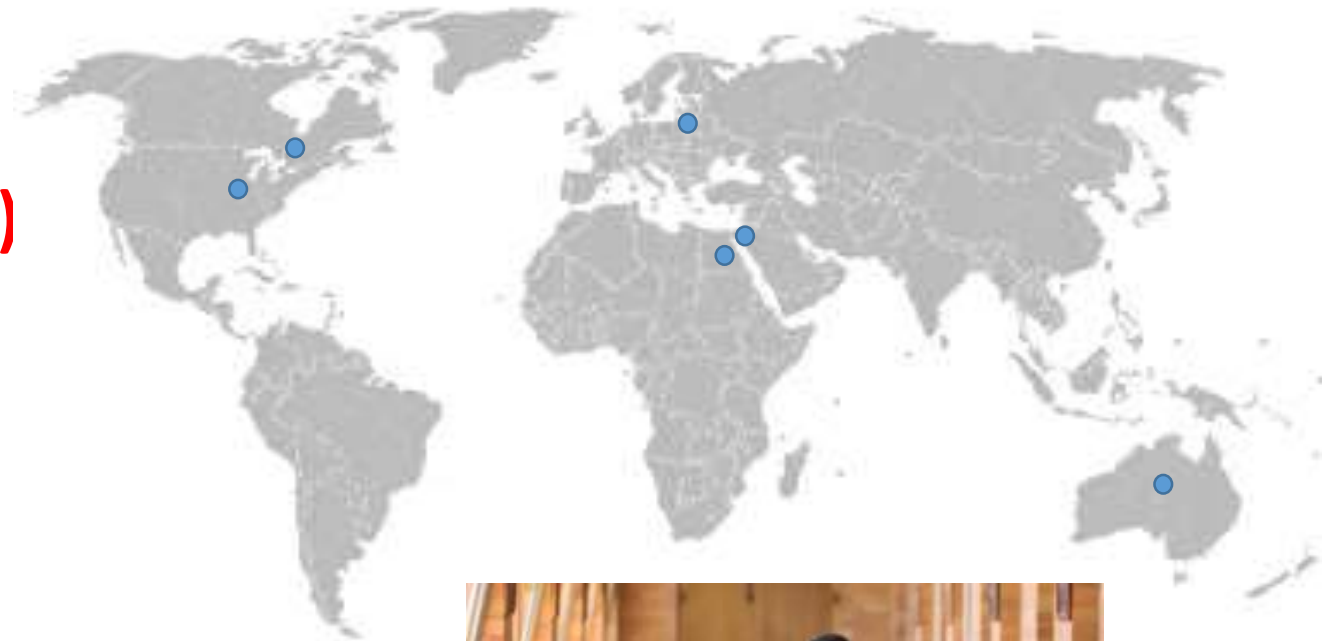
The life and legacy of Tamav (Mother) Irene

tamavirene.com



Coptic Monasteries & Convents Worldwide

- Egypt (88 sites; over 33 large)
- Holy Land (7)
- **Canada (2 recently established)**
- Australia (4)
- Ireland (1)
- Italy (1)
- Jordan (1)
- Germany (2)
- Syria (2)
- United States (6)
- United Kingdom (1)



http://www.wikiwand.com/en/List_of_Coptic_Monasteries

Abba Anthony Coptic Monastery in Perth, ON

www.abbaanthony.ca



Coptic Convent in Paisley, ON

Canadian Coptic Convent of St. Mary, St. George & St. Philopateer

www.cmgp.ca



Canadian Coptic Convent
St. Mary, St. George & St. Philopateer

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AN URBAN
SANCTUARY

2017 marks the establishment of the first Coptic Orthodox Convent in Canada. It is located on 92 acres of land on the Teeswater River. The facility is 20,000 square feet. The beautiful landscape of the surroundings will allow for peaceful meditation and quiet time with God. You will have an opportunity to attend liturgies and praises. The serenity of the Convent will offer a chance for reflection, relaxation and spiritual renewal. Enjoy exotic nature walks on the trails and along the bank of the River.

Famous Monasteries in Egypt

- The Syrian ('**El Surian**') Monastery
- The Monastery of Saint Pishoy (**Anba Bishoy**)
- Saint Mary's '**El Baramous**' (the Romans) Monastery
- The Monastery of Saint Macarius ('**Abu Maqar**')
- The Monastery of Saint Anthony (**Anba Anthony**)
- The Monastery of Saint Paul the Anchorite (**Anba Bola**)
- The Monastery of **Saint Mina** at Mariott
- The Monastery of **Saint Samuel** the Confessor
- Saint Mary's '**El Moharak**' Monastery in El Kousiah
- Saint Mary's '**Durunkah**' Monastery in Assiut (southern Egypt)
- The Monastery of Saint Mina and Saint Katherine (**Al Qalamun**)

Saint Anthony Monastery



Saint Bishoy Monastery



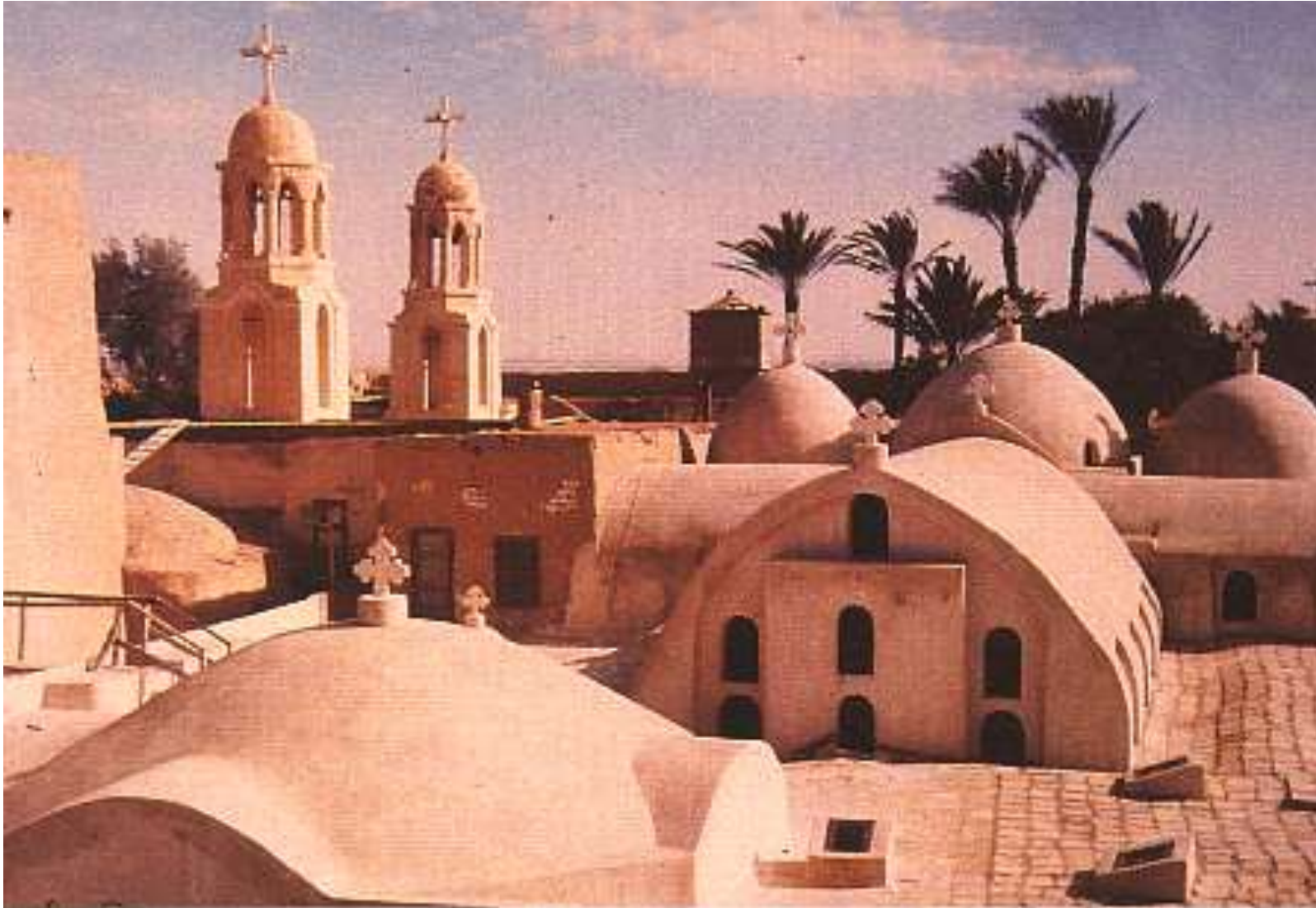


Paintings from the Church of Saint George at Saint Bishoy Monastery

The Syrian Monastery



El Baramous (“of the Romans”) Monastery



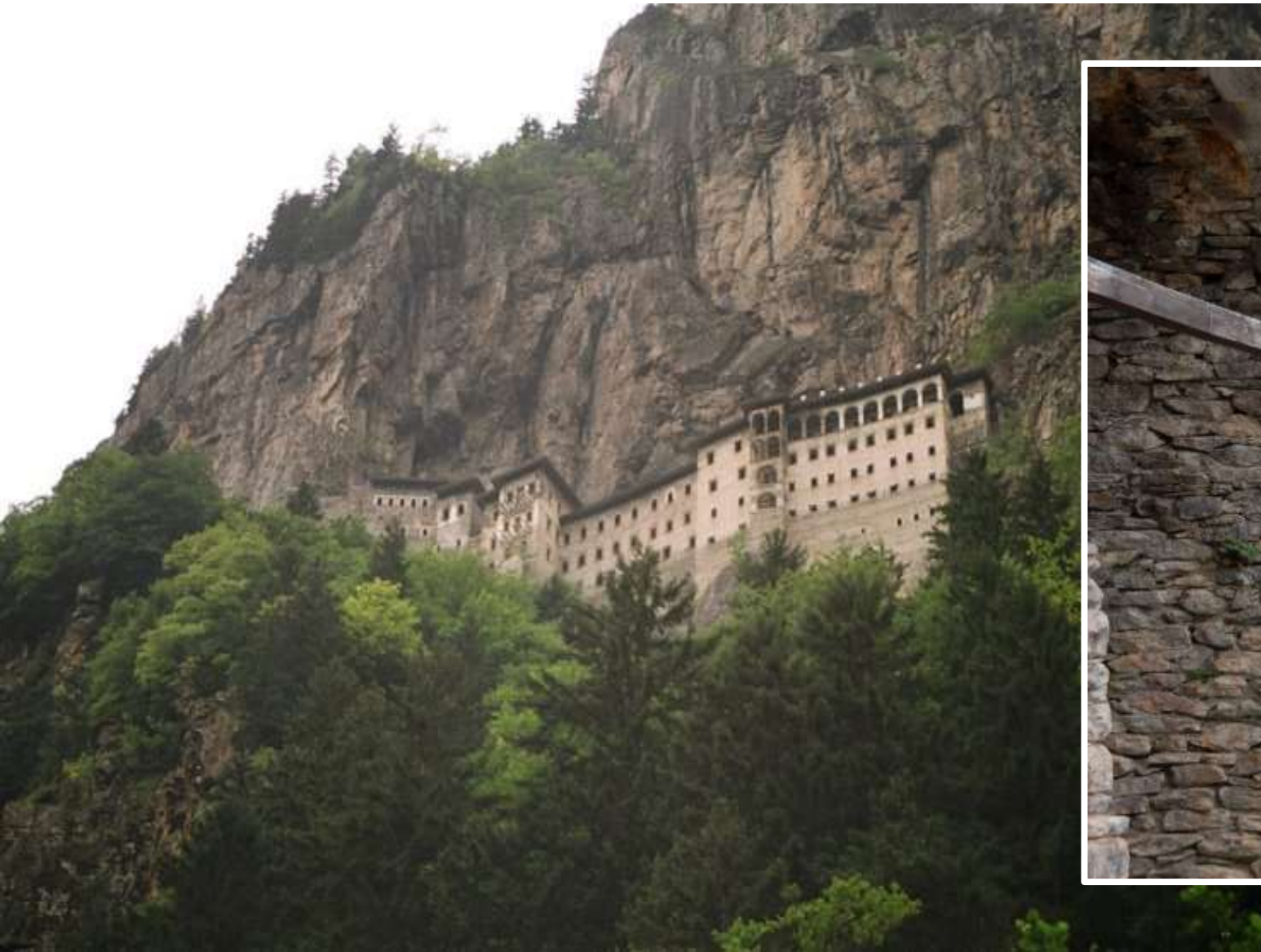
The Monastery of Saint Macarius the Great



The Monastery of Saint Mina at Mariott



Saint Samuel Monastery



El Moharrak Monastery



Route of the Holy Family

- Monasteries
- Churches
- Holy Sites



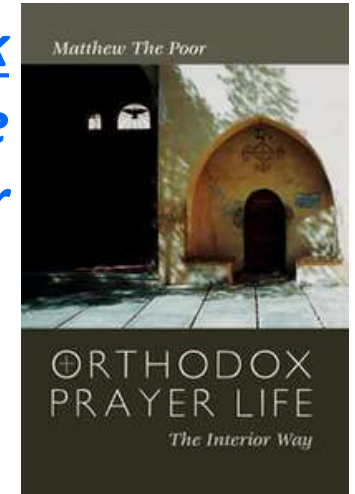


Father Matta El Meskeen (Matthew the poor)

Father Matta El Meskeen or Matthew the poor, born Youssef Iskandar (20 September 1919 – 8 June 2006) was an Egyptian Coptic Orthodox monk. He was a key figure in the revival of Egyptian monasticism which began in 1969 when he was appointed to the Monastery of St Macarius in the Wadi El Natrun in Egypt. By the time of his death the community had grown from 6 aged monks to 130 monks, and many other monasteries had revived, and new ones opened. He was twice nominated to become the Orthodox Patriarch of the See of Alexandria, but was not chosen in either case.

He was also a theologian, and author of 181 books and hundreds of journal articles on Biblical exegesis, Ecclesiastical rites, spiritual and theological matters.

Recommended Book ***Orthodox Prayer Life*** ***by Matthew the Poor***



Literature

<http://orthokairos.weebly.com/fr-matthew-the-poor.html>

1. The Divine foundation upon which Coptic monasticism was built
2. How do we build ourselves up on the most holy faith
3. When you pray say Our Father in Heaven
4. True unity will inspire the world
23. Coping with spiritual paralysis
24. Our relationship with Christ
25. The Mystery of God's Love in Relation to Renewed Mankind
26. Emmanuel, which means "God with Us"
27. The Bible as a personal message to you
28. Birth of Christ and birth of man

Optional (8 minute video) Homework 😊

Fr. Anthony Mourad explains How Monasticism came to be

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_7A1k4Nzz4

