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## PART 1

### POPE KYROLIDS THE SIXTH

#### FROM CHILDHOOD TO ORDINATION

1902-1959

By:

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**(Brother of Pope Kyrollos the Sixth)**

#### **His first School**

Pope Kyrollos was named Azer when he was born on August 2, 1902. He was the second child in a family of three children. He belonged to the Ziki family which moved from Upper Egypt to the city of Tookh El-Nasara in the Governorate of Minofia.

His father, Youssef, settled in the city of Damanhour. He was a deacon well known for his exemplary behaviour, excellent voice, and outstanding script writing. He enjoyed spending his spare time in the church teaching young deacons hymns, penmanship and mathematics. He also enjoyed scribing religious books with his fine handwriting. He held fast to the teachings of the church, not deviating from the traditional manner or prayers, and carefully observed the church fasts.

The family enjoyed spending their evenings together. The children sat with their parents, who read to them from the Holy Bible and recited stories about the saints' and martyrs' lives.

Azer's mother was an ideal parent with respect to raising her children. She carefully planted love between each sibling. She hardly punished any of them. Pictures of the saints filled every corner of their house, and the saints' lives were always in their minds. The saints' feasts were celebrated either at home or in the church. They used to visit Saint Mary's Church in their home town on her feast day and did the same on Saint George's feast day. Every year, at Saint Mina's feast, the saint most dear to Azer's heart, they would go to the city of Ibiar, and stay for a week at Saint Mina's Monastery. All of these religious experiences left a deep impression in Azer's heart.

Azer's father worked as a general manager for a wealthy businessman, running his entire business from agricultural to commercial trading. This business bloomed and grew because of his honesty, hard work, and dedication. The owner loved and respected him.

The Ziki home was always open for the many monks who came to visit the city of Damanhour. There they found both generosity and comfortable accommodations.

#### **He Is From Our Stock**

One of the monks who often visited them was Father Tadros El-Baramousi, who **had weak eyes due** to his advanced age. He travelled around the country collecting tithes for the Baramous Monastery. Azer, though not yet four years old, found comfort in the old man's company and enjoyed looking at his beard. One night Azer fell asleep on the monk's lap. His mother apologized, rushing to carry the boy. The elderly monk stopped her by saying, "Let him sleep here, because he is from our stock; he is one of us." And from that day on, Azer truly was one of them. He no longer enjoyed wearing a new suit unless he put a black apron on top of it, similar to the one Father Tadros wore. In the beginning his parents felt a sadness for his insistence and stubbornness, however, over time they accepted it.

The day before The Holy Lent, some Coptic people serve a large variety of rich foods. Azer protested against the lavishly set dining room table. He said, "Why should we have an overabundance of food, while others have only plain bread?" Azer said to his mother, "We eat this rich food and next to us live the Kurdy family." Their neighbours were a Turkish Moslem family who survived on the bare necessities because the household members were old and had no income. Azer continued, "It would be good to offer them this food for Jesus' sake. Tomorrow we will fast and will be satisfied with a modest meal." His parents were delighted that their son had such noble feelings. They brought the food to the Kurdy family who were surprised and

asked the reason for this appreciated generosity. When they were told that it was Azer's suggestion, they kissed him and asked God to bless him.

In their city, there was a school run by a friendly Moslem sheik, who visited Azer's parents and suggested that they send Azer to his school during the summer vacation. The parents consented and Azer went everyday regularly. Azer's great interest in the Bible prompted the sheik to suggest to Azer that he bring the Holy Bible so they could memorize it together. His father gave him the Gospel of St. John written in large letters, and, to every one's surprise, both the sheik and Azer memorized the entire Gospel.

Azer's family moved to Alexandria when his father took another job working as general manager for an ex-prime minister's family. There, many political and patriotic movements, as well as one of the political parties in Alexandria, had their headquarters. Azer's exposure to this environment helped him develop a strong patriotism. Azer loved and was willing to serve his country.

After Azer finished high school, he joined a shipping company. The company's general manager, who was from Australia, was a very tough man. He was well aware that his employees feared him and tried to avoid him. Many mornings he would stand in the building's main entrance to watch the staff arrive. Every morning Azer went to Saint Mark's Cathedral before going to work, which started at 9:00 a.m. One day he arrived at work and noticed the general manager standing by the main entrance. Azer greeted him. The general manager asked him why he was late. Azer firmly responded that his job schedule started at 9:00 a. m. and that he was not late. The general manager went to Azer's boss and told him that he was proud of this young man who respected himself and did not avoid him, as many others did.

### **His Honesty**

One day Azer was in charge of handling the customs clearance of the belongings of an important English captain returning to England. When the luggage was opened for inspection by the customs agent, they were surprised to find that the Captain had left his wallet there. After he had finished his job, Azer returned to the shipping company where the Captain was waiting with the general manager. He indicated that everything had gone smoothly and then handed over the wallet. The Captain, who was worried over his wallet's loss, because it contained a large amount of money and important documents, was very pleased to have his wallet returned. He offered Azer a reward of one hundred Sterling pounds, a large fortune at that time. Azer politely refused and said he was only doing his job.

The next day, his boss told him he was to receive an extremely large raise of ten Egyptian pounds. (At this time ten Egyptian pounds per month was a good salary). His colleagues were amazed to hear that a young man was being rewarded in this manner. Azer received not only high pay, but also respect and confidence from all.

### **Readiness To The Monkhood**

Azer's love for God was very evident in his behaviour at this stage of his life. He spent all his spare time in the church attending liturgies and prayers. Every evening he stayed in his room praying or reading the Bible.

He also felt uncomfortable when members of his family spent their time joking around and he would leave them for a short while and return with a smiling face. Then in a gentle and loving manner he would turn their conversation to focus on the word of God.

He didn't allow any of his family members to enter his room or know its contents because he considered this a practice for living alone in a monastery cell.

He lived in this manner, without anyone realizing that he was actually preparing himself for a more precious life. He quietly began to prepare monastic attire and needs for his new life, which would eventually surprise every one.

### **The Resignation**

One day, Azer's general manager at the shipping company, phoned his brother and asked to meet with him. This request worried him because he knew Azer was in charge of the company's accounts and daily expenses. When they met, the general manager informed him that Azer had submitted his resignation. Azer had stated, "As I have a very important task to fulfil, please accept my resignation as of the end of June 1927. " The general manager wanted the brother to ask Azer about this

"important task" that was a priority above his job and important position in the company. The brother explained that he was unaware of Azer's resignation but promised to find out the reason and get back to him.

In the evening, when the family gathered, the brother questioned Azer about his resignation. Azer replied, "Which is preferable; a holy life and real internal happiness, or the suffering and painful life one has to live in the secular world?"

Both his family and friends gathered to convince him to change his mind, pointing out that he was already a successful young man with a great career. However, all their petitions and advice were in vain. He could not be convinced to change his mind. He proceeded along the path he chose, step by step, until he became a monk in El-Baramous Monastery.

## **Azer Knocks At The Monastery Door**

Azer went to meet with His Grace Bishop Youanis to discuss how he should proceed and become a monk. The Bishop learned that Azer was one of the Ziki family, whom he'd known for a long time, the son of Youssef Ata. The Bishop then inquired of Azer why his father and brother hadn't come before him to inform His Grace of his desire to become a monk. The Bishop felt that the family opposed Azer's plans, otherwise, they would have already come to him personally. The Bishop could not accept Azer's request unless his father and brother came with him.

When Azer returned home saddened, his family thought that he was struggling internally about his future. They thought that this was the perfect opportunity to inform him that the general manager had offered him an exceptional raise if he changed his mind.

He explained to the family that his sadness was because of what Bishop Youanis said. His father, Youssef, knowing his son's strong will and spiritual strength, advised him to go to church, pray and receive Holy Communion. Then whatever decision Azer made, the rest of the family would abide by it as well.

**Azer's** father of confession was a well respected and love priest by old and young. He referred to Azer as "blessed Azer" because of his good behaviour. Now, Youssef had already informed the priest of Azer's plans for monkhood. The priest spoke with Azer. After the divine liturgy, the priest advised Youssef to help Azer fulfil his plans and that Azer clearly knew what he was doing. He personally felt that this was God's choice for Azer.

His father and brother then accompanied him to Bishop Youanis who discussed the matter firmly, telling Azer the obstacles of becoming a monk. He said that the road of monkhood, where every step is filled with pain, insults, and many kinds of temptations, would never allow him a day with a clear and peaceful mind. Azer responded that for the past five years, he had already begun to travel this road when he was alone in his room, and what would face him would not be new to him. The Bishop responded, "Son I have seen through my experience that the young men coming from major cities seldom proceed with life in the monastery." Azer replied, "My hope and trust in God is very strong. I believe that if you bless and ask the Lord to grant me strength and success, I will succeed. The Lord Jesus Christ is fair and will not forsake those who love Him." Bishop Youanis then blessed him and told him that he would help him on his path toward monkhood. Azer was delighted and praised the Lord.

## **Waiting To Travel To The Monastery**

**Azer** accompanied the monks who were studying in the Theological College in Alexandria, while waiting for his departure to the monastery, "heaven's door". He stayed day and night in the church during the Apostles' fast. On the Apostles' feast day, July 12, 1927, his family brought him a large basket filled with pastries in commemoration of the feast of the Archangel Michael which happened to be the same day. In his delight that the Lord had accepted him to enter the road into monkhood, he arrived at the church dressed in a suit with the basket on his shoulder and distributed the pastries. It was unusual to see a well-dressed man carrying a basket. But Azer didn't mind. He said, "If the Lord's disciples each carried a basket of the leftovers remaining after the miracle of feeding the multitudes, am I better than they?"

He prepared a file containing his credentials, as someone looking for a new job, even though this was not needed to be a monk.

## **Going To The Monastery**

At the end of the semester in the Theological College, each monk went back to his monastery. Bishop Youanis called Azer and set a date for his departure to EI Baramous Monastery with Father Bishara El-Baramousy. He provided Father Bishara with a letter of recommendation to the head of the monastery (the Abbot) with information about Azer and his family. Bishop Youanis asked Father Bishara to make sure to hold onto Azer's clothes and other belongings, in case he **changed his mind about being** a monk and decided to go back to his family and job.

### **Joining The Monastery**

Early in the morning on July 27, 1927, Azer packed all his needs and went to the railroad station where all his family and friends were waiting to wish him well. Even his direct manager from the shipping company was there to express the greetings and good wishes from the company's general manager, and to remind him that his position would still be available if he changed his mind. Azer smiled and thanked him for his kind words.

After taking several different trains, he and Father Bishara arrived at their destination. Monks from the monastery were waiting for them at the railroad station. They arrived together at the monastery at around 8:00 p. m.. The rest of the monks greeted them when they arrived and washed their feet which is customary (as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples).

Father Bishara introduced Azer to the Abbot as a visitor from Alexandria, one of the sons of Bishop Youanis. That's why the Abbot made him stay in the guesthouse and turned on the generator for lighting and gave him supper. The next morning Father Bishara presented Bishop Youanis' letter of recommendation to the Abbot, informing him that Azer came to join the monastic life, and not to visit. The Abbot ordered the bell to be rung, and when all the monks had gathered, they were informed that Azer came to join them. Everyone was overjoyed. The monks said that this was the first man seeking monkhood that has been received in such a manner (referring to Azer's stay at the guesthouse). They forecasted that he would likely become a person of great importance.

Azer was shown to the cell where he would reside. It was old and deserted for a long time, and needed a lot of work to make it liveable. Azer cleaned the dirty floor, and sprinkled it with water and lime to create a hard surface. He also spread out some cardboard and organized the cell, setting an area for sleeping, reading and praying. He put his luggage in the middle; this became his table. He dressed in a black robe (galabia) and a head cover, and looked like he had been a monk for many years.

Father Bishara expressed his concern to the Abbot that nobody had offered help to Azer. The Abbot told him to leave Azer alone, as he was trying to find out how Azer would respond to the tough monastic life, and to see whether he could take it or not.

Azer became deeply involved in his prayers. When the midnight bell rang, he would go immediately to the church for prayers and praises. He would silently return back to his cell at 7:00 a.m. without mingling with the other monks.

### **Apprenticeship**

One Saturday evening, the Abbot asked Father Bishara and a few of the elderly fathers to go and find out the condition of the new comer who was seeking monkhood. They went to Azer's cell and found the outside very clean and the inside well organised, with no furnishings, but beautifully arranged. As they were leaving, Azer respectfully acknowledged them. One of the elderly monks, Father Abdel Messih El-Massoudi said to him, "My son, the blessing of monkhood is to give your heart to God. This is a great treasure, more valuable than all the world's treasures. The monk who voluntarily selects poverty and has prepared himself to be an honest soldier of Jesus Christ, is greater than all the world's kings and rulers in both strength and position. My heart is totally opened to you. I ask the Lord Jesus Christ to guide you and to open the door of grace for you. I ask Him to fill your heart with peace, that you may continue in this life with His care supporting you. " Azer bowed (mataniya) and kissed his hand, but Father Abdel Messih hugged and kissed him and told him, "From this hour, you are a gift from God and you will be a son to me. " From that moment Father Abdel Messih became Azer's spiritual father and revealed many things about monastic life to him.

Azer became a role model in the monastery because of his obedience and meekness, and his selection of the toughest tasks to perform. He gave special attention to the elderly monks; washing their clothes, cleaning their cells, and taking care of their food. He delighted in doing these chores and always visited them offering his help. They, in return, never forgot him in their prayers.

At the beginning of every month, the Abbot distributed the chores amongst the able monks. In Misra (the Coptic month of August) 1927, Azer's assignment was to take care of the monastery kitchen. Let us not forget that this was quite a difficult task in the mid-twenties, in a desert, and with very limited resources. Azer cleaned the copper pots repaired the wooden stoves, and took care of the drinking water. He cleaned the large tanks that held the water, and filled the water pitchers for the elderly monks who were unable to go to the water pump or carry their pots. The elderly monks deeply appreciated Azer's care.

His spiritual father, Father Abdel Messih, always urged him to do more without giving him a word of praise. Instead, he pointed out the example of meekness of our earlier fathers who used to fill the water jars from wells miles away from the monastery. They were thankful for their work and did it whole heartedly and hoped that it would be accepted in the Lord's sight.

Besides Azer's care of the elderly fathers, and the rest of his responsibilities, he also took care of grinding the grains, baking the bread, and the Korban. All of this did not interfere with his studying of the Holy Bible, praying, receiving Holy Communion, and learning to scribe from the elderly fathers.

The summer months passed, and the monks celebrated the Coptic Martyr's New Year (Nayrouz). Student monks began to prepare to leave for the Theological School in Alexandria. The Abbot called Azer and told him when the students were leaving. Azer wished that they would go in peace, accompanied by God's care, but asked, "Please allow me to continue the road I started. I am confident that the Lord would never leave those who call upon Him."

Before leaving, Father Bishara asked him if he would like to send along a letter to his family to let them know how he was doing. Azer told him, "Joseph didn't send a letter to his father when he called him to come to Egypt, but said to his brothers, 'Tell my father what your eyes saw, and what your ears heard.' And I, the meek, do similar to what Joseph did. I ask the travelling fathers to tell my family of the blessings God has given me through the prayers of the fathers."

Later on, Father Abdel-Messih requested Azer to produce a religious magazine titled "Port of Salvation Magazine". He took the job seriously and produced a twelve-page, hand-written magazine, and scribed fifty copies of each edition. It was well written and designed. This magazine appeared monthly and was distributed among those seeking the Lord's knowledge. This job took a tremendous effort in researching, studying, and writing. However, it was successful and lasted for many years.

### **The Monk Armanious**

The Monk Armanious (who later became head of El-IBaramous monastery) was in charge of delivering the monastery mail to the post office while riding a stubborn, hard-to-control mule. One day, the mule threw Armanious to the ground and escaped into the desert. The monk spent the day searching for the mule, and when he was totally exhausted, he returned very late to the monastery, where all the monks had been waiting and worrying about him. One monk, who had the reputation of being too obsessed with the monastery's property, asked him how he could come back without the mule, and told him not to enter the monastery until he brought it back. Azer, despite his youth and short time in the monastery, and his not yet being a monk, spoke up and said, "Father, let him in and allow him to rest. One of the Bedouins will find it and bring it here." However, the brother was not convinced and remained angry. The monks asked him to calm down, and told him that Azer spoke with wisdom. Besides, Azer had offered to buy another one if they did not find it. Moments later, the bell rang, and a Bedouin was by the gate with the mule. The monks tipped him thankfully, the largest amount coming from Azer.

The next day, when they were discussing the mail delivery, Azer volunteered to do the job. The Abbot tried to keep him from taking on this difficult responsibility, but Azer calmly indicated that he was trained to ride horses. He took the mule, which kept bucking, trying to throw him to the ground, and succeeded in controlling it.

### **His Monastic Order**

After Azer gained the monks' acceptance, and the elderly monks were comfortable with his chastity and strong will, they decided amongst themselves to recommend him to be a monk. On November 25, 1928, the beginning of the Christmas fast, the ordination began with the Vespers, then the Midnight prayers. Azer bowed in front of the altar; on his right were the relics of St. Moses the Black and on his left, the relics of St. Abba Isidoris. His monastic rites were completed and he was called Mina. He attended the morning liturgy, after which there was a procession around the church with the attendants holding candles and crosses, and he received blessings from the Saints' relics.

Father Yacoub, brother of Father Abdel Messih El Massoudi, was known as the silent monk: he never spoke to anyone and did not want to be spoken to. Although he showed that he was not satisfied with monk Mina's service to him personally, his love for him made him speak and say, " Dear son, may Cod's blessing be with you and may He grant you His grace, and pave your path so that you will be successful in all you do. May He fill you with His Holy Spirit so that you will be honest to your last breath with the talents the Lord Jesus Christ will give you to invest them and make them grow. " The fathers were delighted with his words, and they all said, "Amen."

The monk Mina started his new life of monkhood by stepping on the first rung of the ladder of struggles. He placed a strict law on himself that he followed for the rest of his life: **"Love everyone, but keep yourself distant."** He kept a stringent schedule of worshipping the Lord, guided by his spiritual father, and of continuing his prayers, fasting, and receiving the Holy Sacrament. He was meek, forgiving, never giving himself to anger, no matter what the difficulty was that he had to face, and always doing good. He cooperated with his brother monks in everything, helped the elderly, served the weak, cared for the sick, and never expected nor looked for praise or glory. He was constantly baking the Korban, giving it special attention. He took care of the monastery library, arranged the books, and read the holy books and the elderly fathers' writings.

The doors of knowledge were opened to him and many mysteries became clear. He studied the writing of Mari Isaac the Syrian, which guided him on the right spiritual path. He was so taken with this writing that he transcribed it into five volumes with durable covers. When he found he received great benefit from transcribing these writings, he copied them four more times so they would be available for everyone, therefore, further increasing and deepening his knowledge. He was also guided by the sayings of many saints including our righteous fathers the great Abba Antony, Abba Shenoute the Archimandrite, and Abba Macarius, as well as other great teachers.

### **Priest Mina**

On Sunday, July 18, 1931, Monk Mina was ordained as a priest, retaining the name "Mina". Bishop Dimitrous prayed the Divine Liturgy of the ordination. Among those attending the ordination were his brothers, Hanna Youssef Ata (the writer of the first part of this book) and Mikhail (Hegumenos Mikhail).

Priest Mina cried during the entire Liturgy and made everybody else cry. After the ordination, they lead him in a procession around the church singing hymns accompanied by the traditional triangle and cymbals.

Father Mina's brother received permission from the Pope to plant trees in the monastery garden in commemoration of the ordination. The Pope asked him to distribute the trees among the four monasteries in the Natroun Valley.

### **At The Theological School In Helwan**

Father Mina was chosen to study at the Theological School in Helwan. He reluctantly accepted because he preferred the life of solitude at the monastery. He attended the school and was very successful.

He chose a colleague with whom he was comfortable and they became dear companions. This was Priest Kyrollos El Anba Paula (Bishop Kyrollos of Baliana). They arranged to have raising of incense and vesper prayers every evening and celebrate a Divine Liturgy every morning before they started school. Priest Mina was responsible for baking the Korban; and they did that for some time. This arrangement was not welcomed or appreciated by some who secretly, one night, knocked down the Korban oven. As usual, Father Mina went to knead the Korban; but at 3:00 a.m., when it was time to bake it, he found the oven destroyed. Immediately, he woke up Priest Kyrollos. They discussed the problem and Father Mina developed a solution. He went to the bakery across the street and asked the owner if he could bake the Korban there. The owner agreed. Father Mina did the baking by himself and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated as usual. Priest Mina and Priest Kyrollos discussed the matter with the principal of the school, Hegumenos Mikhail Mina. A council of monks decided to have a daily Divine Liturgy before school started as part of the program. The vespers provided a good opportunity for the fathers to give sermons. Each evening a monk took a turn praying the vespers, raising the incense and giving the sermon.

### **Nominated For The Bishopric**

Pope Youanis was at the school when it was Father Mina's turn to raise incense and pray the vespers. Father Mina gave a sermon for one whole hour. The Pope was very pleased, as the sermon was a strong one full of the sayings of saints, especially Mari Isaac the Syrian. When Father Mina finished, he went to receive the Pope's blessing. The Pope blessed his efforts and prayed for him that he would be a pillar in the church of God.

The Pope spoke with the principal of the school, Hegumenos Mikhail Mina, about his desire to ordain Pries, Mina as a bishop of Garbia and Behira. Hegumeno! Mikhail was so happy that he went and told Father Mina thinking that he would be delighted to hear the news Priest Mina went back to his cell very depressed. He met with his friend Priest Kyrollos, and told him of his plan to travel to Anba Shenouda's Monastery in Sohag to live the life of solitude. All night, Priest Kyrollos tried to make him change his mind, saying, "Leave it in God's hands and accept this blessing." But Father Mina insisted on his plan.

Early the next morning, Father Mina took the train to Sohag, and from there he went to the Monastery. His disappearance caused a great disturbance, as Priest Kyrollos didn't tell anyone. They called Father Mina's brother and asked him where he was. His brother was greatly surprised, as he didn't have any idea about what was going on. He was asked to look for him so as not to upset the Pope.

Father Mina's brother went to Priest Kyrollos and begged him with tears to tell him the secret about his brother's disappearance. Father Kyrollos finally told him the truth. After a lot of effort by one of the Christians in Sohag, Father Mina agreed to return to meet with Pope Youanis. Father Mina received a lot of blame and rebuke, which he accepted patiently. Then he told him about his desire for solitude.

The Pope understood this desire and allowed Father Mina to return to his monastery to rest. Afterwards, he was required to follow the path which his spiritual father, Father Abdel Messih El Massoudi, would advise.

## **Solitude**

### **The Return to the Monastery**

Father Mina returned joyfully to the monastery. The monks' council gathered and tried to change Father Mina's mind about the life of solitude. They feared the spiritual dangers and told him, "You are only thirty years old, and have only been a monk for five years. Do you want to live the life of solitude in which monks with thirty or forty years of experience have failed? Or is it that you wish to escape responsibility, either at the faculty or in the monastery? Also, there is the physical danger of living alone in a cave in the desert where you might be attacked by beasts and poisonous snakes. That's why we absolutely do not agree to let you travel that bumpy road."

Father Mina was patient in front of this strong opposition, but finally he spoke quietly, "My fathers and brothers, I appreciate your love and care for me. I appeal to you as an obedient son asking for the opinion of his fathers who have spent many years worshipping God. You know more about the mysteries of the solitary life than I. But I also trust that the Lord Jesus Christ will prepare the narrow road that I will travel, which will lead to eternal life for those with a pure heart and thoughts, void of all temptations. Please be assured of this. I will be the obedient son and will not walk in any way without the guidance of my spiritual father and leader whose heart God has filled with love and kindness towards my weak self."

At that moment, everybody looked towards Father Abdel Messih El Massoudi for his opinion. He said, "As for Father Mina, and the danger in the cave, trust in the Lord. With His almighty power, He will hold his hand, and protect him. My heart is confident about his behaviour. He walks in the Lord's way with a faithful heart and the wisdom of the elders. I see with a clear eye that Father Mina will succeed, as he was chosen from his mother's womb for this grace. Do not stand in his way."

One of the zealous elders said to Father Abdel Messih El Massoudi, because he loved Father Mina so much, "Father, you have been a monk for forty years, have you ever considered the solitary life? Have the elders thought of going this way? Please advise this young monk to go back to the Faculty of Theology to obtain his degree, and then return to serve the monastery. And, when God wills, he will receive a higher rank as the fathers who preceded him.

Hegumenos Abdel Messih replied with the spirit of goodness, "Let your son, Father Mina, walk in His way. Don't let your pity or your love prevent the grace of God from entering him."

The elder became more vocal and said to him, "Why didn't you travel that way? How can you push someone else to take that road? This is a rough narrow path that no one can walk unless he is supported by God's help and the Holy Spirit." Father Abdel Messih replied, "I leave the judgment regarding this matter to my brothers. Father Mina and myself will abide by the fathers' decision."

Silence prevailed for some time. Then, Hegumenos' Shenouda, Bassilous, Bakhoum, Gergorous and Luke all said at the same time, "Let it be according to the Lord's will. Let Father Mina be in God's care and the guidance of his spiritual father, Hegumenos Abdel Messit. And God who is honest and just will lead him in the way of righteousness and safety. "

Father Mina shouted joyfully, "Blessed be the name of the Lord. Here is a Matania (knelt down) to you my fathers and brothers, " He knelt down three times to them expressing his sincere love.

### **In the Cave**

Father Mina checked the cave chosen for his life of solitude. It was about one hour from the monastery. This cave was the place of Father Sarabomon the Baramosi, the former head of the monastery. It was about six by eight meters, engraved three meters deep into the rocks. He found that the cave needed some fixing; so he brought gypsum (plaster) which was abundantly available in the monastery because the monks used to bum and grind it in a special grinder. He also brought water and started fixing the ceiling, floor and walls with skilled craftsmanship. He made a door that lifted upwards. After it became habitable, he moved in all of his belongings - a sheet of wood, pottery vessels for water and some utensils. He took some beans and flour. He did not take bread so that he would not have more than his one day's food. The fathers bid him farewell, and wished him well. He had them promise that no one would visit him, and no one would care about him. He promised, as per his spiritual father's orders, to come to the monastery every Saturday night to wash his clothes and the clothes of the elder and sick fathers who could not help themselves. He would also attend the Sunday vespers and partake of the Holy Communion on Sunday morning.

Father Mina settled in the cave, and organized it in the same way as his cell at the monastery. He practised his worship as per the solitary life, continually praying, doing the Matanias (kneeling to the floor) and hand copying books. He worked twenty hours per day.

At the end of the first week, he returned to the monastery, attended the vesper and talked to the fathers about God's power that was supporting him. When the fathers asked a lot of questions about what he had seen and the amount of suffering he had, he told them, "Don't worry, I didn't struggle to death. " After that, he had a special meeting with his spiritual father, Father Abdel Messih revealing to him all his heart's hidden thoughts. He promised before leaving the monastery that he would not disobey him or hide any matters from him. This father always encouraged him and provided him with advice.

Days passed. The fathers relaxed because Father Mina's life was going smoothly. They saw happiness radiating from his face. Why not? He became the angels' partner in praising and glorifying God's holy name.

They used to wait for his visit to the monastery every Saturday so they could enjoy his fellowship and be comforted by him. He looked very humble when he returned to his cave carrying water and his needs. He wore a coarse hooded robe and carried a stick which he used both for walking and as a place for hanging up his needs.

### **With The Dean Of The Theological School Of New York**

One day in 1933, Father Mina heard a knock on his cave's door. This was the first time in his life of solitude that he had a visitor. It was the Bedouin that he saw from time to time along with two other men. One was an Egyptian and the other a foreigner. He greeted them and invited them to enter. Carefully, they descended the cave steps. They sat on a blanket covered with a new, white, clean bed sheet. They introduced themselves as Dr. Hassan Fouad, manager of the Arabic Monuments, and the other as the dean of the School of Theology in New York.

During the discussion, the American visitor felt that this hermit knew English, and he asked him to converse with him. (Father Mina mastered the English language when he worked in Coxa Shipping Company in Alexandria.) Although Father Mina knew English well before joining the monastery, he apologized because he had not used the English language for some time.

The guest said, I came to Egypt to write a book about the origin of Monasticism and its conception in Egypt. I want to become familiar with the teachings of St. Anthony, the father of all monks; the fathers of Shehit Prairies, and the fathers of the great Coptic Orthodox Church. I have spent some time reading at the Patriarchate Library and the Coptic Museum and visiting the monasteries at Wadi EI Natroun, but this is not enough. Today, I asked my friend to walk in the desert with me. We walked for a long way aimlessly, until we met this Bedouin. He asked us if we wished to visit a hermit in his cave, and our curiosity led us here to you."

Father Mina told them about the life of the fathers of monasticism such as St. Anthony; Abba Paula, the father of the spiritual anchorites; St. Macari, the father of Shehit Prairies; and St. Pachournious, the father of communal monasticism (Koinonia). He read them excerpts from the books of St. Isaac, the Syrian. He explained to them the philosophy of monasticism and its ways, and how the monk prepares himself to receive the spiritual gifts. The American wrote down everything he heard and at the end, he told Father Mina that the information he had collected in the last two months, paled in comparison to what he learned from him in one day.

On their way out, the American researcher put some money in front of Father Mina. He said to him, "This is a symbolic gift by which to remember me." Father Mina refused to accept it. He said, "Why do I need this money? The love of money is the source of all evil. Money is an obstacle in the way of solitude. Thank you, but please take back your money. " The man respected Father Mina's wishes and was filled with admiration and respect for him. The Director of the Arabic Monuments embraced Father Mina warmly and said to him, "My Father, you crowned the monks with pride and honoured Egyptian men. I hope some day I can show my respect and honour for you." This day would eventually come to pass.

The two men were deeply moved by this visit. Their only regret was that Father Mina would not allow them to take his picture for the cover of the book.

### **Another Visit**

Pope Youanis wanted to visit Father Mina one day. The cave was about an hour walk from the monastery. The Abbot and other monks tried to change his mind about making such a tiring trip but he would not listen to them. The Abbot sent ahead to Father Mina to meet Pope Youanis halfway to spare him the long walk. Father Mina hurried to meet the Pope, and when he saw him, he knelt and told him that he was not worthy to have the Pope go through so much effort to see him. Pope Youanis realized that the Abbot had called Father Mina. He told Father Mina that he wanted to receive the blessing from the cave that had become holy through the spiritual struggle of this hermit. He went to the cave, and descended its narrow steps, and sat on Father Mina's blanket tasting the bread he used to bake daily. Father Mina told him about his daily schedule. Pope Youanis blessed him and wished him success. When Pope Youanis was leaving, Father Mina started to accompany him, but the Pope told him to return to his cave so that he would not have to make the long journey back. Father Mina obeyed.

### **The Seven Monks**

At Easter time in 1936, Father Mina went to the Monastery on Lazarus Saturday. He noticed some commotion around the Monastery and he saw that the Abbot had brought in the area governor, a police officer and some soldiers to expel seven elderly monks from the Monastery. He put his belongings down and entered the reception hall. There, he found the Abbot sitting with those people and some other monks. He saluted everybody and then knelt in front of the Abbot, and said, "Father, I came to welcome you back, ask about your health, and about the truth regarding the dismissal of the seven monks. " The Abbot told Father Mina, "My son, these are the Pope's orders, and I came to execute them." Father Mina said, "It would be sad and painful for the Pope if these monks were expelled on the blessed Palm Sunday evening. He would never accept that these brothers lose their hope in Christ. You are our head, father of the monks, their shepherd, and responsible in front of the Lord for the sick, the confused and the lost.

In your hands is a strong power stemming from the monastic laws. Its firm and sharp rules can lead back the lost. I plead to you, in the name of the Lord and these blessed days, that you postpone this order until the monastery fathers appeal to His Holiness to accept that the decision regarding their future be judged inside the Monastery. Please do not expel them during these holy days. "

Because his pride was injured, the Abbot became angry. How could a new monk, and in front of this crowd, object to his orders while the other monks who were with him did not utter a word? He said to him, "Listen my son. Do not object to what I want to do, otherwise, you will be disobeying His Holiness. Besides, you are a hermit and this is not your business." Father Mina told him again, "In the name of Christ who sacrificed Himself for our sake, I ask you, my father, to proceed slowly and in a manner that would please the souls of our fathers, the saints. They teach us to intercede for the wrongdoers and lawbreakers, and to give each one his punishment without causing him to lose his hope." The Abbot became furious and ordered the soldiers to expel the monks by force, and ordered Father Mina, since he disobeyed his orders, to remain in the Monastery until he took his case to His Holiness, the Pope.

Father Mina answered by saying, "My father, I will devote myself to serving these fathers who were expelled by force and with no mercy. I will be their slave until they come back safely to their monastery through the power of God.

The Abbot was frightened because he knew of the Pope love and respect for Father Mina. He felt that the truth would become known. He sent Mr. Isaac Mikhail, the monastery's superintendent, to try to change Father Mina's mind. Mr. Mikhail tried to convince him that he had nothing to do with this problem and that he should not interfere. But this was all in vain.

The seven monks were dismissed, all with a glorious history serving in the Monastery. Father Mina left for Cairo with them, comforting and encouraging them. They stayed at Malak El Kibly Monastery in Old Cairo which was under the supervision of the great late Father Dawood (Father of Father Mikhail Dawood). He welcomed them and hosted them that night at the monastery. Mr. Ragheb Moftah, Father John Shenouda (the priest of El Moalaka Church - the historical church elevated on columns in Old Cairo) and the Honourable Mr. Marcos Fahmy (the commissioner of El-Giza Governorate who knew the family of Father Mina when he worked at El Behira Governorate) all came to see Father Mina. They all cared for the monks, renting a ten room, two storey house for them. Each monk had a room, one was assigned as a dining room and another for meetings. Father Mina bought floor covers (made of hay), blankets and some necessary utensils, and they settled at their new place until God took care of them and their case.

An accurate picture of this kind, shy, quiet monk, who was filled with God's grace, can now be seen. His appearance showed modesty and weakness, but he was brave and defended the truth relentlessly.

After this incident, the Abbot left immediately for Alexandria to see the Pope. Even though it was very expensive, he rented a car to take him from the desert so he could reach the Pope before the seven elderly monks or Father Mina did. He complained to the Pope about Father Mina. He portrayed him as a lawbreaker of the monastery system and the monastic laws. He falsely accused Father Mina of trying to attack him with a big stick, only to be stopped by the intervening soldiers.

The Pope was very surprised and said, "I cannot believe what you are saying about Father Mina. All of his behaviour is disciplined and wise. Why are you the first to complain about him in this way?"

The Pope called Father Mina's brother, who was always in touch with His Holiness. Father Mina's brother found the Pope very distressed. The Pope told him, "Your brother deserves punishment." He answered by saying, "Your sons always obey your Holiness." The Pope said, "Then why did he interfere in the Monastery's business, object to the actions of the Abbot, attack him verbally, and almost hit him on the head with a stick?" Father Mina's brother responded, "I know nothing about this matter. I am sure that he is always as good as you would expect. My heart tells me that this news is not right. As soon as your Holiness investigates this matter, the truth will be revealed." The Pope said, "I ordered seven monks be expelled from the Monastery, and when the Abbot tried to execute this order, Father Mina objected." Father Mina's brother said, "Your Holiness, I will dare to tell you what I am thinking. I love the Baramous Monastery, the very one that you love. You call it the Glorious Baramous Monastery. It is the Monastery of Pope Kyrollos the Fifth. It hurts me and saddens my soul, as a layman, to hear that the Monastery is expelling seven of the elderly monks. I hope you alone are making this decision regarding your sons. Do not let the devil get hold of them and make them lose their hope."

Father Mina's brother left for Cairo upon the orders of His Holiness, the Pope. He met the monks with whom he had good relations in Old Cairo, and met alone with Father Mina who told him the truth. He informed him about the importance of meeting the Pope, who came to Cairo especially for this matter. Father Mina insisted on meeting the Pope alone at first and then the monks would go and meet with him after he told him the truth. He also asked his brother not to remain in Cairo but to leave him in God's hands. His brother went back to Alexandria to wait for any news.

When Father Mina went to the Cathedral, the Patriarchate, to meet His Holiness, some people in the Patriarchate were rude to him because they supported the Abbot. This, however, did not bother him. He went into the church to thank God and to leave everything according to His will. The Pope was praying in the small church. Father Mina went to see him after the Divine Liturgy.

The Pope started harshly by saying, "You are still at the first steps of worshipping. Did the devil deceive you and want to lead you away from the way of salvation?" Father Mina answered, "My Lord Jesus Christ is honest and just. He does not leave those who seek Him. He shelters them with His angels." The Pope asked, "Mid the teachings of Christ allow you to interfere in what is not your business?" Father Mina replied, "God taught us to struggle for honesty, even if it means shedding one's blood. One who does not defend the truth is similar to the devil. I am the son of the Monastery. How can I see things that are not according to the monastic laws, that spoil its name and yet remain silent? I did not resist or hurt my father the Abbot. Instead, with all respect and reverence, I pleaded, for the sake of Christ, to whose service he devoted himself, not to leave those fathers to despair. I asked him to judge them according to the monastic laws. In remembrance of Our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ's

victorious entry into Jerusalem, I begged him not to keep them away from the shelter of hope and to postpone their expulsion from the Monastery until the end of the Holy Week and after requesting your Holiness' mercy."

The Pope retorted, "Why did you interfere in this matter, when you are a worshipper away from the Monastery and the monks?" Father Mina replied, "I would deserve your anger if I had neglected defending the reputation of the great Baramous Monastery, the monastery of your Holiness, and if I had left seven reverent elders, who have a glorious history in the Monastery, to be expelled in such a shameful way. They would collapse and lose hope God's mercy during the Passion week."

The Pope asked, "Didn't you revolt against the Abbot? You wanted to crush his head with a stick!"

Father Mina replied, "God forbid that I would even think of doing such an act. I asked only to look at the future those monks with a loving eye as their shepherd and judge them according to the church laws." Father Mina wept and that made the Pope weep too.

After that, the Pope relaxed and said, "Father Mina, you have my blessings. I forgive those monks. Tell them come to receive the blessing and to return safely to the Monastery." Father Mina said, "I plead with your Holiness to show them your kindness. Please order one of your sons to inform the monks of your forgiveness and your acceptance."

This matter finally ended in the best possible way. Father Mina went back to the monks after buying them the necessities with the money the Pope gave him. The monks were surprised to learn that they were forgiven because of Father Mina's visit.

The Pope sent Metropolitan Thomas of Gharbia Governorate to the monks. The monks had to borrow a chair from the neighbours so that he would be comfortable and not dirty his elegant clothing. Surprisingly, the metropolitan started to rebuke them for their disobedience, and this caused them much despair. They looked at Father Mina wondering why they were being treated in such a manner. He admonished them for disobeying the Abbot. They objected because they felt that he did not know what had really happened. Father Mina interfered. He started by telling the metropolitan about the meekness and modesty with which his spirit should be filled, and how he should work in helping the ones who fail. He also reminded the metropolitan of the days when he was a colleague monk in the Theological School of Helwan, pointing out to him how he was then a modest and poor monk. Furthermore Father Mina drew his attention to the way he was now: wearing expensive clothes and living in luxury. He told the metropolitan that he should replace all of this with the Grace of God, because all of these material possessions were not acceptable to God.

These words had a great impact on the metropolitan. He cried and apologized for what he had said. He asked the monks for their forgiveness. They kissed each other with a holy kiss. They bade him farewell as one of the church princes. He did not forget to give them the money that the Pope sent so that they could go back to the Monastery. The monks went to the Pope for absolution before returning to the Monastery.

## **The Windmill**

Father Mina waited because he had a request for the Pope. He said, "I intend, with the help of God, to stay at the Eastern Mountain, near the Malak El Kibly Monastery in one of the windmills. It is as isolated as a cell. God helped me get the permit from the manager of the Arabic Monuments for a token rent. I ask your Holiness for permission to stay there." The Pope said, "This mountain is a hiding place for criminals and staying there is dangerous and could cost you your life."

Father Mina said, "My heart tells me that I will receive God's comforting grace in this place. It is like the cave at Wadi El Natroun (which is near the Monastery in the desert) as it is far from residential areas." The Pope agreed to the request.

## **The Story Of Renting The Windmill**

The story of how Father Mina received the permit to stay in the windmill is interesting and it must be told.

When Father Mina was serving the seven monks daily and staying with them in Old Cairo, he used to climb the mountain in which the Archangel Michael Monastery was built. He spent his time in meditation and prayer. While examining and looking at the windmills there, Father Mina met the monument's guard. He mentioned to the guard that he was interested in staying in one of these windmills. The guard told him that this was a historical area, and that no one was allowed to live here without the permission of the manager of Arabic Monuments. No one had ever received such a permit, he was told. Father Mina inquired

about the location of the headquarters of the Arabic Monuments. When the guard mentioned the name of the manager, Father Mina remembered that he was one of the men who visited him in 1933 in the cave in the desert of Wadi El Natroun.

Father Mina went to the headquarters and approached the office boy asking for the manager. The office boy thought that Father Mina was seeking some money and told him to sit down. "When the manager comes out of his office, God might put some mercy in his heart to give you something," he said. Father Mina sat for a while and chatted with the boy. The office boy felt comfortable with Father Mina and promised him that he would help in arranging the meeting with the manager. Father Mina convinced the office boy to enter and tell the manager that the desert hermit, when he visited with the American researcher in the cave at Wadi El Natroun, wanted to see him. He went and told the manager, who immediately left his office to meet Father Mina. He hugged him and invited him into his office. The manager told the people in the office about the strange visit to Father Mina in the desert cave. He asked Father Mina to stay as an honourable guest in his own house. Father Mina thanked him but explained that he wished to rent out one of the windmills. The manager called his secretary and asked him to prepare the rental contract for the windmill that Father Mina wanted. Furthermore, he paid, out of his own money, the rent for an extended period of time. He instructed the monument's inspector to visit Father Mina at the mountain, and to take care of all of Father Mina's needs. Father Mina thanked him for his good deed and left giving praise to the Lord.

### **In The Windmill**

Father Mina left happily to his new place. It was a six-meter high windmill at the southeastern corner of the mountain with a deep valley below it. He stayed there for days with no covers, furniture, nor a roof or door. Every Sunday morning, he would go to the church of Archangel Michael to attend the raising of incense and the Divine Liturgy. He used to leave right away after the service without talking to anybody. Hegumenos Dawood and another well-known parishioner noticed this. They felt that they should know where and how Father Mina was living. The following Sunday, Hegumenos Dawood asked one of his sons in the church to inconspicuously follow Father Mina. He found him staying in the windmill with no door or roof. Subsequently, several parishioners went to see Father Mina. They found him sitting on the floor supporting his back on the wall and reading one of the books of the Spiritual Elder. They were surprised and told him he could not live in these uninhabitable conditions.

Father Mina answered them saying, "Who am I? I am only a worm, not a human being. I wish that the Lord will help me be like the righteous people who went into the desert and the mountains because of their love for the name of Christ. "

They sat with him on the floor for some time and returned glorifying the Lord. Their hearts were filled with love and pity for this poor monk who chose such a difficult way to live.

The following day, they sent some men to make a roof and a door for the windmill and to change it into two floors for Father Mina. The first floor would be for Father Mina to live in; the second was to be an altar. God had also prepared for him an old deacon, Mr. Meleka, who used to climb the mountain daily at 2:00 a.m., summer or winter, never missing a day.

Time passed, and the windmill became a well-organized place. Father Mina made a wooden altar and Father Youhana Shenouda attended the first mass, bringing all of the altar needs. Hegumenos Dawood provided the Korban for this mass. Some parishioners also attended, and they all rejoiced in the Lord that day.

Father Mina became famous. People from all over Egypt came to see him. They saw that God accepted his prayers for them and that miracles would thus occur. Father Mina had to set a time for opening his cell; outside of these hours, he did not see anybody. When the numbers increased, he had to arrange for daily masses, so more people could receive a blessing.

### **The Visit to Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka (May God repose his soul)**

One of the priests serving with Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka at St. Mark's Church in Heliopolis, went to Father Mina telling him that the Hegumenos wanted him to visit his home and pray for him. Father Mina said, "Our father, the Hegumenos, is a great man. Who am I, the lowly, to be asked to pray for him?" After the priest pleaded with him, Father Mina consented to visit the Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka at his home. The priest asked Father Mina to wait at the door of the nearby Archangel Michael Church, so he could have a car pick him up at 7:00 A.M. on the following day. Father Mina replied, "God will take care of it, and asked for the address of Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka. At 7:00 the next morning, Father Mina wearing a hood, black shawl on his head and a staff in his hand, appeared at the door of Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka. When he entered the room where the Hegumenos was lying down sick, he said to him, "My father, I came to receive your blessing. " Hegumenos Ibrahim replied, "No, I am the one who is asking for your blessing. With faith, I ask you to pray for me and anoint me with oil as the apostles

instructed." Father Mina prayed for him, anointed him with oil and left at once in spite of the requests from everybody to stay with them for some time. Hegumenos Ibrahim wished to honour him and return him with his car to the windmill, but Father Mina politely declined. God granted the Hegumenos good health. As a result, the Hegumenos always mentioned this miracle and he planned to visit Father Mina in the mountain to thank him.

### **A Prophecy**

Father Mina was really sad when Pope Youanis reposed in the Lord. For forty days he mentioned his name in a daily mass after the commemoration of the saints. After these forty days, he saw Pope Youanis come to him while he was taking a nap. He was surprised that the Pope made such an effort to climb the mountain. The Pope said to Father Mina, 'I am saddened that the papal staff broke while I was climbing the mountain.' Father Mina said, 'I wish the Pope would leave it with me for a while.' The Pope gave it to him. Father Mina fixed it and returned it. The Pope rejoiced, examined it carefully, and said, 'Take it Father Mina; I am giving it to you.' He took it happily from his hand. He woke up thinking about this vision, regarding the staff and his conversation with the Pope.

### **Renovations Of Anba Samuel Monastery**

**Metropolitan** Athanasius, the former metropolitan of Ben'. Suef asked Metropolitan Yousab of Gerga, the Deputy Patriarchate, to appoint Father Mina as the head of Anba, Samuel Monastery. This monastery, which was not doing well financially, needed someone to take care of the monks and their needs. Father Mina was obliged to obey, even though he did not want to leave his cell at the windmill. The monastery's centre was located in the town of El Zora near Maghagha. The building was constructed of soft bricks, and the church was very old and unsafe. Father Mina went to Cairo to meet many of his beloved people, including a contractor, Mr. Hanna Nessim. He asked for their help and support in rebuilding the church and the monastery centre. They immediately planned and organized the work amongst themselves. Two big tug boats full of steel, cement, and coal to make the bricks, were shipped to the site. The residents rejoiced when they saw this material arriving. They started the work with Father Mina by making the bricks from clay which was put into moulds and heated until hardened. They knocked down the falling walls and old foundations, and put in new foundations and columns, and they constructed the church roof. They also built a two storey residence for the monks. This work, which became the centre of conversation, was supported by many people. Within a short time, the church was finished and the building was ready for occupancy. Metropolitan Athanasius prayed the opening Divine Liturgy and consecrated the church. At this Liturgy, which was attended by great multitudes from the neighbouring regions, Father Mina was promoted to the rank of Hegumenos.

### **Anba-Samuel Monastery At Kalamon Mountain**

Now that Anba Samuel Monastery was finished, Father Mina started thinking about the Monastery at the Kalamon Mountain which was about seven hours away from the centre at El-Zora. When people heard that Father Mina planned to visit the Monastery, they offered so many gifts, including wheat, honey and cheese, that a convoy of seven camels was needed. When he arrived, the monks rejoiced by ringing the church bells. He stayed for a few days, examining the monastery and its buildings to prepare a plan for their renovation. The faithful people provided the needed help and support. The monastery was renovated and the church was built. Father Mina arranged that every fifteen days, the monks' needs would be brought in from El-Zora. And when these plans were completed, the monastery flourished and the monks who had previously left because of the deteriorating conditions, now happily returned.

Once Hegumenos Mina was sure that all of the monastery's needs were met, and that everything was back to normal, he appointed Priest Mina El-Samuelli to be in charge of the monastery centre. Thus, he was able to return to the windmill in the mountain at Old Cairo.

Priest Mina El-Samuelli, who was a disciple of Father Mina in Old Cairo, was ordained a priest at the opening Divine Liturgy of the centre at El-Zora, by Metropolitan Athanasius.

### **Saint Mina's Call**

#### **Leaving The Windmill**

The Second World War was becoming fierce. The Allies chose the mountain where Father Mina was staying as the defence centre for the city of Cairo. Father Mina was fully respected by the military troops. When the air strike intensified, the top

military leader feared that it would be dangerous for him to stay around the troops. He asked him to leave this dangerous mountain area and find sheltered accommodation in the residential area. Father Mina did so by living in two nearby churches.

Father Mina, and the beloved people, thought about building a place that would be a small residence for him and a church to be named after the great martyr, Saint Mina. He bought a 150 square metre piece of land, but later increased it to 500 square meters to insure a place for the church and the necessary facilities. The contractor, Nessim Hanna, designed the building and construction began. They worked diligently until they finished the church which included a cell at the top for Father Mina. In a short time, a residence for Cairo University students who came from outside Cairo, was also built. This place in Old Cairo was named Saint Mina's Monastery. It also became a shrine for those who wanted God's blessing. The Monastery became an active place for the blessed sons of Father Mina.

### **The Return To The Monastery Order**

A Papal order was issued ordering all monks to go back to their monasteries. None of them would remain outside his monastery unless he had a responsibility in the city. Because Father Mina was needed as the head of Anba Samuel Monastery, he could not go back to his monastery, El-Baramous Monastery. He sent a letter to Hegumenos, Ibrahim Luka, who was the patriarchate authorized representative, informing him about his responsibility, and that he needed to obtain a patriarchate permit to stay in Cairo. This was done and Hegumenos Ibrahim Luka quickly visited Father Mina to hand him the permit personally.

### **The Consecration Of The Church**

When Saint Mina's church was built, Metropolitan Athanasius consecrated it. Metropolitan Abraam of Giza, who was a friend of Father Mina since their days at the Theological College of Helwan, celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Metropolitan Athanasius. The church and the buildings around formed the monastery.

### **Caring For The University Students**

Father Mina personally gave special care to his sons, the university students from outside Cairo. They all felt as if they were members of one big family with a loving and kind father. As much as he was merciful and loving, I was firm. He led them wisely in their ways in life, and helped resolve the problems that stood in the way of the receiving God's grace. He established three conditions to be followed by those who wanted to join the monastery:

- to obtain a certificate from the priest in the student's home town stating that he was a strong Orthodox believer,
- to abide by the monastery rules of living,
- to attend the Divine Liturgy and partake of the Holy Communion regularly.

### **Come Poor**

Father Mina had many spiritual sons. Many of them used to come back to receive his blessing. One of them, after graduating as a pharmacist, opened a pharmacy in his home town. One day he came to the monastery in Cairo. Father Mina thought that he came for a spiritual retreat, learned that he wanted to join the monastic life. He sold his pharmacy and brought the money to Father Mina to help in finishing his projects. Father Mina told him, "Jesus Christ said, 'Whoever comes to me, I will let in.' He did not say that you should bring your money. If you want to follow Christ, leave everything and come and follow Him. Distribute your money as you want. Come poor; owe nothing. Taste the sweetness of the voluntary poverty so you can feel the richness of Christ". This son obeyed. He left; he returned poor, having nothing.

### **Centre Of Grace**

Saint Mina's Monastery in Old Cairo became a place where great blessings were received. Visitors were there every day from morning until evening, feeling the grace of the Lord and inhaling the aroma of Jesus Christ. Miracles took place as God looked with His merciful eyes and healed the sick. Heavily burdened hearts entered the monastery and the Lord carried their heartaches away. Those possessed with demons left free of the devil's ties. The monastery was a centre radiating the spirit of God.

### **The Envious People**

The more the grace of God increased in Father Mina, the more envious people became. They made false statements against him to the Pope who ordered Father Mina to return to his monastery until such matters were cleared. God prepared righteous people close to the Pope to defend Father Mina. They intervened on Father Mina's behalf to the Pope that Father Mina was a righteous son of God. They insisted that his only goal in life was to worship the Lord, and that God was truly glorified in all of Father Mina's deeds.

## **The Heavenly Invitation**

Throughout church history, there have been times of sadness and sorrow in believers' hearts. At these times, the church turns to Christ, in the highest, "O Lord, save. Do not let your divine heritage be put in shame. " The church was experiencing one of **those periods** just before it became time to elect a new shepherd for the church. Metropolitan Athanasius, God repose his soul, was the Deputy Patriarchate at that time. God helped him keep the church safe and deliver her into the hands of the divinely selected successor. The nominees were highly respected monks. Nominations were submitted for Father Demian (late Metropolitan Thomas of Atbara in Sudan), Father Angelos El-Meharaqi (late Metropolitan Maximus of El-Kaliobia), Father Timotheos (late Bishop Yousab of El-Baliana), and Father Mina from Saint Demiana Monastery. Although Father Mina, the Hermit, was not part of this process, Metropolitan Athanasius added his name without informing him.

After all the final nominations were submitted, Metropolitan Athanasius called Father Mina and asked him, Father Mina, why are you not part of this election?"

"Your Holiness, may the Lord bless you, and may the Lord choose a good shepherd to guide His people with piety and purity of heart."

"You should not have missed this duty."

"Who I am I but a little worm, to even consider this glorious and serious responsibility, and carry its enormous trusteeship, which should be given to a divinely chosen person, and not to whomever wants it."

"But I still did not hear your answer as to why you didn't allow yourself to be nominated and allow the Lord to choose according to His will?"

"Your Holiness, all of my fathers, the monks who were nominated, are suitable for this critical position. But as for me, I am content with the Lord's grace that is with me."

"Father Mina, I submitted a nomination for you."

"May the Lord bless you, your Holiness, but where would the lowly stand between kings?"

"The Lord can lift the poor man from the pits to seat him with the principals of his people."

"May the Lord bless you, your Holiness, and guide us and lead us."

Father Mina had requested from his beloved ones - especially those who knew about the blessings that the Lord had granted him - not to campaign for him, either by flyers, or through meetings. Everyone respected his wishes.

On Friday, the seventeenth of April 1959, the nominees were narrowed down to three monks: Father Demian El-Meharaqi, Father Angelos El-Meharaqi, and Father Mina El-Baramousy (Father Mina the Hermit).

## **The Draw At The Altar**

Sunday, the nineteenth of April 1959, was the day a Pope would be chosen. A Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Metropolitan Athanasius, and attended by most of the high ranked clergy of the Coptic Church. Three papers, each bearing the name of a nominee, were put into a sealed envelope and placed on the altar, as witnessed by the congregation and Dr. Ramzy Stino, the state representative. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the envelope was unsealed in front of the clergy and congregation. A young deacon was appointed to pull out one of the papers from the envelope. The name of "Father Mina El-Baramousy" was chosen. At that moment, the Cathedral bells rang with joy announcing the divine choice. The congregation, and all Coptic people, rejoiced and raised many thankful prayers to the Lord. The news was transmitted by all of the radio stations.

The news reached Father Mina who broke into tears while praying the Divine Liturgy at St. Mina's Monastery in Old Cairo. He refused to allow his beloved ones to ring the church bells before the end of the Divine Liturgy. Shortly afterwards, clergy and church members flowed into the monastery. Father Mina walked out of the altar welcoming them, and prayed, "Glory be to God. The Lord has chosen to demonstrate His power and glory through my weakness. I tremble with fear in the glory of Your power. You are just and right. You do not forget your beloved. From You we receive power and help, O, Our Lord and Redeemer.

## **Visit To The Monasteries**

It is imperative in our traditions that the divinely chosen Patriarchate should leave from his original monastery and head to St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. So, Father Mina first headed back to El-Baramous Monastery on Saturday the ninth of May 1959, accompanied by a large number of metropolitans, bishops and people, in a long convoy of cars. He entered the Monastery while the bells were ringing, and was warmly welcomed in a procession of monks wearing their liturgy attire carrying crosses and censers. In the church of the Holy Theotokos Saint Mary, he knelt down (matania) with each step he took from the church's front door until he reached the Iconstasis. As a blessing, he kissed each of the icons of the saints and the relics of Saint Moses, the Black and Anba Isidoros, the Priest of the cells, which were on either side of the altar. He prayed the Divine Liturgy, and then visited each and every part of the monastery as he meditated about God, the thorough Examiner of the hearts, the Benevolent to those who are righteous in their hearts.

After a short break, Father Mina visited the Monasteries of El-Sorian, Anba Bishoy, and Abou-Makar. He headed back to Cairo in a car that was provided by Mr. Wanis and Mr. Ayad Faltas. He was accompanied by Metropolitan Athanasius and the late Bishop, and dear companion, Kyrollos of Baliana. The late Bishop Benjamin of Menofia was also with them.

Around sunset, the convoy of cars arrived in Cairo. A great number of people awaited their arrival and walked alongside until they reached the Great Old Cathedral of Saint Mark. Thousands of people filled the streets that surrounded the Cathedral. When he finally arrived at the church, which was overflowing with people, Father Mina made his way inside, knelt in front of the altar, and offered the Prayer of Thanksgiving.

### **The Ordination**

Early Sunday morning on May 10, 1959 (Bashans 2, according to the Coptic calendar), Father Mina El-Baramousy, walked out of the Papal residence preceded by the bishops, priests, and deacons carrying crosses. Sounds of joy filled the air as multitudes welcomed him. The divinely chosen Patriarch to be, stood in front of the closed church door. He opened the church door with the key that was handed to him, while saying, "Open the door of righteousness to me, so I can come in and thank the Lord, for this is the door of God which the righteous people walk through. I thank you Lord, because you granted my prayers, and you saved and redeemed me." Then he walked through the door of the church, and knelt down in front of the Iconstasis. Metropolitan Athanasius, who was the only surviving Metropolitan of those ordained by Pope Kyrollos the Fifth, started the prayers. The bishops were invited to join in the prayer. They placed the four Gospels on Father Mina's head. Then according to their seniority, they laid their hands on him. Metropolitan Athanasius (The Deputy Patriarch) said, "My brothers, come and bless our father and shepherd, who was selected by God and His people. " Afterwards, they put the Papal garments on him, and the Papal crown on his head. He walked up to the altar and kissed it, and received the Papal staff that was placed on top of the altar.

Then, he sat on the Apostolic Chair, The Chair of Saint Mark, the Evangelist. When he stood to read the Gospel, he dared not to say, 'I am the good shepherd', but said, "Christ said, 'I am the good shepherd.'" After that, he broke into tears, feeling the magnitude of his responsibility, and showing his humiliation in front of God, Whose help he was seeking.

The ordination was broadcast live, and was attended by Mr. Anwar El-Sadat, Deputy of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and representatives of different organizations and other churches.

The people crowded around him in order to receive his blessing. He remained patient and gentle, though he stood .for many hours. The Metropolitans and the Bishops asked him to sit down and rest because he was sweating, however, he insisted on continuing because he wanted everyone's heart to be filled with joy. Everyone went back home glorifying God for what they had seen and heard.

Becoming the Pope, did not change him. He continued his system of prayers as he did when he was a monk. He regularly celebrated the raising of incense prayers and daily celebrated the Divine Liturgy.

The Lord helped him in managing the church matters, both big and small. He revived the regular celebration of many church rituals. The Lord was glorified by all of his actions and always accepted his prayers. He has been crowned and has joined the saints in Paradise. Many of the great and magnificent things that he had done have been recorded. All his sons and daughters who received and enjoyed his blessings in their lives, have recorded their stories.

## PART II

### POPE KYROLLOS THE SIXTH

#### PATRIARCH OF THE SEAT OF SAINT MARK

1959-1971

BY:

**Father Rafael Ava Mena**

**(Deacon Roufaiel Sobbi)**

**The personal deacon to Pope Kyrollos**

#### **The Continued Asceticism of the Pope**

"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection ... (I Cor 9:27)

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:24)

"For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor 4:11)

Pope Kyrollos the Sixth, never forgot that he was the poor Monk Mina. His election as the Patriarch did not change the ascetic life he had been leading. On the contrary, he believed that he was going through a very tough experience, and, therefore, more fasting and prayers with tears were required.

Since he was divinely selected, he always felt a righteous need to continue to reject the pleasures of the world, and hold onto Christ within him. He gave up everything to buy the precious pearl.

There is no surprise then to learn that the Pope's diet remained the same as when he was a monk, even though he was getting older and the stressful responsibilities tougher. His breakfast was one korbana with some salt, ground cumin and sesame seeds. After much pleading from his disciples concerning the content of the meal, he added two spoons of beans. Many times, the Pope would be in meetings until 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. before having had a chance to eat breakfast.

His lunch consisted of dried bread with a small amount of cooked vegetables. He never ate the vegetables, but only dipped his bread into the sauce. I never saw him touch a piece of chicken or meat, or even have a sip of milk.

His dinner was just like his breakfast. Sometimes, he would just have some fruits for dinner.

That was the Pope's food during the non-fasting days. During a fast, he had a very strict food regime, especially during Lent and the Holy Theotokos, the Virgin Mary's fast. On those days, he would only eat one meal a day after the Divine Liturgy late in the evening. He ended the day of fasting only because of his pity for the rest of the fasting congregation.

His clothes were also simple. His inner clothes were made of coarse, cheap, fabrics that were basted, not properly sewn. He wore a leather belt around his waist and the monastic habit (eskim); above this a black, light, tunic made of a cheap material. He would also wear a tunic that had no slits called a "faragia". He would wrap his hair in a shawl, because he vowed to himself, when he was a monk, never to cut his hair.

The clothes he wore, when celebrating the Divine Liturgies, or for feasts and celebrations, were also very modest. Many other priests' attire were of more expensive materials, but this was his style.

He refused to wear the chasuble and the crown even during the opening of the New Cathedral in Abassia. He did not wear the new- garments offered to him by Emperor Helaselasi for the occasion, and he would repeatedly say, "Christ fled to Egypt, and did not have a place to rest His head. "

He only used the cheaper, modest handkerchiefs of the brand "Mehallawy" and would give the luxurious ones offered to him to his disciples. He used to give his clothes to the bishops and priests, and some kept them as a blessing.

To my great astonishment, his Holiness never changed his shoes for the five years of my service with him. He never thought of repairing or polishing them. He would wear them unlaced. When people would try to tie his shoe laces after the Divine Liturgy, he would say, "Leave them my son, and let this evening end in peace."

**“Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Your saints shout for joy.” Ps 132:9**

He also slept very little. It is well known that the Pope started his day by prayer around 3:00 a.m. and would never finish with meetings, visits and other responsibilities until very late at night. No matter how tired or exhausted he was, he would still wake up on time for the early morning prayer with remarkable energy and happiness.

His bed was a very modest one made of brass. His cover was a single blanket, summer or winter. Many times he slept on his chair. **When the Vatican deputy came to visit his Holiness during his illness, he was greatly surprised to find that the Pope's cell was so modest that he offered to furnish it at his own expense. The Pope thanked him, and told him that he liked this simple place.**

### **The Pope's Readings**

His best friend had always been the Holy Bible. He would meet with it every day, and never became bored reading it. Likewise, he never grew tired of reading the books of St. Mari Isaac the Syrian, although he memorized most of them, and transcribed them several times. He also read the numerous religious books that were published during his blessed reign. He would thoroughly read the religious magazines, never skipping a line. He used to meet with the magazine writers and share his comments with them, and they always found the meetings beneficial.

### **The Pope's Modesty**

Words alone cannot describe Pope Kyrollos' modesty because humbleness can only be shown through actions. Our memories provide many examples of his humbleness and we find joy in recording them.

His dislike of praise or glorification can be shown by the following incidents:

While giving a sermon at St. Mina's Monastery in Mariout, a priest mentioned a miracle that happened as a result of the Pope's prayers. The Pope, who was attending the sermon, left the church and went to his cell. He didn't return until the sermon was about to end, and one could see that he had been weeping.

An accountant and his daughter came to meet with the Pope. When they entered, the daughter knelt in front of the Pope, and looked up as she went to kiss the cross he held in his hand. She saw such a marvellous sight that she could not stand up until the Pope helped her. Once out of the room, she told her father about what she saw. She came back the next day with her father and met the Pope. She told him that she had seen a halo of light around his head that reached his shoulders. At hearing this, the Pope became really disturbed, and cried, "Protect me O God! O God protect me!" and he turned his face in humility.

I often heard him abasing himself, saying, " ... the boy became a Patriarch..." And if he would ask for something and found many people responding to his request, he would humbly say, "His shirt is at his knees and ten are at his service." Or, as it is said, "He's still in grade school and the world is waiting on him."

While the Pope treated everybody with kindness and compassion, giving us consolative smiles that were like heavenly gifts, let us see how the Pope dealt with himself.

### **The Pope's Spiritual Vigilance**

**“Indeed, You Are A Man Of God...”**

During Lent of 1969, the Pope gave me a small bottle containing three kidney stones, and asked me to consult Dr. Aziz Fam, Professor of Urology, at the Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University. He asked me to inform the doctor that they induced tremendous pain on their way out.

As soon as the Professor saw the stones, he said in amazement, "The smallest of these three stones would need surgery to be removed." He rushed me back to the Pope to ask him to drink a lot of water throughout the day. And if he chose to fast, he still could, but he had to drink a lot of water to avoid crystals precipitating in the kidneys. But the Pope simply answered me, "Did we lose our faith in God and the martyr St. Mina?"

Two days later, Dr. Fam came to visit the Pope to reassess his health conditions. He asked me whether or not the Pope was drinking a lot of water. I informed him that the Pope was still fasting as usual. He became very upset and shouted, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God!"

The Pope overheard the doctor's voice and asked him to come closer to him and handed him another bottle containing two more stones, saying, "St. Mina has helped me remove these two stones as well."

At this point, the doctor calmed down and said to the Pope, "Indeed, you are a man of God, and I believe in you." He then took the stones and kept them as proof of the Pope's faith, his trust in God and ascetic life.

### **"... Why Be Lazy?"**

One morning at St. Mina's Monastery in Mariout, Pope Kyrollos wasn't feeling well. He told protopriest Mina, head of St. Mina's Monastery, that he would not be able to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with him. Father Mina went and celebrated the Divine Liturgy by himself. Half an hour later, the Pope called me and said, "My son, why be lazy? Prepare the altar for prayer." I implored him to rest, but he refused. I told him that Father Mina had taken all of the vessels and linens for the service. The Pope then got up, and by himself obtained another set of vessels, some communion handkerchiefs, and three breads of offering, saying, "My son, St. Mina's bread of offering is better than that in any other place." His Holiness celebrated the Divine Liturgy on a side altar forgetting all about his pain.

More than once, His Holiness' health would deteriorate and he would be very ill with a fever reaching 39°C. We would worry, but to our great surprise, His Holiness would leave his bed and head to the church. I would beg him to rest, but he wouldn't. Rather, he told me, "I was once in Mansoura when my fever reached 40°C. The doctors asked me to rest, but I celebrated the Divine Liturgy and made several visits to a number of other churches. I came back the same day and found the doctors apprehensive, but they found that my fever was gone and my temperature was back to the normal 37°C."

The Pope used to go to the new Cathedral at Anba Rewis to pray the Divine Liturgy every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, as well as the Prayer of the Raising of Incense on the nights before. In the winter, when the weather was very cold, the Pope would still go. The Cathedral was very cold because it had no windows or doors at that time.

It had a very high ceiling and was extremely wide and drafty. The Pope always prayed there even when it was very cold and rainy. We expected that these conditions would stop him from going there, but to our surprise, we would see him leaving his cell energetically and heading for the Cathedral. On such nights, none of the congregation attended.

### **My Hands Served My Needs**

One night I awoke when I heard some movements in the small reception hall near my room. To my great surprise, I saw His Holiness standing in the kitchen in his night clothes, putting the food back into the refrigerator. I was deeply touched and asked His Holiness, "Why didn't you ask me to do that." He answered, "You are tired after working for me all day. I was concerned that the food would go bad because I didn't eat any of it, so I thought it better to put it away. Have a good night."

I was moved knowing he didn't treat us as one would expect a Pope and Patriarch to, but rather as an equal.

### **His Own Food For His Sons**

Once when the Pope was residing at St. Mina's Monastery, some families came to visit him. Before they left, His Holiness ordered food for them. Shortly after, he asked me to bring his own dinner to the children. I explained that we already took care of their food, but he insisted. So, I took the food and gave it to them, and he remained without food.

### **May God Look At Me And Have Mercy On Me**

The Pope once gave me a stack of his incoming letters to arrange and then read to him. Amongst them I found a letter full of swearing and insults to his Holiness. I informed him that there was an unethical letter and asked his permission to destroy it, but the Pope insisted that I should read it to him. After I did, he smiled and said, "Don't worry about this, my son, nor become disturbed, may the Lord look at me and have pity on me. Worse than that has often been said, but thanks to the Lord, He saved me and watched over me."

### **He Serves And Wouldn't Be Served**

In 1967, His Holiness developed a thrombus in his femoral vein, and had to remain in bed for two months. Despite that, he would order me to have his sons and daughters come to him, and would sit with his leg stretched on a chair (as per doctor's orders). One day, we had a fairly large number of visitors, and because I was so tired, I went to my room to rest. Three hours later, his Holiness called to me from his room and as soon as he saw me, he said, "My son, the Lord had blessed me with a miracle today." I asked him to explain. He said, "After the visitors left, I got up to close the door knowing how tired you had been all day. I was able to close the door, but once I closed it I fell. I tried to stand up, but couldn't, nor could I ring the bell because it was too high. I couldn't knock on the door nor lean on the chairs because they were too far away from me. I stayed like that for half an ' hour, then, when I cried to God to help me, I was able to stand."

I cried when I heard these words and said, "What use are we to you. Please allow me to leave, because the Pope doesn't even need me to close his door." He said, "My son don't say that, but rather glorify the Lord for He helped me and saved my bones from being broken. He performed this miracle in spite of my old age and my health conditions." He then prayed and dismissed me.

### **The Open Wound**

Surgeons would operate on the Pope's feet (ingrown toenail) once every two months. Dr. Youssef Yoakim from Cairo and Dr. Michael Assad from Alexandria would perform these surgeries in the Pope's cell. They usually took over an hour and left the Pope in great pain. This procedure was to be followed by a few days recuperation, 'but he never rested. Shortly after the doctors left, he would be in the church, raising incense to thank the Lord. He would meet with his sons and daughters, with a smile while listening to their troubles and problems. Nobody knew that the Pope had two open wounds on his feet.

### **The Praying Pope**

It is difficult for us to understand the personality of Pope Kyrollos the Sixth if we do not have the experience of living in unity with God, and if we do not recognize the meaning of prayer in spirit and truth. His Holiness prayed unceasingly. He never stopped praising God, either in his cell, during meetings, while walking, or even while eating. He was always lifting up his heart and all his senses as he sang psalms. Prayer was his source of comfort and the tool for solving difficult problems. He spent prolonged periods of time alone in his cell just in prayer. The Pope's life was always full of prayer, and eventually prayer became his life.

Pope Kyrollos' day started at 3: 00 a. m. no matter how late he went to bed the night before. He would wake up for midnight prayers, and then he would go to the church to pray the prayers of the Raising of Incense before the Divine Liturgy. He likened the praises of the Raising of incense to the Manna that the people of Israel used to collect before sunrise, after which it would melt, and become impossible to collect. When he was tired, he prayed the praises in his cell. I used to hear him saying them with deep thought and enthusiasm.

His Holiness told a story to show the importance of this Dogma, as well as all other church Dogmas. A church chanter from a small village had a lazy son who refused to memorize the prayers of the midnight praises. His father often disciplined him, and one time he locked him in the church. While the boy was sitting in the church, a lady came, patted his shoulder, and asked him, "What happened my son?" He replied, "My father punished me for no reason." The lady said, "My son, your father wants you to learn and be as good as he is. Listen to your father and I will help you. " The lady left, and the father came back to go over some hymns with his son. He found that his son had suddenly mastered them. Even the boy was amazed at this achievement. The father, a devoted man, asked his son, "Did anyone come to you?" The son told him about the lady who visited him. The father realized who she was and said, "That was Saint Mary, the Virgin. Peace of God be with her."

The prayers of the Divine Liturgy, were like a treasure that he opened every day to collect heavenly comfort, and to place before the "Lamb of God" all his worries and sufferings. He used to pray with a low voice, bowed head, and closed eyes with almost no hymns nor singing, but with fear and respect. He never allowed himself to lean against the altar nor to talk with

anyone during the Liturgy. While praying, he used to shed many tears, as tears are the product of prayers. We deacons would find ourselves shedding tears in our prayers along with him. In fact, His Holiness enjoyed celebrating the prayers of the Divine Liturgy by himself because it gave him the greatest spiritual comfort. Sometimes the Pope would pray the Christmas and Easter midnight Liturgies that were also broadcast on the radio. Other times, he would just attend without taking part in them because he would pray another Divine Liturgy early the next morning that ended before dawn.

Because of his faith in the great benefits of the Liturgies, he ordered that three Divine Liturgies be celebrated daily at the Cathedral, and two others at the small church beside it. He used to say, "We have to bring joy to the angel of every altar, so that he may remember us before God. Those angels are my army and we fight together."

His Holiness was also committed to the Prayers of Raising of Incense which he said morning and evening. He prayed them joyfully, going around the entire church, offering incense before all of the Saint's Icons asking for their prayers and intercessions. He insisted on raising the incense by himself. When a young priest monk offered to raise the incense for him, as was the practice of some bishops, the Pope told him, "And why can I not raise the incense? Are we not all raising it to the glory of God? There is no great or small person in the eyes of God. We are all the same in front of Him." He pointed out the greatness and honour of this Dogma by saying, "It is like the service of Aaron and Zachariah".

In the evenings of Kiahk, (the Coptic month before Christmas), His Holiness found great comfort in praying the special praises of this blessed month while alone in his cell. When I would enter, I would find him playing the timbrel (Daff), praying in a clear voice. He would be upset that I wasn't participating with deacons of the church in the prayers of these praises. I was hoping to share in these prayers with His Holiness, but he usually refused.

During the Passion week (the week before Easter), he used to live all of its painful events. He would weep while praying during that week. He would pray the first and the last hours' prayers in the church when it was not crowded. He read the readings with reverence whether in Coptic or in Arabic. During the litanies, he used to kneel down, in spite of his old age, praying in tears and humility.

The rest of the hours' prayers, he prayed in his cell, setting before his eyes the sufferings of our Redeemer and Saviour, and asking in tears for the forgiveness of the sins and iniquities of his people. One thing that affected me deeply was to see His Holiness with a monk's simple stick instead of the Papal staff.

As soon as the Divine Liturgy of Holy Maundy Thursday ended around 3:30 p.m., His Holiness, while still fasting, started reading the Gospel chapters of the Holy Spirit wearing the white head cover and holding a candle in his hand. Although this took a long time, he felt great comfort in these prayers.

You can imagine the sorrow that His Holiness went through when the doctors ordered him to stay in bed after suffering several heart attacks. Being separated from the altar affected him greatly, especially after forty years of praying the daily praises and Liturgy. Upon the Pope's request, I set up speakers in his cell, so that he would be able to follow the prayers at the Cathedral.

Thus, life on earth for our Father, the Saint Pope Kyrollos the Sixth, was a continuous prayer, a continual and active relation with the source of all blessings that went beyond every mind and was indescribable. The prayer by the spirit is the one that helps to save the heart from the bonds of the world, and gives a true inner desire to ascend to higher purity.

With his prayers, so many problems were solved, many troubles ended, and many miracles were performed.

## **Relationship With His Children**

"A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench ..." (Mt 12:20)

*His heart was full of love for his children. A divine fire of love pulled him towards his sons and daughters. He could not help but to love them and open his heart before he opened his door to them. For them, he suffered, grieved, wept, became depressed and exhausted.*

*As the love that filled his heart was a divine one, he loved everyone; those who offended him as well as those who exalted him; those who accepted him as well as those who rejected him. If he had rebuffed someone or was hard on them, it was*

*because his love was truthful and sincere. If he had compassion or pity on someone standing on shaky ground, he would help him stand firm. He was fearful that the weak person was like a bruised reed that would break in a storm of tribulation.*

*As his spirit was immeasurably stronger than his body, no debilitating illness would have prevented him from meeting with his children. He met with them because he loved them, even when he was sick in bed, tired, or in pain which only those close to him knew about.*

*We will remember you father for many years. History will keep your memory for many generations. Celestial bodies will witness, until the end of times, that you were a father for your children; that you were the shepherd for your flock, teaching them with meekness, humility, and love. You gave them peace from your overflowing heavenly peace. For them you were not just a preacher, but your life was a sermon.*

*As I gather a little from here and there of the life of Your Holiness, I witness that your love for your children was a matter that no words can describe, and no stories can tell. Therefore, I sincerely ask the reader to think deeply with a clear mind into each and every story I mention. I hope the reader will be able to see the true meaning of God's work in our saint's heart. I wept with each word as I went through each story; and why not, since the one who loved us so much has departed.*

Whenever the Pope learned that any of the bishops was ill, he would go pay him a visit. He also called or sent a delegate to inquire about the well being of sick priests, and cheerfully received them when they recovered.

Early in his reign, he visited the Coptic hospitals in both Cairo and Alexandria. He would start his visit by visiting the very poor patients in the third class ward. This greatly impressed people because they expected him to visit the first class patients first. He also had a church built inside both the Coptic Hospital in Cairo and the one in Alexandria.

On many occasions, the Pope would see an elderly gentleman who needed a blessing but who could not reach him because of the crowd. The Pope would then go to him and pray for him.

Many newly married couples would ask the Pope to pose with them for a picture. He would agree, bestowing his blessings and prayers. He declined, however, to have a picture taken with engaged couples.

On many occasions, I heard the Pope ask for an absolution from a priest that would be celebrating the Liturgy with him. The priest would feel embarrassed, but with the Pope's persistence, the priest would give him the absolution.

### **"... We Have Found A Good Shepherd"**

One day, Anba Athanasius, Metropolitan of Beni Swaif, came to meet with the Pope. He could not, however, find him upstairs in his cell. He learned that the Pope was still receiving visitors on the lower level after the Divine Liturgy. By then, it was close to half past two in the afternoon, and the Pope still had not had his breakfast.

His Grace, the Metropolitan, was astonished at the situation. As he approached the Pope to take him upstairs so he could rest, he said to the crowd, "Enough, we have just found a good shepherd. Do you want us to lose him?" The Pope went upstairs with the Metropolitan, listening to him as a young son. But the Pope returned to his children after the Vespers prayer and spent several hours with them.

### **"... I Was Sick And You Visited Me" (Mt 25:36)**

The Pope heard that late Anba Kyrollos, the Metropolitan of Kena, was sick and staying at a relative's house in Cairo. The Pope went to him and they shared their blessings and prayers together. His Grace, the Metropolitan, wept because he was overwhelmed by the Pope's love.

When Anba Kyrollos, the Metropolitan of Beliana, was sick at the Coptic Hospital, the Pope went to visit him. As soon as His Grace, the Metropolitan, saw him coming, he stood up, although he did not have the strength to do so. He kissed and hugged the Pope several times as he received him.

### **"He That Receives You Receives Me ..." (Mt 10:40)**

When the Pope received bishops or metropolitans who were ordained before he was, he would get up from his chair to greet him at the door of his reception room with a kiss, hold his hand, and have him sit down beside him.

### **Honour To Whom Honour Is Due**

The Pope would never reprimand any priest in front of other people, no matter what the reason. He was always careful to discuss any shortcomings in private. He was following St. Paul's epistle to his disciple, Timothy: "Rebuke not an elder." If a priest left out a part of the prayers or a ritual procedure, the Pope would approach him holding the liturgy book (kholagy) and show him what he missed. If the priest missed a part of the unwritten rites (usually taught from one person to another) the Pope would inform the priest in a very low voice.

His Holiness, the Pope, was very strict regarding the use of the Coptic language in prayers. He had issued a letter to all priests, instructing that every Divine Liturgy should contain parts said in the Coptic language.

### **"My Son, Give Me Your Heart ... " (Prov 23:26)**

One day, His Holiness, the Pope, heard that one of the deacons criticized the way a priest chanted the mass. He had said that the priest's hymns barely had a tune. The Pope wanted to gently reform the deacon's behaviour. He did so at a Divine Liturgy attended by the priest and that deacon. He said to the deacon, "Do you hear how the Father is praying? The prayers are coming from his heart. If two or three people like him existed in this world, God would have turned away his wrath." The deacon felt embarrassed and asked the Pope for his forgiveness and absolution.

### **'Strengthen The Weak Hands ... " (Isaiah, 35:3)**

Some complaints were forwarded against a certain priest. The Pope compassionately advised him in a way that would strengthen him. The priest would continue to come to the Pope asking for his support and prayers. The Pope would say to him, "I am praying for you everyday, Father. Arise, do your best. I want to be proud of you."

### **The Just Judge**

Once, a committee of a church in Cairo sent a complaint against the church's chanter, accusing him of neglect. The Pope did not make any decision until a trustworthy person was sent to investigate the complaint's validity.

### **"Let The Little Children Come To Me, And Do Not Forbid Them (Mt 19:14)**

The Pope encouraged young deacons by letting them participate in most of the hymns. He encouraged the older chanters to be patient and let the young deacons complete the hymn. When a chanter would interrupt them and start singing the next hymn, the Pope would ask him, "How will a young deacon learn if he isn't allowed to try to sing and be corrected if he makes a mistake?"

### **Lest They Faint On Their Way**

The Pope would ask that food be prepared for the young deacons who served with him in the Divine Liturgy during Lent, when prayers usually ended at five in the afternoon. He would inquire several times to make sure they had their meals before leaving.

### **Be Simple**

One evening during the Vespers, the Pope was raising the incense in the church. A simple woman approached him and presented him with three eggs. She said to him, "Master, take these and bestow your blessings unto me." The Pope of Alexandria took the three eggs and put them into his pocket. Although I was walking behind him, he did not hand them to me. Smiling, he asked the woman, "Are they boiled well, or will they crack in my pocket?" The woman replied, "No master, they are well done." He smiled and said to me, "Son, now we are guaranteed of our supper. " Then he bestowed his blessings upon her before dismissing her.

### **Sheep Not Having A Shepherd**

His Holiness had a special place in his heart for his daughters, the female employees and university students. He urged them to uphold the virtues of modesty and purity, and to seek God's closeness. He gave them examples from the lives of the female saints of the church. He would say, "As they become busy loving the church, the power of evil departs from them." The Pope also expressed grief at the new generation. Once I heard him in his room sighing and saying, "It makes one weep. It makes one grieve that sheep do not have a shepherd."

The Pope's wisdom was fruitful. Many of these young women went regularly to church before going to work or school. They used to attend the Divine Liturgies and receive His Holiness' blessing.

### **Outward Adorning**

In spite of the Pope's fatherly compassion towards young women, His Holiness never neglected to ask them to wear modest apparel. He strongly reprimanded them for any inappropriate clothing. When he did not approve the apparel they were wearing, he would say, "Lady, put something on your head or "Go out and cover your shoulders. " If a family came to visit His Holiness, accompanying a young girl who was wearing a short dress, he would say to the girl, "Tell your mother to lengthen your dress. " If the girl was wearing a dress with no sleeves, he said, "Tell your mother to fix you a couple of sleeves."

One day, a woman, who was being hospitalized, was allowed a time of leave to go with her husband to visit the Pope and receive his blessings. His Holiness noticed that she was wearing inappropriate clothing. He rebuffed her saying, "Go out. Are these the kind of clothes you wear to come meet the Pope with?" The lady went out weeping bitterly. After the lineup of visitors had diminished, she once more went in with her husband. The Pope prayed for them and then dismissed them. He did not show them the compassion he usually receives visitors with.

### **Be Perfect**

The Pope was also strict about the necessity of young men to wear sensible clothing. When he saw a young man wearing a short sleeve shirt, His Holiness would give him a slap on the arm, reproaching him, "You should be perfect." If a young man with long hair would come to visit him, the Pope would tug on his hair saying, "This is not right." Many of them obeyed. If he would see a young man with a wild or wanton appearance, His Holiness would give him a slap on the arm and severely reproach him.

### **The Good Shepherd**

The Pope was careful to always meet with his children, even when he was not feeling well. He wanted to be assured about their well being, and to carry their burdens.

One day, His Holiness had just finished the Divine Liturgy, and had not yet eaten breakfast. A large number of visitors arrived asking His Holiness' blessings. When he asked me about the number of visitors, I told him that there were too many. I noticed that the Pope looked tired and I beseeched him to quickly dismiss them. The Pope looked right at me and asked sharply, "What do you mean?" I felt ashamed of my conduct. He then asked me to invite the visitors in and he had long conversations with them. The visits were not over until late afternoon. Afterwards, the Pope wanted to draw my attention to my mistake in his fatherly fashion. He started blaming himself, and said, If I had listened to you, I would not have been that late for breakfast. " I left His Holiness and went outside weeping. I was touched by his great compassion and love for his flock.

Moreover, His Holiness would ask me, before going into his room to rest, to check that there were no more visitors waiting on the ground floor.

### **Eat Whatever Is Set Before You**

His Holiness never rejected any kind of food presented to him. He used to accept, bestowing his invocations.

Once, some simple people brought His Holiness a few beans and falafel sandwiches which he accepted.

Also, a wife of a policeman used to give away pastries (feteer) to the poor during the feast of Archangel Michael. She would give His Holiness his share of three pieces. He would delightedly take them, taste them, bless her, and dismiss her. He would give me the pastries, and though I would completely forget about them, he would come and ask, "Son, get the pastries, so we can eat them and receive a blessing." And, he would eat a little bit from them.

### **"And Whoever Desires To Be First Among You, Let Him Be Your Slave-" (Mt 20:27)**

Once, a visitor came to the Pope and asked His Holiness for a piece of cotton moistened with holy oil, so he could give it to a sick friend who was asking for the Pope's prayers. His Holiness brought the oil bottle, and started to moisten a piece of cotton. At that time, some of the oil was dropped on the visitor's hand. The Pope asked him to wash his hands. The visitor washed his hands three times to clean the oil. He was surprised to find the Pope patiently standing behind him, holding a towel.

### **Learn From Me, For I Am Gentle..." (Mt 11:29)**

One day, the Pope phoned me from his room. A visitor, who was in my room at that time, answered the phone. He did not know that His Holiness was on the line, and started to speak to him in a rough manner. At that point, I had come in and heard the Pope's voice. I hurriedly took the phone and spoke with the Pope. My visitor felt very embarrassed. He went to the Pope asking forgiveness and absolution. The Pope reproached him in a gentle and mild manner.

### **One Body And One Spirit**

When I began my discipleship with His Holiness, the Pope asked a steward to prepare a few things that I would require. The steward replied, "Master, I am his servant." As a father to us all, His Holiness did not accept this reply and said, "Rather, brothers." Thus, we lived as brethren, loving each other under the care and direction of our beloved Pope. And that was a useful lesson for me in my first days of discipleship.

### **Be Wise**

One time, an elderly worker in the patriarchate had outrageously insulted me. I wanted to reprove him, but the Pope stopped me. Afterwards, the worker came to me, apologizing. From that day on, we became friends, thanks to the Pope's wisdom.

### **Love Your Enemies**

Some unruly individuals issued and distributed handouts containing insults and defamation against His Holiness, the Pope. Afterwards, many of them came to apologize and confess. He would welcome those who returned saying, 'I knew everything about you and I was praying for you.' He even assigned them some of the church's important jobs. Many people wondered about the reason behind the Pope's behaviour. The Pope used to answer them, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them who spitefully use you."

### **Be Meek**

When His Holiness used to ask one of the custodians to bring him something, such as a glass of water or his praying clothes, his request would be meek yet witty, "Son, bring me (such and such), so I can bestow upon you the last remaining couple of invocations."

At St. Mina's Monastery in Mariout, the Pope used to stay in the upper floor of his private suite. After having his meals, he would bring the dishes himself to the lower floor. When he returned upstairs, he would call down to let us know that the dishes were brought down. We tried many times to dissuade him from doing so, but he said, "What you are already doing for me, aside from so many other chores, is enough."

## **Pope Kyrollos The Wonder-Worker**

*"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;" Joel 2:28*

"O man of God, Pope Kyrollos the Sixth, how many have said that you understood them from the first meeting, speaking to them about their inner self and commenting on their personal problems before their mouths open up to tell? How many have

said that you had predicted incidents that happened in their lives and homes? Though you were far away from them in flesh, yet, you entered into their inner self with your spirit and mingled with them in their personal lives. They have seen you in dreams as a guide and they have become obedient to the words you speak that light and guide their path." (H. G. Bishop Gregory)

"I insisted on talking to him about a personal matter of great importance to me. As I kissed his hand, he started talking to me as if he read my exact thoughts. Astonished, I kept staring at him after he finished, I had nothing to say. He had completely covered all my concerns. This was repeated many times. I realized that it was God's spirit and He only abides in the holy. " (Masr Newspaper - May 10, 1960 - Protopriest Arsanious Zaki)

### **A Private Conversation Revealed**

Dr. Albert Guirguis once told me that he was walking by the Patriarchate in Cairo with a friend. He asked the friend if he would like to attend the vespers service lead by His Holiness, Pope Kyrollos. His friend's response was that the Pope was an illiterate man, so there was no need to waste time listening to him. Because Dr. Guirguis persistently asked his friend to spend just a few minutes in the church, he agreed. While the Pope was going around the church with incense, both men bowed their heads to receive his blessings. As he was blessing Dr. Guirguis's friend, he said to him, "Why are you wasting your time here since I'm illiterate and not educated?" The man burst into tears kissing His Holiness' hand and asking for forgiveness. Since this incident the man grew closer to the church.

### **A Prophecy For Discipleship**

A family came to receive His Holiness' blessing in 1967. After they left, the Pope asked me about my relationship with that family. I replied that I did not know any one of the members. His Holiness told me that the young man in that family would take over my position as a disciple and would become a monk. I replied, "May God make us worthy to serve you." Two years later the young man came to spend his summer vacation with His Holiness in St. Mina's Monastery. At that time, His Holiness ordained me as a monk and then a priest. I was to inform the young man that the Pope had chosen him to replace me as his private deacon. When he came before the Pope, the Pope asked me to hand the young man the Patriarch brass serpent rod as a symbol of his discipleship. I refused, saying that I had personally received the rod from His Holiness and that the young man should also receive it only from His Holiness not from me. Pope Kyrollos took it from me and gave it to his new disciple. This young man is the deacon Fahmy Shawky Farag who became a monk in the Baramous Monastery after the departure of Pope Kyrollos, and took the name Father Matias El-Baramousy.

### **The Name Mina**

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Many children are named Mina. In many cases there is a story that goes along with their names. In a typical scenario, barren couples would come to His Holiness to ask the Lord to grant them a child. The Pope would pray for them and tell them, "Around this time next year you will return with Mina. " The prophecy would be completed when the parents would come back, as the Pope had predicted, carrying a child named Mina.

It is sufficient to mention one incident in detail, yet it should be known that there are many similar stories.

There was a man working in the Desert Cultivation Organization in the area of Mariout. He was married to four women (his religion allowed it), hoping one would bear him a child. Yet, he had none. The physicians agreed that it was impossible for the man to have any offspring. He went to the Pope in St. Mina's Monastery, in Mariout. When they met, the Pope asked him if he had any children. The man replied sadly that he had none and the physicians gave him no hope of having a child of his own. The Pope comforted him saying that in the following year he would come back to the Monastery carrying his child. The following year, the Pope, who coincidentally was at the Monastery, saw the man carrying his child whom he named Mina. He had come to thank the Pope and receive his blessings. The Pope again told him that the following year he would be given a daughter. This prophecy was fulfilled and the man came back with his son and daughter.

### **New Creation**

A couple related to Father Makary Abdallah, a priest in Cairo, asked to meet the Pope to receive his blessings. When the Pope met them, he asked about their children. Their eyes filled with tears when they told him that the woman had been diagnosed as having an undeveloped uterus, and a miracle would be needed in order for her to carry a foetus. Pope Kyrollos gave her a cup

of water to drink that he had blessed and then dismissed them. They returned to the city of Tanta where they lived. Several months later, the woman saw an increase in the size of her abdomen and felt discomfort. The couple went to a new physician. This doctor, unaware that they were married told them that this was the result of a sinful life. The man explained that they were married and they were seeing him because his wife was in pain. The doctor informed them that she was eight months pregnant. The man was astonished and showed the physician the reports from the other doctors. The doctor was greatly astonished after he read the reports written by his colleagues. He trusted the knowledge of those physicians because he had studied with them abroad. The man told the physician that they had met with Pope Kyrollos a few months back. Surprised, he said, "Can it be that we are still in an era where clergy pray on water and miracles are performed. God created a new womb for her." Later, this same physician attended the delivery.

### **The Land Will Return**

Mr. Nasr Wilson, from Cairo, bought land on which he planned to construct a house. Soon, however, he was told that a government agency would take ownership and compensate him with a meager amount of money. Mr. Wilson rushed to tell the Pope about his problem. The Pope assured him that the land would be returned to him.

While the government agency was in the process of receiving the land, a high ranked official arrived to stop the process stating that the government was no longer interested in the land. Mr. Wilson returned to the Pope to inform him of the good news. The Pope told him, "My son, I have sent you St. Mina."

### **God Shall Enlighten Your Path**

A friend told me that he once went to the Pope to ask for his blessings because he was to be married within a few weeks. His Holiness said to him, "May God enlighten your path and save you." The man walked away puzzled by those words. Three days later, he discovered that his fiancée had not been truthful with him and he broke off the engagement. He thanked God for the Pope's prayers that were promptly heard.

### **Thou Are Just O Lord**

The Pope (Hegumenos Mina at the time), once asked a child to refrain from climbing the fence surrounding the church garden, concerned about the child's safety. This incident took place in the Church of St. Mina in Old Cairo that the Pope had built. The child burst into tears, and his father rushed down the street screaming angrily at Father Mina. The man even threatened to have the church closed.

Some of Father Mina's children wrote complaints against the man for swearing at a clergy in public and for interfering with religious ceremony. Father Mina asked them not to proceed further with their complaints and instead brought them to the church to give praise to God and St. Mina that they may solve the problem. After the praise, the Pope spoke to the icon of St. Mina saying, "They are about to close your church, St. Mina." Three days later the man became very sick and was carried on a stretcher to the hospital. Several surgeries were performed but none were successful and he was released from the hospital though he was still sick. He came to Father Mina asking for pardon and he was forgiven. Father Mina also prayed that he would be healed. The man was healed, however, every year he suffers great pain on the anniversary of the incident. His son, who caused the man to revile Father Mina, became a failure and was seen hitting his father, asking for money.

### **The Pope's Chair**

A young lady, named Georgette, came to visit the Pope's residence with her family and Father Antonious Yonan. She had a serious heart disease that medicine couldn't cure. However, Georgette and her family had strong faith that through the Pope's prayers she could be healed. At the time of their arrival, the Pope was resting in his cell, so the family entered the church to wait for him. Georgette who was in pain approached the Pope's chair, and leaned on it while tearfully praying that she may be healed through the prayers of the Pope. As she walked back to her family, she no longer felt the pain. The family rejoiced greatly in the Lord. Later, Georgette was diagnosed to be completely healthy and had no indication of the heart disease.

### **Unlocking The Church Door**

The Pope arrived early to celebrate the Diving Liturgy in a church attached to an orphanage in the city of Alexandria. However, he found the church door closed with a large lock. The group accompanying the Pope knocked on the door for ten minutes to no avail. The guard wasn't there. They suggested to the Pope that they go to another church to pray. But the Pope ordered them to pull away the chain on the door. As they pulled, the large lock fell to the ground and the door was opened. The Pope celebrated the Divine Liturgy as he planned. When the guard of the church arrived he was astonished to find that the door he had locked had been opened.

### **Go To Her St. Mina**

While Mr. Abraham Goudi was receiving communion from the Pope, he tearfully told him that his daughter was in critical condition while in childbirth. The Pope tapped the communion spoon (misteer) at the tip of the chalice and said, "Go help her St. Mina." Later, when Mr. Goudi went to the hospital, family members congratulated him on his daughter's miraculous delivery. He was told that his daughter suddenly delivered the baby. Then he told them what the Pope said and they all glorified God.

### **The Bedouin**

A Bedouin came to His Holiness because he was in severe pain and had difficulty urinating. The Pope blessed some water and gave it to him to drink. Soon afterwards, the kidney stone was released and the Bedouin completely healed.

Many miracles were performed for the Bedouins who lived in the desert of Mariout around the monastery of St. Mina. The Bedouins in this area still remember the power of the Pope's prayer.

### **Even The Winds And Storms**

In 1964, the Pope was at St. Mina's Monastery when there was a severe storm. The monks came to him asking for his prayers that the storm would end. He then raised his cross and said, "Put the air of the heavens in a good mood. " The storm became so calm that there wasn't even a breeze. The Pope then said, "St. Mina, when we asked you to calm the storm, did you have to stop the breeze as well?" Then a gentle breeze surrounded the area and all were astonished.

Also, in 1966 the Pope went to visit the Monastery for a couple of hours before returning to Alexandria for scheduled appointments. After the Pope celebrated the Divine Liturgy, a strong sandstorm hit the desert. The Pope looked at the icon of St. Mina and said, "Are you upset because we are leaving you? We will be back as soon as we can." He raised his cross and the storm was calmed. He went to Alexandria as planned. Every one who knew of the miracle gave glory to God whom the Pope worshipped.

### **Healing Ulcer**

Mr. Hanna Youssef Mina from Alexandria, told me that he had a serious stomach ulcer. He was restricted from eating everything but bean soup. One night, he entered the Cathedral and found the Pope raising the vespers' incense. He stood close to the Pope waiting for the first opportunity to tell him about his condition. The Pope asked for a cup of water, drank half of it, looked at Mr. Youssef and said, "Do you want the remaining water?" As soon as Mr. Youssef drank the water he felt his stomach healing, so he decided not to tell the Pope about his illness. After arriving home, he ate a heavy meal and was amazed that he felt no pain and was completely healed.

### **Exorcism**

When the Pope was a hermit in Old Cairo, many patients came to him to be healed with the power of God. What astonished many was the power he had over demons. He used to heal as one with authority.

I will mention examples of miracles that took place before my eyes to provide the readers with an idea of the extent of the power of God that accompanied this righteous man throughout his entire life.

Many were waiting for the Pope to come down from his cell. While he was at the top of the stairs, one person screamed, "Keep him away from me! Keep him away from me!" When the Pope inquired about the reason for this screaming, he was told that the man was demon possessed. As soon as the Pope arrived on the main floor, the man fell to the ground in a state of epilepsy. The Pope helped him up and called him by his name saying, "Arise Abimalik," prayed for him, and ordered him to

take communion. The young man arose and repeatedly kissed the Pope's hand. The rest of the attendants were astonished that a touch from this holy man could perform exorcism.

After a Divine Liturgy, a demon possessed young man was brought to the Pope who was sitting in the reception room. The Pope ordered the youth to remain on the side until he blessed the congregation. He kept screaming and pleaded with the Pope to stay away and not harm him. When the Pope placed the cross on the young man's head, he became silent and fell down in a state of epilepsy. The Pope helped him stand and gave him water to drink. The young man repeatedly kissed the Pope's hand and his relatives' tears were soon dried and they were filled with joy.

A demon possessed child was brought to the Pope as he was giving communion. The child filled the church with his screams. After the Divine Liturgy, the Pope approached the child and slapped him saying, "Why have you filled the church with your screaming? Get out of him." As soon as the Pope placed the cross on the child's mouth, he was freed and kissed the Popes hand.





The Windmill

### GLORIOUS DAYS IN THE LIFE OF POPE CYRIL

*If we wanted to extract from the life of Pope Cyril, some glorious days to speak about in this section, we would choose all the days which God had set for him since the days of his youth, in which he performed miracles and with which he will be known in history from generation to generation. With his blessed name coincided the appearance of the Holy Virgin Mary, a glorious event that hasn't happened as such again. The Pope has taken a supreme international figure in history and his memory remains a legend as long as there are believers on earth. **Many saints wished that St. Mary appear for a moment or two, and here the Mother of Light came back to her land to appear for months and years.***

***Oh what a glorious man.***

*With his name also coincided the return of St. Mark (his relics) to his See, after being away in a strange land for many centuries ... this is another pearl in this saint's crown ... and that's how his pure memory will be kept forever ..*

***Oh what a glorious man***

*Yes, what do I say about you my father, beneath your wings you sheltered us in peace, kept us away from tribulation, we have tasted in the church, through you, some of the most beautiful and pure days of its life ... and we still live in the sweetness of these days' wine.*

*What do I say about you my father, in your remembrance the words sweeten and lengthen. 77te Lord gave you a glorious name in heaven ... among the glorious heavenly people: Athanasious, Dioscoros, Antonious, and Makarious. What glorious works came about in your lifetime, my father, for if measured in years it would need tens of years .*

*When measured in spirit, it is miracles that cannot be accomplished except by the power of God, who manifested Himself in this saint; a saint whose ways were acceptable before Him so He made even his enemies at peace with him.*

*You were asked a few days before they placed their hands upon you, to make you the patriarch, 'What are your plans for the future?' and you answered as a man of God "I will let God manage the ship of my life. " We have witnessed what God*

*has done with you through His miracles, and if we wanted to count them we'd lose count not knowing the extent of their depth.*

***O what a glorious saint.***

In Pope Cyril's life we were blessed with:

- A true spiritual awareness that returned, to the Christian congregation, due to his appearance amongst us as a silent picture of the praying, fasting and non materialistic man of God, in the midst of a noisy and materialistic time.
- An overflowing fountain of love for his children, happiness for seeing them day and night, whether in sickness or in health and his spiritual concern which was portrayed through his visits to the churches of Cairo as well as all the districts, where miracles took place strengthening the faith.
- The building of the new Cathedral of St. Mark.
- The building of St. Mina's Monastery in Maryoot.
- Life brought back to the writings of the fathers.
- The love and respect which was exchanged between him and the officials of the country, heading them Gamal Abd El-Naser and following him Anwar El-Sadat which was beneficial to the church and the country.
- The opening of the church to the other churches of the world and its role of guidance in both the local and international sense.

These have been signs showing God's work with this saintly man but we don't want to forget that it all took place while the Pope was in great tribulations: those from the devil, and those from enemies inside and outside.



**The Pope with the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches**

## **RENOVATION OF THE OLD ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL**

Upon the Pope's return from the conference with the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, which took place in Adees Ababa in 1965, he was surprised by a contractor who was instructed by the churches general committee, to remove the paint off the Cathedral's ceiling in the large dome of the church. The Pope stopped him and spoke harshly to him saying "the church is made of wood"; instead he had planned to destroy the first and build a new one instead of it in concrete. The Pope was sad about the destroyed paintings on, the ceiling of the church, because he thought of them as precious memories to the fathers who preceded him. The whole church was renovated by the contractors Sharobeem and Farag Akladios from Alexandria and Azeez Mikhail from Cairo. They reconstructed the western front of the church, the two southern and northern levels. They also repainted beautiful paintings on the ceiling and reinforced the altar with concrete as well as decorated the other two domes with nicest illustrations. They also built two floors with reinforced concrete to take 1500 seats.

The small church adjoining the Cathedral, the church of St. Steven ( Estefanos), was rebuilt using reinforced concrete, with three altars and three domes and its area was increased.

On Christmas Eve of 1966 the Pope celebrated the opening of both churches, since the major stages were completed. Sharing the feast with him was representatives of the Eastern churches.

The Pope loved this Church greatly, he always repeated that he felt God's blessings and fear present in it, he had also felt great comfort towards it.

It is not irrelevant to mention that all these renovations cost 40,000 pounds and that when his holiness departed to heaven, he had left enough to complete the work that remained.

### **MAKING THE HOLY MAYROON**

During the Passion week in April of 1967, the Pope conducted the necessary prayers for making and blessing the Holy Mayroon. This procedure was conducted in St. Mark's Cathedral, in the presence of the representative of the Ethiopian church, the metropolitans, the bishops, the priests and the monks; it was not held in the Meharak monastery as planned due to the Pope's sympathy for all the people who were eager to attend these blessed prayers.

The prayers began following the common funerary prayers of Palm Sunday. The Pope, himself, brought down the materials needed to make the mayroon, which consisted of perfumes, incense and pure olive oil. The mixing continued through Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the Holy Passion Week; helping the Pope, were the metropolitans, bishops and monks.

On Holy Thursday additional prayers were held after the Holy Liturgy had ended, and on Easter Eve the Blessed Yeast was placed on the mayroon, then some of it was given to the representatives of the Ethiopian church.

This act of consecrating the Holy Mayroon is one of the most important events which happens rarely and it is said that the Holy Mayroon was blessed only 25 times since the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The ministry of culture had filmed this event and it was aired locally and internationally, this event was also covered by other European and American associations which had sent their representatives to Cairo specifically for covering this event.



The Pope Making the Holy Mayroon

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW ST. MARK CATHEDRAL

### PLACING THE CORNER STONE

On the 24th of July 1965 the corner stone of the largest Cathedral in the Middle East was placed, carrying the name of Saint Mark. Present for this celebration was the President Gamal Abd ElNaser who gave a speech outlining the country's policy towards all citizens, ensuring that justice is the way and that love is what ties the country together. This speech was tapped by the international committee of Churches, it was translated to many languages and thousands of copies were distributed because it was a good example of the correct relations among the citizens within the Middle Eastern countries.

The Pope received many telegrams from all around the world congratulating him about the placing of the corner stone; the ambassadors of some countries also came to the Patriarchal Residence to congratulate him about this event. The ambassador of Senegal showed the Pope a semi-official Senegal newspaper which carried a picture of the Pope and Gamal Abd El-Naser, along with the speech he had given.

### CONSECRATING THE CORNER STONE

On the evening of May 8, 1967 (30 Baramouda of the Coptic year 1683) the Pope conducted prayers for blessing the area where the new Cathedral was going to be built. This day was also the feast of St. Mark's martyrdom and the Eve of the feast of St. Mary's birth. The event was attended by the metropolitans, bishops and many people. The Pope sprayed the water in the building area after the completion of the traditional prayers. The building was then started by the Nile General Company for reinforced concrete (Sbico Inc.), they began building the Great Cathedral after the Pope had blessed the building's blueprints. The heavens showed its joy about this work by a bright light appearing on the dome of the Cathedral on the evening of May 18th, this was seen by many among whom was Bishop Gregarious, bishop of scientific research.

### THE INAUGURATION

On July 25th 1968 the celebration of officially opening the new Cathedral was held. The feast was attended by President Gamal Abd El-Naser, Emperor Hileslasy of Ethiopia, as well as other representatives whose numbers tallied up to 172 guests. Some gave speeches of congratulations and pledged for the greatness of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Pope Cyril VI in whose life, all these glorious events took place.

I remember for instance what the Syrian Pope Mari Aghnatiouss Yakoub said in his lengthy and eager speech: "The Syrian church of Antioch has seen in Pope Cyril VI a three dimensional picture of Saint Cyril the first, known as the "pillar of faith", in his strong faith, righteousness and strength in beliefs. We hope that it is in his lifetime that the love and brotherly relation join our sister churches..."

After the speeches had ended the Pope and his guests proceeded to unveil the inauguration plaque.

The following morning the Holy Liturgy took place in the Cathedral, on the gold plated altar which was a gift, presented by the Russian Church. The Bishops of the Eastern Orthodox churches attended and took part in this Holy Liturgy; it was also attended by the Emperor Hileslasy, a number of representatives from the churches of the world and thousands of the church's children, many of whom stood outside.

Pope Cyril told Mari Aghnatiouss, who sat next to him, lit is truly a glorious day that reminds me of Zion, which gathered the disciples of Christ, glory be to Him." Mari Aghnatiouss smiled and said, " with your efforts, your grace Pope Cyril". Pope Cyril then gave thanks and glory to God for His blessings.

After the Holy Liturgy had ended, the multitudes approached to kiss the relics of the blessed St. Mark, who was carried by Pope Cyril, the Emperor and some Bishops - preceded by priests raising incense, deacons praising and multitudes glorifying.



**The Pope carrying the Relics of St. Mark**

### **THE APPEARANCE OF ST. MARY**

The heavens bore witness for Pope Cyril's righteousness by the appearance of the all-pure, virgin, Mother of Light, St. Mary in her church, in the Zeitoon (Zeitun) district. She appeared in a miraculous way, which is difficult to describe, this heavenly declaration has not happened since the dissension of the Holy Spirit on the saintly disciples, on the day of the Pentecost.

At 8:30 p.m. in the evening of 24th Baramhat, 1684 (April 2nd, 1968) Mr. Abd Elazeez Ali saw a young lady walking on top of the dome, so he shouted at her and a group of co-workers gathered around him; those were: Maemoon Afiefy, Heseen Awad and Yakoot Ali. They saw a young lady all dressed in white walking on the dome by the cross, which was on top of it. They thought she was going to commit suicide so they called the police. The multitudes gathered and the police came but the woman's appearance became clearer with the brighter lights shining. Her picture was glorious before them, in the midst of the light, and suddenly a flock of white doves flew above her head. She was walking carrying an olive branch in her hand, surrounding her was a circle of light and her body was bright as the sun.

Some of those present, attempted to shine strong beams of light at this shining body but it only became brighter. They therefore shut down all the lights surrounding the area in order to be assured of what they were seeing and the Virgin Mary lit up even clearer and stronger.

The news spread by word of mouth and through the mediums of media it reached all around the world. When this appearance was repeated a number of nights at different times and in different apparitions, thousands of Christians and non -Christians came to see her; they would stand by hours admiring her; they would stand by hours admiring her appearance before them.

Among the strange incidents of these apparitions, was that of Tuesday April 30th, 1968 at 2:45am. Thousands were awaiting her appearance, when suddenly two white pigeons flew from the top of the church, then light that looked like clouds appeared and from among them St. Mary appeared suddenly. During that night she would walk from left to right making gestures with her hand and head that looked like she was greeting and blessing all the people present ; this lasted until 5:00 am.

The apparitions lasted for many months, in which shining bodies accompanied the All Pure St. Mary, such as stars and pigeons with luminous bodies that would fly up in the sky until they disappeared. She was also surrounded by great amounts of incense, on the top of the church.

Many were cured from illnesses which medicine could not cure, for she cured: the blind, those who suffered forms of partial paralysis; she raised the paralyzed of different religions and nationalities. Joy and comfort filled everyone, they all gave thanks and glory to God.

This appearance was also accompanied by Virgin Mary's appearance to many in their homes, to heal them from illnesses with no discrimination between religion or nationality.

These events raised hearts with gratitude and praises to God. The children of the church were ensured of the glory of their Coptic Orthodox Church', the validity of their faith as well as its strength, and many who were fooled by other strange religions or beliefs returned beneath her (the church) wings.

It was necessary that the church give its support to what was taking place, therefore, after precise research the Pope ordered that a patriarchal bulletin be issued about the apparitions. It was aired on the 26th of Baramouda, 1684 (May 4th 1968) in a news conference held in the patriarchal residence, it was attended by local news people as well as news reporters from other

parts of the world, who were flown in, specifically for the coverage of this event. Bishop Athanasious, Bishop of Bani Sweaf administered the bulletin in Arabic then in English.



St. Mary's Church at Zeitoun

### **THE RETURN OF THE RELICS OF THE EVANGELIST, APOSTLE AND MARTYR ST. MARK**

There was absolutely nothing to separate between St. Mark's body, in Venice, Italy, from his head, in Alexandria, with one exception being the physical oasis between Italy and Alexandria, which lay 100,000 miles across the Mediterranean. Many patriarchs have sat on the throne of St. Mark after his body was stolen, yet they never thought about bringing him back to where he belongs; until the arrival of Pope Cyril VI.

We have to pause here and ask ourselves what was it that pushed him to ask that the body be returned? Is it a sense of strong connection due to him being a descendant of St. Mark and a true son to him; Or is it due to living the history of the church and it being embedded within him; as well as feeling great gratitude for St. Mark's efforts, who has by preaching the Holy Bible moved Egypt from the darkness of idol worshipping to the light of Christ. Or perhaps it was a heavenly order that pushed him to ask for the body, this could probably be, since his request was accepted very simply - and the outcome was one which was unexpected.

### **ISN'T THIS THE DISCREET HEAVENLY WORK?**

In one of the Pope's meetings with the Vatican's representative, in Cairo, he said "is it not time that you return the body of the Apostle St. Mark to us?"

The representative : "we cannot delay a request from his holiness the Pope".

The Pope : "Thank you ... I will send this request to the Roman Catholic Pope and I am sure that our efforts will be crowned with success."

According to this conversation the procedures were started to bring St. Mark home. Pope Cyril sent his request to Pope Paul and it was received with great welcome. The Pope of Rome then sent his consent to the Patriarch of Venice asking that he also agree - but he refused saying that St. Mark is very dear to Venice because he was her intercessor, as well as a great asset to tourism for he was loved by many. Pope Paul kept repeating the request while the patriarch of Venice remained stubborn - yet with Pope Cyril's many tears and prayers, he finally agreed that part of the remains be given back. With the great joy of the news which was announced, the church began to prepare for welcoming back her spiritual father and the founder of the See of Alexandria.

Pope Cyril assigned a committee of seventy-five people of whom were bishops, priests, deacons, monks, and laymen. They all departed to Rome, on a private plane, where the celebration was held officially on June 22, 1968 (15 Baouna) for the handing over of the relics. They were then welcomed back on June 24th, 1968 at 11:30p.m., where more than 100,000 people awaited the arrival of St. Mark's blessed body.

The wisdom of God planned that the righteousness of this pure body be shown on this blessed day. The plane was scheduled to arrive at 5:00p.m. in the evening but it was delayed till 11:30 P.M., as the plane was preparing for landing a bright white pigeon appeared above at low altitude and it was seen in the midst of the darkness of the night. When the plane landed the pigeon appeared once more above the plane whose engines were still running. Pope Cyril went up the stairs of the plane and carried down the blessed body in the midst of the praises, which shook the entire airport.

When the Pope entered into his car carrying the sacred remains on his knees, many saw the white pigeon inside the vehicle, beside the body. The remains were then placed in its special place in the old St. Mark Cathedral, after the Pope had taken him around the church with the praises of the bishops, priests and deacons, who were raising the incense and carrying the candles respectively.

We were told by Dr. Youssef Mansour head of the deacons, in the Cathedral, who used to enter at night to do the midnight praises, that he entered one night into the Cathedral while the body was still there and felt a great power filling the place, which brought some fear to his heart not allowing him to enter, so he left very distressed. The neighbors had also seen a strange light surrounding the dome of the Cathedral before the blessed body was moved to the new Cathedral.

We were also told by one of the attendants in the Patriarchal Residence - who refused to give his name - about a very unusual vision, which took place while the body was still in the old Cathedral. He saw a man, who seemed very holy, walking with his hand raised and carrying the Bible; behind him walked Pope Cyril carrying his cross and a shepherd staff and behind him some of his children, all walking with great reverence. So he asked one of those present "who is that who's walking in front of the great Pope ... and how (since the Pope should be at the head)?" His answer was loud with night that shook the walls of the room, "You don't know who this is? ... He is the great beholder of the Gospel". The man had recounted this vision to the Pope and was answered, "my son, it is St. Mark whom I always walk behind".

On the 26th of June 1968, after the prayer of the first Holy Liturgy in the new Cathedral, the blessed body was placed in his beautiful shrine in the new Cathedral.

## **THE BUILDING OF ST. MINA'S MONASTERY**

The great martyr St. Mina was an Egyptian young man who came from a large family, with rulers' status. He left the army to live in the desert where he can be filled with the blessings of the heavens, He then declared his faith in Christ and was martyred for His beloved name, after suffering great tribulations, God declared the greatness of this saint through what has come about from his relics in miracles at Maryoot. Several churches were built in his name, in that area, the largest of which was the great Cathedral built with seven altars by the Roman emperor Arkadius. He built it with marble and precious stones, along with the other churches of the area, it brought many people, to the area, who came to partake from the blessing. The area turned into an industrialized city with homes, mansions, factories, markets and much more. This shows us the saint's place among the saints of the church.

Time passed and the area along with its churches were faced with tribulations, then destruction. Saint Mina's relics were moved from city to city in threat of being lost, but God has preserved this saint's relics from things that have never come across any other saint's relics, They have been thrown into fire and did not burn, but instead shone a bright light. Every time these relics were lost or moved to another place, God would show that they are the relics of his beloved soldier the martyr St. Mina.

Therefore, there is no doubt that it was God who guided Pope Cyril towards the way by which the glory and memory, was brought to this magnificent saint; and to bring back life to that land which St. Mina had once before filled with life. What Pope Cyril did was a noble accomplishment, which was a miracle (more than anything) that God used to keep this saint's memory alive. St. Mina's memory was brought back in an extraordinary way that has left a flame burning in many people's hearts, until this very day.

#### THE CALL OF ST. MINA

The Pope's relationship with St. Mina goes back to the years of his childhood, as you have read in the first part of this book. When he was ordained a monk, it was God's will that Anba Youaness ordained him with the name Mina, in the Baramos monastery. He became closer to St. Mina, by using him as an example and praying for his intercession. When he was forced to leave the windmill; he built a church in the saint's name in Old Cairo; but that was not enough to quench his fire of love for this saint. He kept sending requests for permission from the agency of Archaeology to live in the lower room of St. Mina's ancient church in Maryoot. His wait for an answer was prolonged, but he remained persistent until he received the approval, after the altar lot had announced him to be the new patriarch. This was a sign from heaven which the Pope understood ... it was that he would not live in a room which he remained persistent in getting, but instead he would liven up the whole area after he became Pope of Alexandria.

If a visitor of the " Bomina" region looks at it with a sad heart, for what has come about it with destruction, we will look at it from an angle of joy to the glorious works which Pope Cyril has accomplished, in an area which life had left since centuries. He covered it with his faith and gave it his building spirit which gave it the heart beat of life and raised the voice of praises within it ... and its old owner "The Martyr St. Mina" returned to his land, dressing it once more with the attire of peace. The Pope was never discouraged, from work, by the hardship of the way, his old age, the danger of the place, the difficulty of bringing the water or the tools of building and thus many miracles were manifested on his hands.

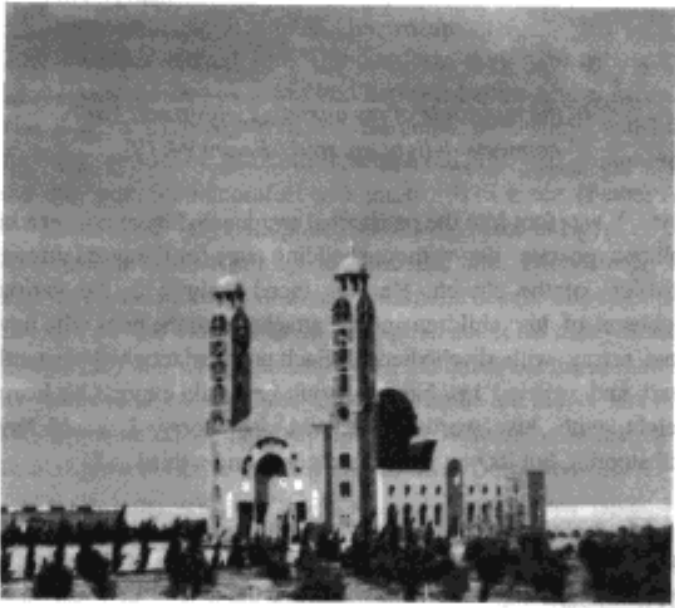
The Pope sent to the agency of "desert development" with a request to purchase 50 acres next to the ancient city in Maryoot and then another request for 50 more. In 1959, on the first feast for St. Mina after the Pope's ordination a large festival tent was put up. The Pope sent his secretary to pray evening raising of incense and ensure that everything was ready for the feast's Holy Liturgy in the morning. In the morning, his holiness prayed the hymns and the Holy Liturgy; those who partook from the Holy Communion were about 500 men and women. He then went to the land which he had bought from the agency of desert development; he prayed, blessed it and placed the corner stone of St. Mina's monastery. During the feast the Pope was asked, by some of those who were present, to sit in the large chair prepared for him but he refused saying: "this chair is for St. Mina."

The two Alexandrian contractors, Sharobeem. and Farag Akladious built a small church, two rooms for his holiness and another for making the holy host. The Pope and those accompanying him spent months in these two rooms with no safety nor rest, just to ensure that the work is being completed.

The Agency of Archaeology agreed to the transport of bricks, that had no archaeological value, to use in the building of the monastery. The students used tractors to transport these stones, it took two full years, and a brick wall was built around about fifteen acres from the monastery's land. Some cells were built along with another church which was blessed in a large festival attended by thousands of people; but his yearning for St. Mina's ancient church pushed him to ride a donkey to the ancient church to partake of the blessing of St. Mina's land.

The ancient church with its seven altars were taking Pope Cyril's mind, so he planned to build something similar to liven up the memory of his beloved hero, who was visited by people from all the corners of the earth and of all kinds of statutes, who came seeking his prayers and intercessions.

The area of this church was more than that of the old St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo. Pope Cyril had left 55,000 pounds for the completion of this church which is suiting of the glory of that heroic martyr.



**St. Mina's Monastery in Maryout**

**IN THE FIRE OF TRIBULATIONS: PATIENCE..  
COMFORT.. SUCCESS.**

*"His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will  
thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His  
wheat into the barn; but he will bum up the chaff with  
unquenchable fire" Mat 3:12.*

*"Persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not  
destroyed" 2Cor 4:9.*

*In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul" Psalm 94:19.*

Since I set foot into the patriarchal residence, I have not seen his holiness go one day without shedding tears for the problems and troubles of the church. He was faced daily with the various problems of his children and the attacks from the ones who have gone astray with disobedience. Each problem touched his gentle heart and worried his humble soul; he would express his heavy weight with his words "if it was one worry, I would have withstood it, but its one worry, a second, and a third .....

In the midst of all these tribulations he never stood alone, he stepped over the thorns and withstood the heat of the war, raised against him by the stubborn, and God's hand was always supporting him. With persistence in prayer he took 'out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness (Judges 14:14)'. He repeated in deep sighs "my eyes look to the Lord at all times, for he gets my foot out of the trap, look to me and have mercy on me for I am a poor lonely son, the sadness of my heart has increased, relieve me from my tribulations, O Lord look to my grief and distress and forgive me all my sins, look to my enemies for they have accused me falsely, keep my soul and save me. I do not wither for I have depended on you. (Psalms 25.15-20)"

The strength of his patience and bearing in facing the vigorous problems surprised many; one of the officials once said "this man is a mountain, not a human". When the problems increased to the extent that they effected his health another confessed: 'We do not deserve this man".

God always sheltered him with comforts, during his tribulations, for he was visited by saints and hermits. Father Abd El-Messieh, who was in solitude, from the Baramos monastery visited him during a period of difficulties which the Pope was going threw, and they both found comfort with the words of grace. (Father Abd El-Messich was an Ethiopian monk who came to Egypt on foot seeking monasticism and joined the Baramos Monastery, then later lived in solitude in a cave within the desert. The reason for his visit to the Pope was to complain about his many visitors, though very few were who came with the

monks of the monastery. He asked that his holiness order that he be left alone. The Pope did as requested of him saying leave him alone so that by his blessed prayers God's wrath would be lifted from the world".

It also happened that on Easter, 1965, the Pope was in St. Mina's monastery, in Maryoot, and in his possession were many problems that could only be described by saying that they were bitter. His heart was heavy with sadness. He asked us to shut all the lights satisfied with only the lights of the candles. His tears kept falling, coming on the Holy Host and he kept trying to stop them but his efforts went wasted. The Holy Liturgy was very long, it ended at 3:30 a.m. and after the liturgy he said to me: "did you see the visitors who were in the church my son". I answered "where were they my father, for your holiness had ordered them to leave the monastery since the morning." He then said I don't mean those, but the church was so full that their was no place for another to enter, and they were the ones who asked me to close the lights". His holiness left the church comforted after God had sent these saints to him. It was when he saw them, that his tears increased. Without a doubt they had lifted their hearts to the heavens asking for the peace of the church and it was a few days later that most of the problems were solved.

Despite his tribulations and illnesses, he would meet the people with a humble smile which never left his lips, not for a day, as well as his sweet words that comforted his children; he would always answer those who asked about his health, "Thank God, health is great and every thing is well".

Yes, "amongst the saints the Beloved sits, transforming the bitterness of his children's' mouths to a sweetness beyond description; tells the heavenly to comfort and guide them." Mar Isaac the Syrian.

*Lets take a glimpse at the flame of tribulations; which the man of God faced, to see what he did and how God was with him.*

## **HE DIED, AND HIS EVIL EFFORTS DIED WITH HIM**

*(The metropolitan's evil plans)*

During the first few years of the Pope's service there was an opposing metropolitan who was seeking to appoint a committee above the Pope because he said that the Pope was an uneducated man, who has no priorities other than prayer and that it is not enough that a patriarch be a man of prayers. He travelled the districts of Egypt soliciting the signatures of the fathers who were members of the Holy Council, which truly saddened the Pope's heart since some of his beloved had signed.

When he had gathered as many signatures as possible, he returned to his district to present his project to the responsible parties. The news reached Pope Cyril where he was in Alexandria. He entered St. Mark's Cathedral to raise evening incense, he said in a sad voice: "St. Mark this will be the last time I come in here to you, I will go to the desert and never come back again, if this man's project succeeds."

Before the next day's evening raising of incense this metropolitan passed away, after having taken some poisonous material by mistake, and his evil efforts died with him.

## **FINE GO, GO**

Another had come attacking the Pope, after he had rendered a decision in one of the problems of the church, this individual was not knowledgeable as to the details of the situation. He repeated unfitting phrases: "you have done wrong, this is unjust you have no right". The Pope said to him angrily "Fine go, go" and directly after this, he was struck with a stroke and was taken to the hospital where he passed away.

## **THEY JOINED AGAINST THE ANOINTED OF GOD**

Many had the sole purpose of attacking the Pope and hindering the ways before him as much as they could. Knowing their plans, step by step, he would still meet them in humbleness and speak to them with love. All he did was pray with tears, so the church may walk in peace and safety, but they were the tears of painful, unjustly treatment. It was not but a short time that they all departed from our world, one after the other. The Pope was mourning them for years, he would say when any of them died "it was as if a part of my spirit was taken from me".

## **GO, GOD KNOWS HIS WORK**

When his holiness wanted to ordain one of the monks a bishop on a region, he was visited by a man who pretended to be one of the leaders in the district and who informed him of his disapproval of this ordination. He told the Pope: "if you ordain him for us, we will send him back to you", so Pope Cyril answered him harshly: "leave, God knows his work", but the man never returned to his home, for he had died in an accident on the way.

## TRUTH FINDING

There was a newspaper which wrote accusing the Pope of many disgraceful things, it's only objective was to hurt his image. The Pope would read and remain quiet until the day came in which the officials shut down the entire paper. He was congratulated by one of his children but he responded: "what are you saying, the newspaper was shut down, my son it has 200 workers who all have families, from where do they feed them". He then began to make calls to the officials responsible, but they informed him that this paper was finished forever. He did all he could until he succeeded in finding printing jobs for all the laid off employees.

## HE TOO IS MY SON

The officials had one day arrested one of the people who were handing out bulletins attacking the Pope; he was one of the most energetic in this field. When his holiness found out he ordered one of the patriarchal attendants to inquire about this person so he did so. He called the officials and told them that, this person is one of the Pope's children who the Pope is concerned about. Their response was "do not say he's one of the Pope's children, for there are no criminals amongst them, in any case you can ensure his holiness that we will not harm him and we will set him free".

## THE BEGINNING OF THE ILLNESSES

Another had met with the Pope for a long time, discussing one of the problems of the church. He informed his holiness that those responsible for this problem are from the most beloved of his children, which was a great and painful shock. After this person had left, the Pope said: "He has tired my heart today", he then departed sad and weighed down with grief, for the effect of these words was too strong. In the evening he asked me to call Dr Youssef Youakeem who diagnosed the Pope with an artery blockage in the leg but he did not tell the Pope, instead he saw it enough to ask his holiness to take his medication on time and to rest at all times. The doctor travelled to Alexandria, where he spoke to the Pope on the phone. When he found out that his holiness was not following his instruction he screamed: "you holiness must take the medication."

He immediately travelled back to Cairo where he found that the blockage had moved ten cm in the blood. He called a council of doctors who all decided that his holiness must remain in bed for two months, and he surrendered to their order. He also asked that we not announce his holiness's illness, so as not to worry his children, but all those who communicated with the Patriarchate found out about his illness. His holiness was then struck with sedimentation of calcium in his joints and spinal vertebrae; he spent another two months with great pain in bed. All this did not keep him from seeing his children and inquiring about each of them without rest, while bed-ridden. During this time, Anba Youaness metropolitan, of Khartoum, visited Cairo for medication but could not see him this way, he would say "when he gets up safely". The Pope's illness was prolonged so he had to go in to inquire about his health. He had not reached the bed before he broke down in tears saying "get up my father, for this is not your sleep, to whom do you want to leave us, may God keep you for the church and for your people" so the Pope answered him, I am fine thank God, all I need is your prayers". He refused to eat anything that was presented to him, saying "when he gets well" his holiness got well a short period after and was received with the joy of his son, who kissed and congratulated him with happiness.

*This was a brief glance at the grief and tribulation which the servant and honest messenger of Christ had withstood. He went through the narrow way as did the ones who preceded him. He did not fail nor weaken and this was characteristic of those who walked in the truth.*

***My father-my Lord, you were patient not the patience of one who had no choice but that of one who is able, you were able and insisted to complete the commandment.***

***My father-you would hide away from us the pain with your smile, not allowing us to share it with you because you did not seek human comfort, for God overwhelmed you with his comforts.***

## THE POPE'S DEPARTURE TO HEAVEN

## THE POPE SAYING GOOD-BYE TO HIS CHILDREN

One of the Pope's children stood praising his holiness's work and accomplishments, then wished that God prolong his life. The Pope answered him: "my son, its all a matter of five years." It came to pass that the Pope actually died five years after this incident.

The Pope called death: "travelling", for he would say about anyone who had moved to the victorious church that he has travelled. When Heghomen Beman, of the Sorian monastery, passed away he said to me that morning: "Fr. Beman has travelled my son". I answered: "he has travelled with your blessing". Pope: "I am telling you he has travelled, my son" still not sure about what he meant, I answered In your love my father". His holiness then said I meant my son that he has travelled to heaven".

A few days before he passed away and while he was being visite by one of his relatives, his holiness said "I want .... I want". Th visitor responded "what would your holiness like, we will brin it." His holiness then said I want .... I want to travel", the visitor thought he meant to travel to St. Mina's monastery. His beloved monastery.. he responded " the weather is still cold your holiness wait until it gets a bit warmer then you can travel to th e monastery. He did not know that the Pope meant travelling to heaven because when he wanted to travel he did not inform anyone until the eve of his voyage or a few hours before.

Normally, before departing from St. Mina's monastery the Po would spend some time with each monk conversing, he would then bless him and present him with a simple gift from his persona belongings. He would then pray the Thanksgiving Prayer in the large church and he would depart smiling with joy. In May 1970 the Pope said his good bye in a completely different manner. He called upon Heghomen Mina Ava Mina, the monastery's abbot, and spoke to him very briefly while fighting his tears which eventually conquered him. He gave him kalanswas (a monk's head cover) for each of the monks in the monastery, he then made praises for St. Mark and St. Mina in both churches of the monastery. He was holding a picture of St. Mark which he had since he was in solitude, in the desert, and he tried to smile to us but his tears kept coming down vigorously. He did not sit down with any of us but instead got into his car with his tears coming down. We saw that, then asked ourselves: where is the Pope's smile? Where are his long meetings with each of us? Why did he give each of us a kalansowa? What is the secret behind those tears? Why was he holding St. Mark's picture in his hand?

These questions remained unanswered, we had no response other than tears of sadness to this sad departure.

As for the Pope it was his last visit to the monastery, the last time he saw his sons the monks, the last time he saw the relics of St. Mina his beloved interceder, for that reason he was crying and for the first time we saw that he couldn't hold himself together. When we were told the sad news we all understood that he was saying good-bye, yet we did not know and that he gave each of us a departing gift of guidance (kalanswa), yet we were unaware; we brought tears to the eyes of the gentle father and good shepherd, his holiness Pope Cyril VI.

During his last six months on earth he would comfort and strengthen his children saying: "be patient my son", "God will look after you", but no one knew the hidden meaning to these words then. He also remained for some time reminding of and delegating certain responsibilities to his children in the Patriarchal Residence, ones which he never delegated to anyone before. On certain occasions he would remind them of taking care of the church; he also delegated certain issues to his secretary Hegbomen Benyameen Kamel which he never delegated to anyone, even when he travelled, and Heghomen Benyarneen would leave the Pope confused about what had just been said to him.

On the morning of March 8th, 1971, Heghomen Benyamee entered to the Pope and was asked to sit down.

The Pope: "That's it abouna."

Abouna: "What do you mean sayednah."

The Pope: "That's it, everything is over."

Abouna: "Don't say that sayednah, may God grant you health and prolong your life"

The Pope: "Health... is gone... Life... has ended" he paused then said "take care of the church abouna attend to its needs ... may God be with you and look after your matters." Before Fr. Benyameen had awoken from the shock each word, Pope Cyril had extended his hand to bless him; Pope Cyril gave him all the important files which he had never entrusted to anyone ever and then said "God be with you abouna" he gave him the cross to kiss it, which was a sign that the meeting has ended, and speechless Fr. Benyameen went out to the visitors hall, where he remained worried .

On the day in which he passed away, his driver Mr. Azmy Wasef entered to inquire about his health. The Pope said to him "my son I have had enough, I want to travel, are we going to travel son". The driver answered I am at your service sayednah", he then left to prepare for travelling thinking that the Pope wanted to travel to the monastery. He had not reached the last step of the residence's stairs when he heard screams, the Pope has travelled, he has travelled to heaven.

Those who came to clean out the Pope's room, after he had passed away, were all surprised that he had prepared everything knowing that he was to leave the land of hardships soon. They found money in envelopes, in his wardrobe, with a description of its purpose on each envelope, this amount is for St. Mina's monastery, and this amount is for completing the renovations in St. Mark's Cathedral. There were also signed cheques, with their cashing -in delegated to a specific person as soon as possible. The other things were all organized in a manner portraying a person who knew the exact day of departure.

Months before the Pope passed away, he would say his farewells to his children when they visited. We also saw him deep in visions and dreams as he smiles reaching out to bless them. Many stories were told to us by trustworthy individuals, but it will be enough to mention just one.

I was told by a monk of one of the monasteries, who asked that his name not be mentioned, about a vision he had seen one night, forty days before the Pope passed away. His vision was as follows: He saw the head of his monastery come to his cell and inform him that the Pope asked that he visit him. They both drove to a very strange place which he had not seen before. He entered into a large hall, where he saw about 100 people and the Pope standing alone close to a marble building. The monk accompanying him was held back by people who approached him to speak to him, so he said to himself "what am I waiting for, I should go see the Pope, after all he was the one who asked that I come see him." So he did .... he saw the Pope in his simple sleeping attire then broke down in tears at his feet. The Pope lifted him up and they spoke as follows:

The Pope: "get up and don't cry my son", the monk got up and saw that the Pope's eyes were also filled with tears.

The monk: "your appearance has changed greatly sayednah".

The Pope: "everything is over my son".

The monk: "we want you sayednah".

The Pope: "this is God's will, take care of the church, and the monastery" they both cried vigorously then the Pope held him and said "come my son let us make a praise for St. Mark". They sung the praise with tears then the monk awoke to the church bell, which was calling for the midnight prayers, and found his hands and eyes filled with tears. He then left to the church severely distressed.

This monk said that when he came for the memorial he saw the large marble building which he had seen in his vision and it was the place where the Pope was buried, it was exactly as he had seen it. What surprised him the most was the fact that he found out that this building was only built after the Pope had passed away and he saw it forty days before his holiness actually passed away.

It happened in 1969 that the Pope agreed that some renovations be done in his private cell at the Patriarchal Residence, while he was visiting St. Mina's monastery. The room held an ancient picture for St. Mark which was misplaced during the renovations, he searched for it for many days until it was brought to him by one of the cleaners. He received it with great joy and many tears, he then complained to Saint Mark for leaving him for such a long time. He also asked that he cure him from his sickness or relieve him from his pain, three days later... he departed to the Lord.

## **HIS DEPARTURE TO HEAVEN**

On March 9th, 1971 (30 Amsher, 1687 of the Coptic calendar), the Pope woke up at 5:30 a.m. to pray, and listened to the liturgy being held in the Cathedral, which was transferred using the speakers placed in his cell. The doctor, who resided in the Patriarchal Residence, then examined him and allowed his children to come in to receive his blessings, he would say to them "God be with you, may God take care of your matters".

The Pope saw the contractor Mikhail Azeez Akladios and asked him about how the renovations in the old St. Mark Cathedral were progressing. He ensured his holiness that there remains plenty of funds so the Pope said to him "be strong my son and do not fear".

The Pope inquired, before he closed his door, as to whether there remained any of his children who wanted to see him. He then raised his hand as he looked at those who stood around him amongst them were Heghomen Morkous Ghaly, the patriarchal secretary; Heghomen Girgis Matthew, head of the patriarchal affairs; Heghomen Benyameen, his holiness's secretary, several

of the fathers representing the committee of the priests of Cairo; the patriarchal committee of the church affairs, his personal deacon, the cleaners and the employees of the Patriarchate; and said to them "God take care of your affairs".

As they departed on their way, they heard his personal deacon scream for the doctor. They came back running and broke into tears, the Pope had departed to heaven.

The doctors placed some medical materials to preserve the body, they did so alone for there was only Fr. Tedaous present with them. The Pope had one day told him "you are like Tobit" and Tobit was responsible for burying the poor people of Israel during exile.

They seated his holiness on the chair in his room and allowed a few of his children to enter to kiss his hand and look at him for the last time. He was then dressed in the white attire of prayer and the golden crown, which he rarely wore. This was despite that he had left a will which instated his desire to be buried with the clothes in which he passes away, but no one had read his will yet. This was the will of God so that he would be honoured in his death even though he had not honoured himself during his life. It was also by the preparation of God that the Pope be buried in a very elegant box, which was shipped from abroad 4 days before his death.

On March 10th at 5:00 a.m. they seated his holy body on his chair in the Cathedral, which he very rarely sat on. His beloved sons and daughters, the people of the church, were allowed to come see their beloved's body for the last time. The number of people was estimated to be one million, amongst them were the President Anwar El-Sadat and many other government officials.

On the morning of March 11<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 a.m. the body was taken to the new Cathedral in Abaseya, where the Holy Liturgy was prayed. They had lifted the crown off his head and placed instead of it a black head attire, they placed his shepherdship staff in his hand (which he never left for a moment) and the cross which he carried with faith, strength and patience, in his right hand, and from which many miracles were seen.

In the evening, the memorial prayers were held, they were attended by the bishops, metropolitans, the heads of the monasteries, a large number of the priests of different countries, a large number of his children and many people who had filled the Cathedral as well as outside the Cathedral. The President and other government officials also attended along with representatives from Lebanon, Syria, Antioch, the Eastern churches, the fathers of the Ethiopian church and finally, the Vatican's representative who was sent by the Pope of Rome instead of himself. Once the prayers were completed, the body was carried down to the burial in the midst of many hymns which were concluded by "Efnoty Naynan" and "Keryalayson".

*We ask you O Lord, lover of mankind, to accept in peace this precious gift and pure soul which is for our loving father the Pope Cyril VI, who has come to You. He was your entrusted guardian who carried Your message. Grant him a heavenly position so he may be amongst those who preceded him, those who guard, taught and explained the word of truth in straight faith. "*

*We ask you who was placed in the same honour as the 24 priests who reside before the throne of God, remember us before the blessed Father, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## **MOVING THE PURE BODY**

The relationship between Pope Cyril and St. Mina reflected that they did not remain apart until the end, so it was of no surprise that Pope Cyril's will was to be buried at St. Mina's monastery in Maryoot. This primary burial in the tomb placed underneath the St. Mark Cathedral in Anba Roweiss was temporary until a burial was prepared in the monastery. It took one and half years to prepare. When it was ready, Pope Shenouda III ordered that the body be moved, as instated in the will, to St. Mina's monastery.

On the evening of Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1972 (13 Hatoor 1689) the body was taken out and placed in the Cathedral when Pope Shenouda said a few words concerning the great works which Pope Cyril had accomplished, after he had raised evening incense, *asheya*. He then read the will in which Pope Cyril had instated his wish to be buried in St. Mina's monastery, in Maryoot. On Thursday morning 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1972 the vehicles, headed by Bishop Samuel, departed on the way to the monastery, they also passed by the St. Mark Cathedral in "Clode Bake or Clut Bey" seeing as though it had a special place in the departed, Pope's heart. Pope Shenouda travelled to the monastery the same day.

The skies of Cairo mourned Pope Cyril's departure sine Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1972 until Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 1972 with dark skies and heavy rain. As for Alexandria it w as preparing to receive the pure body so the case was completely the opposite, for it just drizzled lightly. This was a weather surprise as was written in the Friday paper.

The monastery was packed with people for the two day Thursday and Friday, as they were preparing for receiving the beloved departed Pope's body. There were about sixty buses, tm hundred cars as well as 2000 individuals who came by train.

When the body arrived it was carried in to the large church, by his sons the monks of the monastery, as the people and Arabs of the region wept.

Pope Shenouda along with the bishops and metropolitans, raised evening incense then the body was placed in its *mazar* (shrine), in the midst of the prayers and hymns. The Holy Liturgy were held on Friday, the next morning, after which everyone took the body's blessing and it was then covered with a long marble cover.

When everyone had returned safely, it began to rain heavily in the Maryoot region. It had not rained there for almost 4 years, the Arabs were very happy for the wells were filled and the crops were irrigated. This made the Arabs come running to congratulate the monks for the arrival of Pope Cyril. Every year since then, the rain has come at the same time, in honor of Pope Cyril and his blessed memory.

The present burial, which is located under the altar of the monastery's Cathedral is great in its beauty and is quite fitting of a glorious saint, who had presented his body incense on the altar of spirituality in joy and eagerness which came from a heart full of love for our Saviour, Glory be to Him. God and his beloved St. Mina desired to glorify this saint, who fled from all praise insisting on his humbleness and righteousness. Pope Shenouda and Bishop Samuel vouched, on one of their visits, that they have not seen such glory in any other patriarch's burial. It is now a holy place where people sing praises and are cured from all kinds of illnesses, ranging from evil spirits to deadly diseases.

Pope Cyril VI was seen walking in front of his mazar by a group of visitors from Abou Kerkas, led by Heghomen Yohannah Azez and Deacon Naziny Ayad and they recounted what they had seen to the monks of the monastery with tears falling.

