

Book One

His Grace Bishop Antonius Markos

The Story of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Africa

THE COPTIC BISHOPRIC FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS  
MEMORIES FROM AFRICA

COME ACROSS  .. AND HELP US  
(Acts 16:9)



The Story of the Coptic Orthodox Church  
in Africa  
In our present time  
Book One  
in Ethiopia and East Africa

By  
His Grace Bishop Antonius Markos  
The Coptic Bishop of African Affairs

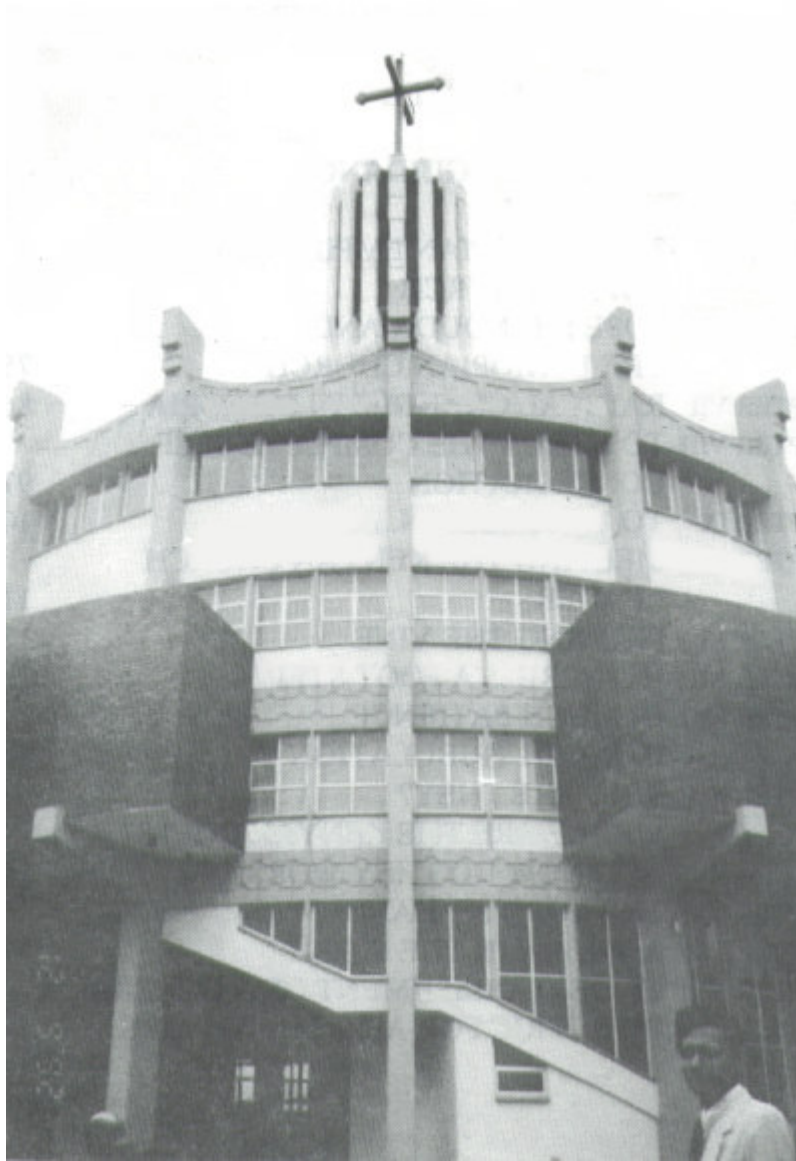
THE BISHOPRIC OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS  
MEMOIR FROM AFRICA

**COME ACROSS ...  
AND  
HELP US**

BY HIS GRACE  
BISHOP ANTONIUS MARKOS  
COPTIC BISHOP FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS

THE STORY OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN AFRICA  
AT THE PRESENT TIME  
**BOOK ONE**  
IN ETHIOPIA AND EAST AFRICA

*THE FRONT COVER PICTURE  
SAINT MARK COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AMONG THE KIKUYU IN  
RONGAI, NAKURU, KENYA. ESTABLISHED 1988*



*THE HEAD QUARTERS OF ALL AFRJCA CONFERENCE OF  
CHURCHES AACC ON TOP APPEARS THE COPTIC CROSS  
BECAUSE THE COPTIC CHURCH IS THE MOTHER CHURCH  
IN AFRJCA. IT WAS PRESENTED AS A GIFT FROM  
THE COPTIC CHURCH AND MOUNTED ON THE TOWER 1984.*

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***SAINT MARK***  
***THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST***  
BEHOLDER OF THE LORD  
PURE AND MARTYR  
FIRST MISSIONARY TO AFRICA



***HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III***  
***POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK.***  
***THE SUCCESSOR OF SAINT MARK – THE 117TH PATRIARCH.***



HIS GRACE BISHOP ANTONIUS MARKOS  
COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOP  
OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS  
TENTMAKER MISSIONARY FROM 1966  
COMMENCED FULL TIME MISSION IN AFRICA JAN 11 1976

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# **COME ACROSS ... AND HELP US**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**DEAR READER**

*The Coptic Orthodox Church has been a missionary church since the first century of Christianity as the Copts followed the steps of the first African missionary namely Saint Mark or John Mark “ABBA SALAMA or KASHATE BERHAN” (in Amharic) which means the revealer of the light.*

*The books of history of the Coptic Church would inform you of the details how Coptic missionaries established churches in IRELAND, SWITZERLAND, NUBIA, ETHIOPIA, ERITREA and PENTAPOLIS.*

*But this book series “COME ACROSS ... AND HELP US” would inform you how the Lord is calling us in this present generation to follow the steps and complete the work of our Apostle and Evangelist to mobilise the church from the concentration into the pastoral work into the mission work also.*

*Since the first Arabic volume appeared in the Autumn 1993, and went out of print in few months due to great demand, we have been making all possible effort to produce it in English. while the second volume in Arabic as well the second edition of the first volume in Arabic are being in print.*

*ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Thanks and gratitude is to be given to our Gracious Lord for the progress of his work in the mission field and our ability to communicate such story to you, through the encouragement, continuous support, and prayers of **H.H. Pope Shenouda III.***

*And our sincere thanks for great efforts done by: **Angela Helga Simone Lutz**, in Johannesburg, for English revision and type— setting.  
**Mr. Magdy Bebawi, J. C. CENTRE, HELJOPOLJS, CAIRO, EGYPT** for his valuable help in colour separation and films making.*

**Bishop Antonius Markos**



## PREFACE

# To The Story Of The Coptic Church In Africa

**This story begins in the first Christian century.**

St. Mark, the Apostle, established the Church of Alexandria and the Church in Libya that was the first among the Pentapolis Churches (the 5 cities in North West Africa), which extend from Barka eastward to Tunisia westwards. That was the first stage.

In the 4th century (325 AD) in the time of the Council of Nicea the Coptic Church had two Bishops in Libya. Nowadays, we have two Churches, one in Tripoli and one in Beni-Gazi.

**In the time of Saint Athanasius, the Apostolic, the Coptic Church established the Church in Ethiopia.**

In the year 329 AD Pope Athanasius, the Apostolic, consecrated the first bishop to serve her. That was St. Fremontious (his name means the man of God). The Ethiopians call him Abba Salama.

**Our Church also established the Church in Nubia.**

It continued under the pastoral care of the Coptic Church until the eruption of the revolution in the 19th century.

Nubia was included in the title of the Alexandrian Pope as well as Libya, Ethiopia, and Pentapolis. These are the areas of his jurisdiction. All these regions (in addition to Jerusalem) are known as the See of St. Mark:

Δαεαδπαριας λχβιης πεπχαπολεως σθιοπιας πεμ  
Αρικια κε παςης σης

**In the middle of the twentieth century the work extended to South Africa.**

That was in the time of Pope Youssab II. (Joseph) who consecrated Anba Morcos, a Metropolitan for South Africa, to shepherd those who joined the Church there. However, this service did not last except for few years. After Anba Morcos' departure from our present world, the proto-priest Father Isaac El-Anba Bishoy continued for sometime then returned to his monastery.

**This book that is in our hands records the story of the service of the Coptic Church in our times since the mid-Seventies.**

It narrates the struggle of Bishop Antonius Markos in the service of Africa, from the time he served there as a lay medical doctor, his ordination as a monk and priest, then his consecration as a bishop in 1976 AD and the spread of his services in Kenya, then Zambia, Zimbabwe and the regions of the Equator until he reached South Africa.

**His Grace wrote the book in a biographic style.**

He narrates the incidents that happened during his services, in an attractive way and sometimes

he enters into minute details. He draws a picture of the characters of the people, the nature of the land, the dangers to which he was exposed, and the work of the Grace with him and also his relations with the other Churches.

**No doubt what you are reading is only a part of the story.**

Bishop Antonius Markos is still working and his story is continuing in Africa. The Lord has granted him an outstanding gift in learning languages, so that he learned the Tigrenia and the Amharic in Ethiopia and the Kiswahili in Kenya, with other dialects of some African tribes, beside his efficiency in the English language, in which he gave many lectures in America and Australia.

He is also distinguished by activity and intelligence that supported him in many of his travels.

**I pray the Lord to grant him success in his services, which he started from nothing, without any material or human resources. But the Lord was with him and that is enough.**

Dear reader, I leave your now to this book. No doubt you shall find in it enjoyment and important information about our present history in some African countries, from the center to the south of the continent.

May this book become an incentive for the servants to join this mission service in Africa.

Fare Yee well in the Lord.

**Pope Shenouda III**

August 1993  
(The Virgin Mary's Fasting)

## **THE LORD'S CALL**

**I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD SAYING: WHOM SHALL I SEND AND WHO WILL GO FOR US? HERE AM I!! SEND ME! (Isaiah 6:8)**

### **GO "FIRST STEP"**

In the summer of 1950 during a youth meeting at St. Mary's Church in Faggala (a district of Cairo known as El Zahir), a servant made an announcement of a new meeting called "the village service". This was an invitation for all who seek to serve the sons and the daughters of the rural areas outside Cairo, those who live in the farming areas who are not remembered by anyone. These would be able to look after those people who had no one to care about their welfare. The village service meetings were held at St. George Church, in Geziret Badran (a district of Shoubra in Cairo).

A high school student, who had just started teaching Sunday school children, listened attentively to this announcement. He was 14 years old and one of the members of the preparatory service class in the Church where he was raised. He was longing to be introduced to those simple people living far from the city, isolated in their homes in the midst of the farms. He joined the "village mission" and, despite his youth and lack of experience, he did not fear to walk long distances or travel to these areas outside his hometown environment. He felt a very strong desire to share in this mission despite the disagreement of many of his fellow servants who were not in favour of going out of the culture in which they were raised.

### **ACROSS CULTURE MISSION**

At the meeting of the "village service" the beginner servant was selected to go once a week to a village by the name of "Abu Zaabal" (a village east of Cairo in Kalyoubia Province on the Marg District Line). He was not to go alone to serve in a foreign environment, but he accompanied an experienced elder servant. There he was to teach children, "because the Lord sent two by two".

The young servant did not know that the hand of the Lord was leading him to serve in what was called "across the cultural boundaries".

At first the village was strange for him when the train arrived on the outskirts of Cairo, it travelled to a far, quiet place where he knew nobody.

**Where are we going to serve? Where are the people? How are we going to know them?**

How are we going to introduce ourselves? Are they going to welcome us or not? Will our service amongst them be useful?



*IN 1953, THE VILLAGE SERVANT WITH SOME OF THE ELDERS AND SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN*

The first visit was a surprise for him from the time he set foot on the railway station. Looking around, he saw that the streets were dusty, the houses were made of mud and means of transport were very primitive, people used to sit on the floor, on a straw mat, and kerosene lamps were the only source of light.

Drinking water was drawn from the canal or underground pump. Customs were different and words were spoken with a different accent. Life was slow and quiet. In the first weeks of his village service the young servant felt that he experienced a cultural shock, which was so soft and light that he could overcome it quickly. He became familiar with the culture and Customs of the people and loved to serve them. He saw in them very simple souls longing to hear the word of God and, although they were deprived of any spiritual care, they were the children of the one Baptism, who were born from the water and the Spirit.

Little did the village servant realise that “He’ who led his footsteps from Cairo to Abu Zaabal, and across the cultural boundaries, would take him to other countries in the vast continent of Africa, to which he belonged ethnically and geographically.

After 16 years of village service, the Lord led him from Cairo to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

During his 9 years in Ethiopia he was introduced to many other African countries, then he returned from Addis Ababa to the El-Baramos Monastery in Egypt. From the desert of AL-Askeet to Nairobi in Kenya, from Nairobi to Lusaka in Zambia and then to Harare in Zimbabwe, and from Nairobi to Kinshasa in Zaire to Botswana, to Malawi, to Lesotho and other countries.

**He went to 23 African countries and in all these countries one can discover differences in colours, languages, tribal cultures, customs, traditions and practices. One also finds differences in the way of thinking of these peoples and how they look at matters.**



This makes us discover something called the “world view”. This is very important and necessary for you to reach them and communicate with them. How do they see the world? How do they see you when they meet you, deal with you, how they interpret you cautiously and carefully at first, before their hearts are opened and accept what you offer them i.e. teaching, goodwill and friendship. Or they reject you, so that you may try and approach others.

### **THE APPROACH**

Our service in the village taught us how to approach people and how to understand different cultures which we have not known before, and what entrance we should seek so that the mission and the service will be accepted.

The servant should have the mind and reflection and seek wisdom from God before he makes any suggestions, so he may not be rejected by the African people whom we have found and to whom we have offered the teachings from the Original African Apostolic Orthodox Church.

### **THE EARLY APPROACHES IN THE SERVICES WERE IN NEED OF GREAT EFFORT AND PATIENCE.**

But once the approach is completed, everything becomes easy and beautiful and the fruits increase, but over a long time and with much patience.

In May 1966, before the departure to Ethiopia, my first experience away from my home land, I sought the advice and guidance of H.H. Pope Shenouda (H.G Bishop Shenouda, the Bishop of Church education at that time), who gave me a piece of advice which was a great help in approaching many people and gatherings in Ethiopia, Kenya and many other countries.

He said, *“First listen well and look well around before making a statement or a comment. Make up your mind about the people and their thinking before saying a word, else what you say may not meet their customs and beliefs and they may reject you”*.

His second advice was *“Learn the language of the people, you will win their hearts because the people’s tongue is very dear to them. Once you speak to them in their own language, their hearts will be opened and they will listen to you”*.

### **THE VILLAGE SERVANT**

### **AND TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST (I John 1:3)**

For the new village servant the estrangement was only once a week and it was a new experience for him. He was new, still an unskilled youth, who felt the difference between where he was brought up and the place where he was serving.

But the name of “Jesus Christ” was the strong link between him and the villagers. The moment they stood up for prayer and he read for them the Word of God, their hearts opened and their souls were moved.

The servant learned how to descend to the level of the people as he was at a university study level. He knew that the Word of God is not tied or restricted to differences in language or

education, knowledge, race, colour, tribe or country. He also learned that he should **ENDURE ALL THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT, THAT THEY ALSO MAY OBTAIN THE SALVATION WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS WITH ETERNAL GLORY** (2 Tim 2:10)

Gathering around the Word of God at the level of children, youth and the village Sunday School students and on adults level was very fruitful in creating an atmosphere of fellowship and sharing that tied the hearts of all. The result was spiritual joy, the joy of praising and singing and comfort in praying and belonging to One Body, which is that of Jesus Christ who is the Church.



*1955 ABOU-ZAABAL VILLAGE, KALYOUNBEYA, EGYPT FEW OF THE COPTIC MEN IN COUNTRY SIDE VIEW*

The young village servant never realised that the Lord wanted to send him to many other places to find comfort and spiritual joy among tribes in foreign countries. The source of this joy and consolation is one, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**BUT THE LORD SAID TO ME: DO NOT SAY, I AM A YOUTH, FOR YOU SHALL GO TO ALL TO WHOM I SEND YOU AND WHATEVER I COMMAND YOU SHALL SPEAK** (Jeremiah 1:7).

As weeks passed, the servant advanced in his studies yet he did not stop serving in the village among the peasants whom he loved even on the days of his exams or preparing for the finals of his university degree.

His stay in the “El-Soryan” Monastery in Wady El Natron (Valley of Natron in the western desert of Egypt), during the Passion Week and another week during his summer holidays, gave him time to contemplate in depth what the Lord was doing with him. He never stopped to serve in the village from the summer of 1950 until he left for Ethiopia in May 1966.

### **THE NEED**

His feeling of the great need that existed among the villagers made him realise the seriousness of ignoring the human soul and he felt what the Lord said: **MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** (Hosea 4:6).

He discovered that most of the Christian villagers had not received Holy Communion for a long time. They never knew how to prepare themselves to partake of the Holy Sacraments and knew not the Confession that they never practised. He even discovered that there were youths preparing for marriage, yet they were not baptised.

He used to arrange trips by train for the villagers to the nearest Church to attend masses, to confess and to partake of Holy Communion from the priest whom they had not seen for sometime. They were overjoyed when the priest welcomed and met them in a fatherly way and looked after their spiritual needs. Yet they became sad each time the priest ignored them or treated them in a routine manner which lacked love and compassion. mingled inside him were too many feelings, but his goal was to make the villagers **TASTE THAT THE LORD IS GRACIOUS** (1 Peter 2:3), so that they could draw nearer to Him as the Saviour of their souls.

### **COME ACROSS AND HELP US** (Acts 16:9)

The village servant did not recall that he ever read a book or saw a movie about the work of missionaries in Africa that did move him. But his service in the village deepened the feeling that there were thousands, millions, who have no one to remember them. The nearer the time came for his graduation from the faculty of medicine, the deeper the feeling that he could trade with his talent of medicine and the Word of God to win many for the Kingdom of Heaven.

A deep feeling possessed his heart that he must serve the Lord among many people that are in much spiritual hunger and thirst and deprived of any medical, human or spiritual care and all his knowledge and faith should be dedicated to serve the Lord in full and for the sake of many souls.

What if these nations were different from us in colour, language, nationality, habits, and traditions? He felt in his heart the courage and the power to overcome all these barriers. The first crossing from the city to the village removed from his heart any fear to step into the unknown. He was sure that, wherever he went, he would find the one whom he knew and trusted ....  
**THAT IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

In amusement he used to listen to his colleagues, the future doctors, talking about their hopes and ambitions after graduation, the fame, the clinic, the surgery, the luxurious cars, the rich wives, the block of flats. He did not have any such hopes or ambitions in his heart, he even found no place for them.

His heart's desires towards missions were not coming from his own self He knew their source, he put them frequently in his prayers, and when they pressed hard on him, he started to speak loudly about them. Not to every man, for he knew well the opinion of the worldly people and the advice of flesh and blood. For that sake he put them in his confession to his confessor and to the Church's spiritual fathers whom he loved and trusted.

The first confession about it was in the Monastery of El-Soryan in 1965. He felt as if they were listening to strange spiritual ambitions in that generation. The Church was trying to upgrade the standard of the pastoral services to the people, and to prepare new priests and servants in the same field. Even the MISSION was considered to be part of the pastoral work of the Church.

We do not have the abilities, or the experience, or equipped servants. And also the work must be very difficult among peoples, tribes, languages nor customs that are strange to us all.



### *THE BISHOP AMONG THE KIKUYU KENYANS IN 1977*

He was not convinced and he kept asking, knocking at doors and seeking. He hoped to find someone who would agree with him. Whenever he sought guidance from any of the fathers, the answer was always the same be indifferent.

But as the days passed and as he was drawing nearer to the end of his studies in medicine, he could not feel in himself *"that the matter: makes no difference:*

### **THE TENT MAKER**

The servant understood well the position of the Church, yet he used to feel comfort and overwhelming joy every time he remembered the saying of the Apostle Paul: **YES, YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT THESE HANDS HAVE PROVIDED FOR MY NECESSITIES AND THOSE WHO WERE WITH ME** (Acts 2:34), for he was working with Akilla and Breskilla as a tent maker.

The talent of medicine that God has given him is one of the most sacred professions. It can offer chances for giving mercy, charity towards the weak, the sick and those who are in pain. Is not this profession the one by which he can serve God. The Lord Jesus was a healer. So, with this vocation, the doctor went to Africa to serve.

### **THE CROSS ROADS**

The doctor graduated at a fairly young age in December 1959. Those who congratulated him, both from inside the Church and outside, thought that this was the beginning of a medical career leading to fame, richness and a settled life. They never knew that his heart was occupied by remote peoples of other nations in far away countries, who never called on the Name of the Lord, because they did not believe in him?? **AND HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD, AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER ?** (Because no missionaries were sent there). **AND HOW SHALL THEY**



## **PREACH UNLESS SOMEONE SENDS SUCH PREACHER (Rom 10:14-15).**

The year of training that was the period of internship was not void of dangerous wars, traps and attractions because of the atmosphere in which the new doctor lived. The advice of his confession fathers, the monks and the spiritual advisers was most powerful and encouraging. The year passed in peace and he refused to take a government position that would hinder him from travelling if the Lords will permit.

He preferred to have his own practice as a general practitioner and a surgeon in the village, as well as in dispensaries in charitable societies in Cairo, in fact anything that could supply him with his body's needs and at the same time offer the village his services. He found the time to do higher studies of specialisation in Paediatric, Internal medicine and Surgery.

## **NO ONE HAVING PUT HIS HAND TO THE PLOUGH AND LOOKING BACK IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 9:62)**

The private practice, the waiting and studying for higher degrees was not easy, especially when comparing himself to his colleagues who had settled down financially, socially and had achieved most of their goals. But his heart's desire encouraged him to wait much longer without hesitation, until the good hand of the Lord should guide him and help him to see clear signs and enlighten his way into the path of mission.

He never doubted God's Voice that was talking inside him in spite of the objections of everyone who knew about his intentions to travel and to serve in Africa. His family, his friends, his colleagues and co-servants were against this idea, as well as his spiritual advisers. He was offered all kinds of services in Egypt, in the frame of the pastoral care, in any service that suited him whether in marriage as a priest, or in monastic life, in any way of consecrated life where the Church needed many talents to serve it. He never liked to argue, debate or discuss, but in full submission his heart used to say nevertheless: **NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL** (Math 26:39).

A strong thought told him that he was chasing a dream, that crossing into Africa was no more than a daydream. He felt pain as he was all alone with this thought. He also felt the fear of the unknown future that he was contemplating in Egypt. The people's comments and thoughts about Africa were always full of fear and fright of many dangers of living among those peoples, in addition to living in strange lands.

During all the years, since he first felt the call inside him towards such service, never was pushed he to despair or retreat, but to carry on seeking in patience and dedication.

## **FOR EVERYONE WHO ASKS RECEIVES, AND HE WHO SEEKS FINDS, AND TO HIM WHO KNOCKS IT WILL BE OPENED (Matt. 7:8)**

Emperor Haile Sellasie of Ethiopia invited the Oriental Orthodox Churches, i.e. Copts, Ethiopians, Syrian Orthodox, Indians and Armenians, who share one Faith and one doctrine and are in communion since the early days of Christianity, to a conference in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, for a gathering of the leaders and delegations. The Emperor invited the late Pope Kyrollos VI, the Pope of Alexandria and the 116th Successor of St. Mark the Apostle, to

preside over the conference. His choice was based on the position of the Church of Alexandria amongst the Apostolic Churches.

When the doctor, who was waiting for the Lord, heard that two of the Coptic Bishops were leaving Cairo, heading for Addis Ababa, he inquired about the day and time of their departure. He went to Cairo Airport at 2:00 am to bid them farewell and to ask them not to return to Cairo without opening for him the way to serve the Lord in Africa.

He enquired if they were going to visit Kenya, and when the answer was negative he asked them if they could pass by Kenya on their return to Cairo and find a place for him to serve there. He did not know the nature of travelling in these countries.

He could not forget the astonishment that the two bishops expressed to find him in the airport at such an hour of the night. They must have realised that his motive was stronger than obstacles and circumstances. When he said good-bye to them, they asked him to pray and put his request in the Hands of the Lord. This he promised because he knew that **THE THINGS WHICH ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITH MEN, ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD** (Matt. 18:27)

## CHAPTER 2

### GO

**HE SAID TO ME: SON OF MAN GO TO ..... ETHIOPIA AND SPEAK WITH MY WORDS TO THEM (Ezek 3:4)**

#### **ETHIOPIA FIRST**

The two bishops came back after the end of the conference which was chaired by His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI. Anxiously, the doctor looked for them to know the result of their search for a field for his service in Africa. Their answer to him was: **“YES ... YES YOU WILL GO TO ETHIOPIA”**.



*THE DOCTOR WITH SOME EGYPTIAN AMONG TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN ARTISTS*

But the doctor objected, saying that the Church in Ethiopia was established and had its own Patriarch, Bishops and institutions and does not need preaching. He repeated that his aim was to serve among peoples who did not know anything about the Lord and did not hear about Him. The Fathers convinced him that he should depend on himself at first, it would be better that he should **COVER HIS NEEDS AND THE NEEDS OF THE SERVICE IN THE SWEAT OF HIS FACE** (Gen 3:19). They said that it was agreed with the Minister of Health of Ethiopia to assign him as a practitioner in the Ministry, so that he may give the service whatever money and time he could afford.

He felt comfortable in his soul and remembered St. Paul, the Apostle, who was supporting himself by the work of his own hands. He understood what was meant by a servant who covers his needs by his own hands, or **TENT MAKER**, who is known as “self-supporting missionary”.

Moreover, since the Church had no experience or knowledge about the service in the wide continent of Africa, especially south of the Equator, this step was considered to be an introduction and a school to what the Lord was preparing us for and where He may lead us in the future.

## **CONTRACT WITH THE ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

The Ethiopian Minister of Health to Abebe Retta (within the Church Conference) expressed the great need of Ethiopia for medical doctors to work in the medical field as well as the need for helping the Church in the field of Sunday Schools, youth programmes and in preparing new Church servants for Christian education.

It was agreed that the young servant would be assigned to the Ministry of Health as a physician and Mr. Merrit Ghali, the Egyptian businessman residing in Addis Ababa, promised to assist in the writing of the contract.

The long waiting for the arrival of the contract from Ethiopia raised the thought that it was lost, but then a big search was launched and it was found, thrown on a shelf in the post office because the house number had been omitted from the address.

A long journey with the routine formalities of stamps, signatures from more than ten Government departments and the Ethiopian Embassy in Cairo. Then to the Office of the International Health Department, to apply for a doctor's work permit abroad. All those efforts were almost completed to obtain an "Exit Visa". The Ethiopian Airline confirmed the availability of a one-way ticket for the doctor to Addis Ababa.

## **HIM WHO IS THE HOLY AND TRUE, WHAT HE OPENS NO ONE CAN SHUT, AND WHAT HE SHUTS NO ONE CAN OPEN (Rev 3:7)**

In March 1966, during the days of Lent, the doctor came home, very exhausted from work, when he heard the 1100pm news bulletin announcing a presidential decree, forbidding the exit of doctors and engineers to work abroad, due to the great need of Egypt for them.

The Doctor left the table, went to his room and closed the door. But his mother followed him to tell him that such news was an answer to his family members' prayers, because, frankly speaking, they were worried and feared such mission and estrangement in such African lands. She asked if anything happened to his mental faculties, why does he want to leave Egypt to go and live among strange peoples. He could not answer except by: let it be the will of God, and he politely asked his mother to leave him alone.

He locked his door and knelt on the floor, bowing his head to the ground and in profuse tears he struggled with God in a very deep prayer. He asked God to interfere, saying: **"You, O Lord, who put such desire and call in my heart, only You are able to fulfil one of the two, either to realise such a desire or to remove it totally so that I can feel free to choose my way of life like so many others. It is now ten years, O Lord, since You put such call in my heart. Teach me Your way, O Lord, and show me your will"**.

Such a hearty prayer may have continued until after midnight and he slept with tears in his eyes repeating the sweet name of the Lord. He woke up at dawn, sat up in his bed and started reading in the Book of Psalms until he felt a great comfort and profound peace filling his soul and heart and he felt such a joy as comes not from this world.

He lifted his eyes from the Holy Bible to find a luminous person standing in the center of the



room and looking at him. He was dressed in white vestments, his face *was* shining and a halo of light surrounded his head. He lifted his hands and said **“You shall go to Africa and God will be with you and work through you”**... and he said many things. The whole encounter was full of awe and fear.

The doctor tried to discuss, what about the presidential decree to stop my going? The luminous visitor answered that such a message is from the One who opens and no one can shut , then the visitor moved to depart from the veranda door and the doctor left his bed to follow him for a longer discussion, but the visitor had disappeared.

The doctor felt a powerful thrill flowing through him, he knelt to pray a deep prayer, then in haste he prepared himself for travelling to the monastery. He carried with him what is necessary for a week’s stay and he awoke his family to tell them to inform his patients in the clinics and hospitals of his absence for a while.

He left home to find that the Lord had prepared his way easily, through one means of transport to the next, until he reached El-Soryan Monastery, as early as 8.30 am.

He went directly to the cell of His Grace Bishop Shenouda, Bishop of Church Education, who was residing in the Monastery at that period. When he knocked at the door, his spiritual father *was* surprised to see him at this hour, and wondered if it was a matter of urgency. They sat on the stairs of the cell and he narrated what happened, only few hours before, and the visit of the luminous being.

His spiritual father asked him to put the matter in prayer and not to speak about it to anybody. He refrained from commenting, as it may be a revelation and, at any rate, if the promises of the visitor are fulfilled, then such a revelation is from God.

Spending a week in the monastery in a deep meditative and spiritual atmosphere was a very good chance to reflect on the Lord and his deeds in his life, his heart was boosted in delivering himself to the will of God.

**MAY THE LORD ANSWER YOU IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE, MAY HE SEND YOU HELP FROM HIS SANCTUARY, MAY HE GRANT YOU ACCORDING TO YOUR HEART’S DESIRE AND FULFIL ALL YOUR PURPOSES**

(Psalm 20;1-4)

None of the spiritual fathers could see the tears of this doctor, while facing such a difficult puzzle. His affairs were depending on a sign from the Lord and a special way to be opened by God. Now it needed a special exemption from the authorities.

...But...

One of the loving Bishops could feel what was going on in the heart of the doctor and servant and he approached one of the Coptic Christian Cabinet Ministers to persuade the Minister of Health to grant this doctor a special exemption.

On 1 May, the Head of State, Gamal Abdel Naser, travelled by train to Suez with all his ministers to deliver a speech on Labour Day, while the Lord planned that the Coptic Minister sat

next to the Minister of Health and that he remembered to discuss with him the case of that doctor. And the Lord whispered in the heart of the Minister of Health to agree to give a special exemption for the doctor to work in Ethiopia in consideration that such a friendly country was not served from Egypt in the field of medicine and then sending new doctors was to open the door for many to work there in the future.

On 2 May 1966 His Grace Bishop Samuel called on the doctor to bring a new set of documents, the same as those presented to the International Health Department, all were sent to the Coptic Minister, Dr. Kamal Ramzy Estino, Minister of Supplies, and through him to the Minister of Health who signed the documents with a special exemption to permit the doctor to go to work in Ethiopia.

### **BUT WHAT THINGS WERE GAIN TO ME, THESE I HAVE COUNTED LOSS FOR CHRIST (Philip 3:7)**

It was very light on him to close his clinic and to resign his work at the hospitals, to care for collecting whatever his services in Ethiopia would need and to seek the blessings of his spiritual fathers, and first of all the Father of All Fathers, the Successor of Saint Mark, His Holiness Pope Kyrellos VI, who blessed and encouraged him, saying that his services there would be important for the relations between the Egyptian and the Ethiopian Churches, which had been continuing for over 16 centuries.

The Church Fathers told him that he was a **pioneer**, but he did not grasp in full what they meant. All that he knew was that he was going Out for service according to Gods plan, and he did not bother much about what he would seem in the eyes of the people. They prayed for him and told him to always be in contact with them.

### **PUT YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEAD**

The time of departure was near and he requested for a message to be sent to someone of the Addis Ababa Coptic Egyptians to receive him at the airport, as he was going to a new country where he knew nobody.

But the Bishop confirmed that there was no need for that, saying “PUT YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEAD”, smiling in fatherly love. The doctor was wondering about that but the Bishop repeated the request, so the doctor put his hand on his head. The Bishop asked what this was and he said this is my head. The Bishop laughed and said take a taxi from the airport and go to the Ras Hotel (Ras in Amharic means Chief or King).

There, near the entrance of the hotel you will find a sign in the name of Mr. Zaki El-Masry, and this Coptic businessman will care for your affairs.

It was the early hours of 26 May 1966 when the aeroplane took off from his motherland, on its way to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, where the doctor (who was 30 years of age) started a long journey in work and service in this country for nine full years.

### **THE GOING OUT TO THE AFRICAN FIELD**

**GO OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY, FROM YOUR KINDRED AND FROM YOUR**

**FATHER'S HOUSE TO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.** (Genesis 12: 1).

These were the words of the Lord to Abraham, the Father of Fathers, when he asked him to go out and become a blessing, which were resounding in the heart of the doctor when he put his foot in the airport.

His thoughts were pushing towards the unknown in the world of service and medicine into which he was rushing. The words of the

Lord to Abraham gave him consolation there is no strangership without blessings and a crown. The voices of the confession fathers and spiritual advisers were ringing in his ears *"May the Lord be with you wherever you go because you will find him everywhere ~*

**THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND ALL ITS FULLNESS. THE WORLD AND THOSE WHO DWELL THEREIN** (Psalm 241)

### **THE FIRST LESSON IN AMHARIC**

The aeroplane arrived at Addis Ababa Airport around 800am. The name of the city was written in embossed English letters, saying **"ADDIS ABABA"**. On the other side, the name was written in other, strange letters. He took advantage of the time that the aeroplane took to stop and looked from the small window, comparing the different letters of English and Amharic. He thought that the letters in Amharic must be pronounced in the same way as English (i.e. Addis Ababa). From the aeroplane window he began his first lesson in Amharic, through comparison, and he guessed that the first letter in Amharic must be like an "a" in English and "b" in the word Ababa. He took a small piece of paper and he drew the Amharic letters to revise and learn, he rejoiced in that knowledge and gave thanks to God for it and he felt the blessing of the virtue of obedience flowing inside him while he was remembering the advice of his spiritual father, "learn the language of the people and you will win their hearts".

It is worth mentioning that the name of Addis Ababa means Addis = New and Ababa = Flower.

**I AM A STRANGER IN THE EARTH. DO NOT HIDE YOUR COMMANDMENTS FROM ME** (Psalm 119:19)

Once he completed the arrival formalities at the airport and went out into the arrival hall, he found many who were warmly welcoming theirs in joy and shouts, but his eyes went around to find out if any of those present knew him or somebody came to welcome him?

He felt lonely in a strange land, but his heart was meditating such a verse **YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME** (John 16:32).

He felt the comfort of depending only on the Lord himself

To take a taxi to the Ras Hotel, according to the Bishop's advice, he had to change the five Pound Sterling, which were all that he had.

He found welcome from Mr. Zaki El-Masri, who booked for him a suitable room in the Ras Hotel to rest after the exhaustion of the whole night travel.

In the evening of the same day the Copts residing in the Ethiopian capital came to invite him to

their homes and get acquainted with him. In no time they decided to look for a cheaper place of accommodation for the money that was left to him could not cover even one night at the hotel.

He knew that they were working with the United Nations organization, known as E.C.A., which is the abbreviation of “Economic Commission for Africa”.

### **HOTEL DE LA GARE “In the Station Hotel”**

One of the Copts suggested that a suitable place would be a small hotel adjacent to the Addis Ababa railway station which links the capital to Deridaw and the sea port of Djibouti.

The Hotel De La Gare was suitable as it was close to the Ministry of Health and cheap, yet the majority objected that it was not respectable enough for a new corner physician. What would people say? There was a debate to which he listened with a different understanding from theirs. He came to serve the poor and the penniless. To him it did not matter where he lived. In a simple or a poor place, the most important thing is its purity and cleanliness. He remembered the vow that he took upon himself in February.

1964 about which no one knew, except his confession father and that was the vow of poverty, celibacy and obedience. His vow to enter the monastic life should be in the assigned time according to God’s will.

### **NATURE IN AFRICA**

**The Ethiopian Ministry of Health, called in Amharic TENA TABBAKA MINISTEER,** which means Ministry of Health Protection (health meaning “tena” and protection meaning “tabbaka”) was near the Hotel De La Gare. On the other hand it was nearly a kilometer and half from where he lived and it was suggested that he could walk the distance. When he started walking, he felt that he could hardly breathe and that his energy was failing. Then he felt very tired and could not continue. He sat on the kerb for a while then carried on walking uphill until he reached the Ministry, short of breath. He asked the first person he met to explain to him the cause of such breathlessness and was told that Addis Ababa is built on a chain of hills and valleys. The capital is eight thousand feet above sea level whereas Egypt, as he knew, was at sea level.

He felt the difference in nature, here and there, and he had to get accustomed to live on high mountains. He discovered that the percentage of oxygen in high altitudes is reduced by 50% and normally two to three months are needed, with limited exertion and slow motions, until the body can acclimatise itself to life with a low oxygen content.

### **CURSED BE THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN MAN (Jer 17:5)**

The doctor knew that the Lord wanted to deprive him of any human assistance so that his trust would only be in the Lord God. On his first visit to the Ministry of Health he enquired about the Minister who had taken the care to bring him to Ethiopia to work and serve but was shocked to know that he was transferred to another ministry and no one in the Ministry of Health knew anything about his arrival or his service.

He felt that every official in the Ministry was astonished at his presence and at what his aims were. The reason was that Ethiopia had not had Egyptian doctors before. He preferred to use Nehemiah’s style by giving simple and short answers to their questions. Nehemiah used to seek

wisdom from God before he answered any unexpected question. He remembered Nehemiah when he was questioned by the king: **SO I PRAYED TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND I SAID (Neh 2:4).**

That was his first encounter with the Ministry and his allocation in the Ministry was delayed several weeks.

He felt bored and lonely and a thought started within him: *“What our friend the Minister was there? Would this not have changed a lot of things? The place of appointment, its timing and the freedom of movement in service in the future?”*

The feeling of being a stranger became heavier on him, for the **REFUGE HAS FAILED ME, NO ONE CARES FOR MY SOUL** (Psalm 142:4). However, the psalms of the Compline Prayer gave him comfort and strength. **DO NOT PUT YOUR TRUST IT~ PRINCES NOR IN A SON OF MAN IN WHOM THERE IS NO HELP. HAPPY IS HE WHO HAS THE GOD OF JACOB FOR HIS HELP** (Psalm 146:3-5). Is He not the controller of all life’s affairs. Whether the minister was present or not the Lord is present and he will help me in everything.

### **ASMARA, THE EXAMINATION POT**

The doctor was appointed in the Hospital of Empress Menen (Itege Menen) in Asmara, the Capital of Eritrea, in the north of Ethiopia. Asmara is an Italian style, medium-sized, beautiful city with fair weather, He was assigned to the department of surgery. He discovered that the head of that department and the provincial medical officer were Israelis. The tension between Egypt and Israel at that time was very high and he realised that his presence in this area was only to examine him and find out his intentions of working in Ethiopia.



*1966 THE DOCTOR WITH THE YOUTH OF HAIMANOTE ABEW IN DEBRE BERHAN, ETHIOPIA*

As far as his work was concerned, there were many challenges in his work, but the Lord sent him comfort through a Christian Bulgarian colleague who, together with his family, surrounded him with love and care. They took him to the Governor of Eritrea, **RAS ASARAT KASA**, for an interview. When the Governor knew that he was coming from the Coptic Church, through the arrangements of the ex-Minister of Health, he welcomed him warmly and wished him success in his work and explained to him the sensitivities of the area and the care he should take. The

governor expressed his satisfaction when he knew that the goals of the doctor was humanitarian as well spiritual and arranged for him to meet with the Archbishop of Asmara, Abouna Mikhail to whom the doctor had to deliver a few letters from the Bishops in Egypt.

The Ethiopians use the word ‘Abba’, or ‘Abbati’ to call a priest and the word “Abouna” for a Metropolitan or Bishop, as they are the fathers of all. In Asmara, or Eritrea, they speak “Tegrenia” which is closer to the Arabic language and different from Amharic. It is worth mentioning that in Ethiopia there are 36 different languages which is also the number of its tribes.

Yet there is also an old language called “Geeze” which is used in the liturgy prayers. It is considered to be the Church language, similar to the Coptic language we use in ours. There are some monks who speak it in the monasteries, like the few Egyptian families and monks who speak the Coptic language fluently.

The Israelis used to ask him many political questions, but the doctor seemed to ignore these matters and he used to refrain from close contacts with them except at the time of work when his relation with them was peaceful and full of respect.

### **ST. MARK IS OUR FATHER AND ALEXANDRIA IS OUR MOTHER**

The meeting with Abouna Mikhail, Metropolitan of Asmara, was encouraging and comforting. The Metropolitan welcomed the doctor in a warm and fatherly way which touched his heart. The Metropolitan addressed him *“You are my son, the messenger of my beloved brothers, the Bishops of the Mother Church”*, and he continued, saying *“All Ethiopians believe and confess in deep faith and belief”. Alexandria is our Mother and St. Mark is our Father.*

In a long conversation the doctor felt that he had found spiritual fathers in Ethiopia whom he could love and consult.

The Metropolitan invited him to lunch on Sunday after the liturgy in “Kidest Mariam” (Saint Virgin Mary). They use the word “Koddous” for saints and “Kidest” for a female saint.

### **I’LL NEVER EAT THIS FOOD AGAIN**

### **I’LL NOT BE ABLE TO LEARN THIS DIFFICULT LANGUAGE**

The doctor’s first experience with the Ethiopian food was difficult and painful because it is spicy and full of chilies. After the liturgy, the doctor went with the Metropolitan to his residence where a ready table was covered with a big sheet. After the prayer, the servant removed the sheet and once the smell of the food reached the doctor’s nose he felt his nose starting to run and tears spilling in an uncontrollable manner. He was encouraged to eat, but as soon as he tasted the first bite, he felt that his throat was also irritated while they still encouraged him to eat and he ate. But after a while he felt that this lunch was a battle which should be finished as soon as possible. Nothing eased such burning even a little, except drinking coca cola, eating dry bread or green salad.

The Metropolitan released him, wishing him all success, blessing him and asking him not to hesitate to come back to him in difficulties or needs.

He also welcomed him to serve in youth and servant preparation classes with a spiritual society that serves in St. Mary's Church called "Fenote Berhan", meaning "the Light of Faith".

The doctor stepped out onto the street, heading for his hotel, with the chili fire still burning in his throat and stomach. He thought: *"I'll never eat this food again, it was nice but very harmful"*. On the way he tried to read the signs of the shops in the street but he found that the language was more complicated than he had thought. He said to himself: *"Living here is difficult from all aspects"*. What he said about the food, he said about the Ethiopian alphabet: *"It seems that I will not be able to learn this language"*. But he never lost hope and thought: *"Is it going to be a onetime trial? Why should I not try once more, maybe I will get used to the difficulties because the Lord is my helper"*.

### **I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME,(Phil 4:13)**

The doctor asked one of the hospital employees, whom he befriended, to help him read the alphabet. The Ethiopian alphabet is composed of 36 letters. Each letter has 7 vowel points attached, making each completely different from the original letter. Thus the letters in the Ethiopian alphabet add up to 252.

In a few days he started to read easily but did not understand what he was reading. He had a good fair idea and that was to read in two languages at the same time. The book he chose was the Bible. He used to read a verse in English then in Tsegrenia. His vocabulary started to increase, making it easy for him to communicate with patients and workers in the hospital.

Within three months he was able to communicate in the clinic without a translator. People were amazed at his pronunciation, asking if he had learned the language before his arrival to Ethiopia. They used to ask: *"Did you come with the language in your pocket?"*.

His services with the youth and Sunday schools grew week after week and he was also invited to teach in Bible study meetings in the small city of Asmara. People started to talk about the doctor who practised medicine and also served in the Church. It was difficult for them to comprehend that one person could do two jobs: being a doctor and an evangelist.

The news spread in Asmara in all circles and many queries were raised about the spiritual activities of the doctor: would they continue?!

### **YOU SHOULD NOT PARTAKE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Asmara's Archbishop, Abouna Mikhail, did not prevent the doctor from partaking in Holy Communion. Yet, when he went to another Church, he was taken out from the queue and he was sad and wondering why this was so. They told him it was because he was within the age of youth, the age of sin.

Ethiopians permit only children and the elderly to partake, while prohibiting all the rest of men and women. This is because of their strictness concerning Holy Communion being "Light and Fire", like some people who say the same in Egypt. Fearing the condemnation of partaking whilst unworthy, they deprive many from the struggle against sin through self-examination and confession, and accordingly millions are deprived of abiding in the Lord.



**HE WHO EATS MY FLESH AND DRINKS MY BLOOD, ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM (John 6:56)**

The doctor discussed this issue with Abouna Mikhail and felt that the Bishop preferred not to degrade the Body and Blood of the Lord to the level of people vulnerable to sin, and also for the great care they take towards such sacrament and for fear of the outcome of looseness in dealing with it.

The doctor insisted on teaching the people self-examination and confession.

**BUT LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF AND SO LET HIM EAT OF THE BREAD AND DRINK OF THAT CUP. FOR THE WHO EATS AND DRINKS IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER, EATS AND DRINKS JUDGEMENT TO HIMSELF, NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY (1 Co 11:29).**

The Metropolitan gave him two letters, one addressed to the priests not to prevent him from partaking in Holy Communion, and the second he wrote at the end of the doctor's service in Asmara, addressed to the Bishops in Egypt, thanking them for sending the doctor and for his services in Ethiopia, both in the field of medicine and in Church education.

**FOR DO I NOW PERSUADE MEN OR GOD? OR DO I SEEK TO PLEASE MEN. FOR IF I STILL PLEASE MEN, I WOULD NOT BE A SERVANT OF CHRIST (Gal 1:10)**

Life in Asmara was comfortable, the weather was fine and working in the hospital was pleasant. The hospital was of a high standard of equipment and administration. Many people wished for the doctor to continue in Asmara for his comfort but they warned him that his spiritual services would urge the authorities to transfer him to a remote area, because they would not accept that a physician would also work in the spiritual field.

The responsible people in Asmara were aware of his services, the Governor, the Metropolitan and many others. They all welcomed and appreciated his spiritual teachings, yet Satan started to put fears in his soul : Continuing in your spiritual services will harm your position, it will push the people to misunderstand what you are doing. He used to hear all this while praying: *“Lord you know what fills my heart towards these people. Because you examine the heart and the mind, should I seek to please men or should I complete Your work ?“*. And he continued in his service without slackness, not considering any fears, because he was serving the Lord.

**THE LORD IS ON MY SIDE, WILL I FEAR WHAT MAN CAN DO TO ME? (Psalm 118:6)**

**TO THE WORK IN THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT**

His superiors tested him concerning his medical work and whether he would insist on serving in the city, where life would be comfortable and work was of a high standard of civilization and knowledge. His answer was always that he wanted to serve Ethiopians in any place and that helping the poor was more desirable to his heart, as they are brothers and sisters of the Lord.



*1966, THE DOCTOR IN HIS WHITE GOWN AT THE GATE OF DEBRE-BERHAN HOSPITAL*

Suddenly, in December 1966, he received an order that he be transferred to a small town in the Showa province, called Deber Berhan, meaning the “Mountain of Light”. He was assigned to be the director of the hospital. This happened six months after his probation work in Asmara.

He felt that he was too small to take on the responsibility of a hospital, and wondered if he would be able to direct a hospital in Ethiopia, especially while he was new there. All the comments he heard about this town were not encouraging at all, in comparison with life in Asmara and Addis Ababa, where he had lived at first. He resorted to prayers and God put in his heart **BE STRONG THEREFORE AND PROVE YOURSELF A MAN (I Kings 2:2)**  
**BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE (Joshua 1:6).**

**IN THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT  
LIGHT A CANDLE INSTEAD OF CURSING THE  
DARKNESS**

The general standard of the hospital where he was appointed was appalling. This applied also to the conditions in relation to the care for the children and the Christian education in the Churches of the town: a great shortage in equipment and medicines, as well as a great shortage in servants and Church education and in guidance for the youth or Sunday school children.

The liturgy was prayed at a very early hour on Sunday, when the weather was still freezing cold and no one was permitted to enter the Church, except those who arrived before 6.30 am. More than 40% of the parishioners stood in the yard, kneeling and kissing the outside walls of the Church. Then they stood for private secret prayers, and then Holy Communion was permitted only to children and the aged.

The situation in that Church looked as if the majority of its community were catechumens. Sin, adultery and corruption were widespread everywhere. It had its big markets and clientele. Children and young people roamed in the streets, barefooted, lost and astray, like sheep without a

shepherd. Poverty, illiteracy and sickness were the most common features of that society. This town was a center serving approximately 2 million citizens, dwelling in the surrounding villages and mountainous areas.

### **A DROP TN THE OCEAN**

What can a single person do in the field of medicine and Church education, when the situation is as bad as that? He used to go through periods of great sadness invading his soul as he wept bitterly because of the situations he was facing and the manner of human life he saw.

He fought the thought that he could never do anything all by himself The needs were great, resources few and it might be better to abandon everything, because it would be useless to exert any effort. It would be better for him to go back to his country, Egypt, or perhaps he should insist to be transferred to the capital city.

But what about the mission he came for. *Was he not a tentmaker* (Acts 18:3) who worked to cover the needs of the flesh so as to serve the Lord? Would he accept that the tent making in his life became a profit making without serving the Lord?? And while he was in a state of very difficult loneliness, without a spiritual adviser or a spiritual father nearby, and while his thoughts were pressing on him very hard,

### **HE LEARNED THAT NEGATIVE THINKING WOULD LEAD HIM TO BITTERNESS, FATIGUE AND FRUSTRATION.**

He learned how to transform his thoughts into prayers. He went from thinking to praying, as it is better to pray to God because there he found peace, comfort and rest and also because prayers have their own power and open the gates of Heaven and the Lord answers them.



*ST. PAULA THE FIRST EGYPTIAN HERMIT WITH THE CROW BRINGING HIM HALF LOAF OF BREAD IN THE EASTERN DESERT OF EGYPT.*

## **THE LORD'S GUIDANCE**

**THE LORD WILL GUIDE YOU CONTINUALLY AND SATISFY YOUR SOUL IN DROUGHT AND STRENGTHEN YOUR BONES THOSE FROM AMONG YOU SHALL BUILD THE OLD WASTE PLACES (Isaiah 58:11-12)**

**I DO NOT KNOW, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, I CANNOT DO!!**

**HOW CAN I START? - WHAT CAN I DO ? NOTHING!**

Is there any wisdom in my presence here? I cannot understand. He repeated such prayer at all times, submitting all his life's affairs in the Lord's hands.

He struggled to make the hospital capable of serving the sick. He brought in medication and equipment, and gradually the medical work started in earnest.

But what about the spiritual work?

**BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK (Rev. 3:20)**

A few weeks after the start of his work there, one evening, he was surprised to find a group of youth knocking at his door. He welcomed them and they told him that they were responsible for the Y.M.C.A (Young Men Christian Association) branch in the town. They knew that he was a Christian Copt from Egypt and they came to ask for his help in giving some preliminary lessons in first aid, simple treatment and preventive medicines to the members of the association.

The doctor asked them about the goals of the association. They answered that their goals were a perfect mind through education, a perfect body through sports, and the perfect soul through spiritual teachings of the Word of God.

### **FIRST AID LESSONS**

He agreed to give them lessons in medicine and first aid twice a week. He asked them how they intended to achieve the goal of the association regarding the perfect soul. They replied that they wanted to, but there was no one to teach them the Word of God.

He offered to help them in that field and he bought twenty copies of the Holy Bible in the Amharic language and he held Bible study lessons for them which attracted a large number of youth from the town. In a short time, regular evening meeting were conducted twice a week.

He realised that it was necessary for him to learn the Amharic language because the language he had learned in Asmara (the Tigrenea) did not suit the Amhara tribe, who only speak Amharic. Finding in them acceptance and eagerness, he requested them to help him learn the language. One of them volunteered to do so, and the doctor became fluent in Amharic within six months and he tried to teach in Amharic as well as in English.

## **LAUNCHING TUE SUNDAY SCHOOLS**

A few weeks later the doctor discussed with the youth of the Y.M.C.A. the importance of spiritual and biblical studies to the thousands of children in the town. He encouraged them to become part of the service offered to those children. He proposed to help them to prepare the Sunday school lessons while they were to gather their relatives and neighbourhood children in the Y.M.C.A. hall and teach them.

On the first Sunday, there were nearly 60 children attended. The number went up to 250 the following Sunday. The third week, the number doubled to 500 and afterwards increased to 1000, 1200, 1500, until it became impossible to continue, due to lack of space and they had to gather several classes in the corners of the football field that belonged to the Y.M.C.A.



*SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN AT DEBRE BERHAN 1967*

**YOUR MERCY, O LORD, WILL HOLD ME UP  
IN THE MULTITUDE OF MY ANXIETIES WITHIN ME,  
YOUR COMFORTS DELIGHT MY SOUL**

(Psalm 94:18-19)

In a short period, the doctor started to feel comfortable staying in this town. Both his medical work and his spiritual services started to bear fruit.

The Lord had given him a few signs which encouraged him and gave him the strength to carry on. The area governor paid him a visit and expressed his appreciation of what he was doing for the people of the town. He invited him to become a member of the town council, that helped the governor's office by giving consultations.

At the first meeting of this committee he was introduced to the Director of the Department of Education, a very religious Christian, who expressed his appreciation of the Sunday school classes and offered his services to help in any way. The doctor asked him to open the primary schools on Sundays and bring the children to their classes to be taught the Sunday school lessons and Bible study. The director was pleased and promised to do that.

## **STARTING CLASSES TO PREPARE SUNDAY SCHOOL SERVANTS**

The doctor (Dr. Mikhail was his name) did not find enough servants to cover all the Sunday

School classes opening in the town. The Lord sent him help. He was introduced to two groups of male and female youth who belonged to a society called **HAIMANOTE ABOU**, meaning “the Faith of the Fathers”. These groups were members of the high school and the Teacher Training Institute in the town.

He was welcomed in both places. Then commenced a wide range of activities in preparation of servants and bible studies among the youth.

They loved the service in the Sunday schools and became regular attendants, realising the importance of teaching the children at an early age. Delegations came asking for the introduction of Sunday school classes in the nearby villages. One was 15 kilometres north and the other one 20 kilometres to south. The doctor was pleased to offer his services. On Sundays he used to drive the servants to those regions, giving them pictures, crosses and gifts for distribution to the children.

Knowing the young people through the meetings, he found out how poor some of those were who were studying in the high school. Many of them were very intelligent and keen about their studies, but there was no one to help with the essentials of existence.

#### **ADOPTION OF AN ETHIOPIAN STUDENT**

The doctor adopted an intelligent, quiet young Ethiopian boy. He was one of many children of a poor priest who served in a rural place far away from the town. To give him a chance to study and serve, he gave him accommodation in his residence and adopted him when he was 14 years of age.



*1971, THE ETHIOPIAN ADOPTED SON WITH THE FAMILY OF REV. FATHER MIKHAIL AT THE MAIN DOOR OF THE OLD SAINT MARK CATHEDRAL, CAIRO*

In 1970, Tadesse Wold Gabriel completed successfully his high school studies. The doctor sent him to Egypt to study at the Theological College at Anba Ruweis. In 1975 he graduated in Theology and returned to serve in Ethiopia. Later he was offered a scholarship to study Christian education in Germany, which he completed in 1983. Today he is married and employed in Ethiopia, in a charitable organization, helping the disabled and refugees.

The doctor adopted other youths as well but they did not complete their university education.

#### **ESTABLISHING A WELFARE ASSOCIATION AND A HOME FOR NEEDY STUDENTS**

The number of students who asked for help and adoption increased. The doctor could feel their eagerness to study and their abilities and intelligence. He adopted two more but the demand increased again and he felt the necessity of doing something for about twenty male students and another twenty female students, to enable them to complete their secondary education

The doctor invited the Governor, all directors and responsible personnel to a tea party at his home. He presented to them a detailed description of the condition of the students as well as of their needs. He also explained how the Copts in Egypt offer plenty of services by establishing welfare associations where members pay a monthly contribution. The money so collected was well used to build many orphanages and hospitals such as “The Coptic Hospital”, “El-Twefik Hospital” and others. These societies looked after thousands of orphans, and produced loyal, educated citizens, faithful to the Church and the nation.

The invitees were convinced and established a welfare association to which they all contributed monthly.

A house was rented and furnished. Twenty-two boy students, who were the best in their classes and among the most needy, were given full accommodation to enable them to complete their studies.

The students’ house lasted for three years, until the doctor was transferred from Debre Berhan. It was then handed over to others who did not give it the required attention to keep it going, so it had to be liquidated.

### **TRANSLATION OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM INTO THE AMHARIC LANGUAGE**

Preparing servants and Sunday school lessons continued and the need to print a curriculum in the Amharic language was evident to help the servants prepare their lessons.

The doctor spent long hours with his young Ethiopian sons, translating. They finished six books that were presented to the acting Patriarch, who stated that the Patriarchate did not have a budget to print such books. The doctor bought the required paper and inks, Abouna Theophilos wrote a preface, and the books were printed at the Church’s printing press. Then the books were distributed and used for Sunday schools and they are still in use by the servants in Addis Ababa and other areas

The doctor used to go to Addis Ababa once every month, or every few weeks, to attend the Liturgy with the Copts who worked there. They used to request an Ethiopian priest, Abba Petros, who came from Eritrea and who could pray in Arabic, to celebrate Mass for them and enable them to receive Holy Communion. Abba Petros was consecrated General Bishop in Cairo on Pentecost in 1991.

### **THE APPARITION OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN ZEITOLTN IN APRIL 1968 WAS A BLESSING TO MANY IN ETHIOPIA**

The doctor used to take his annual leave in April of each year during the time of Lent, before Easter the Feast of Resurrection, to spend the week of Passion in the El-Soryan Monastery, as he used to do before he went to Ethiopia.



It was planned that he would arrive in Egypt on 5 April 1968.

At the airport he was received by his family and friends who were shouting, *“The Virgin Mary is appearing in the Zeitoun Church, you have come at the right time!”*

He was deeply touched and gave thanks to God who enabled him to come to Egypt in such a time of rare and heavenly revelations and he prayed *“Help me, O Lord, to have a chance to see Her, so my soul should praise You and my heart should glorify You all the days of my life”*

He spent a night of vigil next to the Virgin Mary Church at Zeitoun. At 3.30 am in the morning he saw our Lady the Virgin Mary, a true luminous being. Without any doubt it was a true apparition, while thousands of viewers were shouting in wonder. Such an apparition entered deeply in his soul, and it happened that he saw her twice before his return to Ethiopia.

The news of the appearance had preceded him before his return, and thousands of Ethiopians asked him about the truth of such an apparition. They were enquiring in great eagerness due to the deep love the Ethiopians carry for the Virgin Mary. He told them exactly what he had seen with his own eyes, and he gave lectures about it in the youth and Sunday schools, the teachers preparation classes and all were receiving such a witness with great joy and spiritual happiness. To the prayer of: *“Hail to Saint Mary, full of grace, the ever virgin Mother of God...”* the Ethiopian Church adds *“You who are virgin in your mind and virgin in your body and heart”*.



*THE HOLY MOTHER THE VIRGIN SAINT MARY*

## **THE TRIAL**

**KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NEED BE, YOU HAVE BEEN GRIEVED BY VARIOUS TRIALS (I Pet 1:5-6)**

### **THE TEMPTATION AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE**

After a period of almost three years of his services which were full of hard work, struggle and labour, he had to go through a very harsh trial which exposed him to dangers. But the hand of the Lord intervened to save him and delivered him after gaining more experience and awareness of the sensitivities of the service in the African continent.

Didn't St. Paul, the Apostle, say:

**NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU, EXCEPT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN; BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL WHO WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND THAT YOU ARE ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL ALSO MAKE THE WAY OF ESCAPE, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT (I Cor 10:13).**

### **THE TRIAL**

The only mixed secondary school was catering for more than 1500 male and female students from town and the vast surrounding mountainous areas. At the end of 1969 the doctor noticed that, at the out-patients clinic, frequent daily visits of young students, 15-18 years of age, occurred, they were seeking medical treatment for venereal diseases which result from sinful sexual relations.

He felt great sympathy towards them as they fell in such sins and diseases with all their complications. He tried to advise and teach each student who came in. But that was impracticable because their number would reach 10-15 students every day. He realised that it was an epidemic which was spread due to lack of knowledge or education in the school and the Church, a radical solution should be sought.

The doctor wanted to share the remedy with his friend, the school headmaster, who was a very sympathetic person and who took quick steps to exchange views with the doctor. They realised the seriousness of the situation there was a great misunderstanding of sex among the students together with the open, easy way for sex due to the presence of four thousand harlots, who were in business in the town.

The headmaster decided to present the matter to the school management board. The doctor welcomed this wholeheartedly because he needed time to put the matter in prayer and to reflect deeply upon it. He wished to do whatever possible to save the youth, who are the future of Ethiopia, from the physical, spiritual and psychological complications of those diseases.

The headmaster came up with the suggestion that the doctor should give a lecture in English to

the school students to explain the ways of infection, the ways of prevention and the dangers such diseases may carry for their future.

In general, it should be a lecture of consciousness-raising and education, medically, socially and spiritually.

### **KEEP YOURSELF PURE, FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH (1 Tim 5:22 & Rom 6:23)**

That was the title of the lecture which he prepared, aiming at its being simple, easy but informative to the students. The lecture was delivered on a Friday, at an early hour, while all the students and the school staff were standing in the school grounds. The headmaster gave his comments about the lecture and how much there was to be learned from it, then everybody went to his duties.

### **THE STORM**

For the doctor that was not the end of the matter, for in a few hours the news of whatever information and education was included in the lecture had spread all over and had stirred up the anger of those who would see such teaching as a threat to their business.

News were flowing in from the hospital workers as well as from the police officer that the market and the main street in the town were tense and the harlots were plotting severe revenge on the doctor, as they intended to cut him with their teeth and not with other tools. By noon of that Friday the doctor realised that his life was in danger. He could not continue to examine his patients and treat them while his mind was preoccupied. So he returned to his residence and sheltered himself in fasting and prayers to the Lord to save him from their revenge.

In the evening, a great number of his friends, foreigners and Ethiopians, gathered at his residence, encouraging him and giving him moral support, assuring him of their firm stand behind him and, for his protection, they would not let him spend the night alone.

Very early on Saturday, while it was still dark, he left the town, driving his car to Addis Ababa, to spend the weekend there and to present a full report about the situation to the Ministry of Health.

### **FACING THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE**

Once he arrived at the Ministry on Monday, he knew that, through a certain source, they were aware of all the details and they saw that he had trespassed the limits of his responsibilities and that in general the situation was not in his favour. A committee was formed, consisting of a deputy minister, an assistant minister and three directors general who were medical doctors to question him and investigate the matter.

While he was waiting to be summoned, he took out of his pocket a small New Testament and he asked God's guidance and he opened the Gospel according to Saint Mark to find these very strong comforting verses: **AND WHEN THEY BRING YOU TO A TRIAL AND DELIVER YOU UP, DO NOT BE ANXIOUS BEFOREHAND ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE TO SAY, BUT SAY WHATEVER IS GIVEN YOU IN THAT HOUR (Mark 13:11).**

He was faced with an accusation by the committee that he had gone beyond the limits of his duty in the hospital management and that this had stirred up unrest in the town which could have serious results regarding his own safety and the hospital functions.

### **PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE**

The doctor started his defense by mentioning that common Egyptian proverb which says: *“One gram of prevention is better than one ton of treatment”*.

He assured the committee that what he had done was in accordance with the oath he took on his graduation.

He saw that what he had done falls within the practice of preventive medicine which aims at preventing diseases through education, vaccination and all measures which stop the spread of diseases. What is spent on prevention is much less than the expenses of treatment. While he was in Debre Bernan he was responsible for the health of the people on the preventive as well as on the curative side. He noticed that the committee did not expect such an answer. The three doctors on the committee welcomed such an answer and they could not hide their joy about it and they defended the doctor, declaring their appreciation for his loyal efforts to serve the rural people of Ethiopia and they recommended that he should be helped to get out of this dilemma and should be encouraged to serve Ethiopia more.

It was decided to transfer him to the university hospital in Addis Ababa for three months until the situation cooled down in “The Mountain of Light”.

It was very painful to him to leave his service in the Sunday Schools spread in the town and the surrounding areas and the servants preparatory classes, as well as the welfare associations and the orphanages and the sons whom he had adopted and who were living with him.

He organised a way to serve all those at a distance and to send to them moral and financial support. At times he felt fearful for the future of such services in his absence. He learned spiritual lessons

1) No man or servant is indispensable. The Lord is able to perfect his work through other tools and those servants who think that such services depend solely on them and, that if they leave, they will collapse, have erred for **GOD IS ABLE FROM THESE STONES TO RAISE UP CHILDREN TO ABRAHAM** (Math 3:9).

2) It is necessary to prepare the second line of servants for any service. Leaders and founders should keep in mind the future of the service without selfishness or egotism; they should be ready to hand over leadership and responsibilities to the new generation in real submission at the proper time.

**THIS KIND CAN COME OUT BY NOTHING BUT PRAYER AND FASTING** (Mark 9:29)

His work in the medical field in Addis Ababa was his first experience of life in that big city and its hospitals. He was faced with many challenges. When Lent was at hand, he decided to fast the whole period without a break, until the afternoons, accompanied by constant prayers.

**FOR WE DO NOT WRESTLE AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES, AGAINST POWERS, AGAINST THE RULERS OF THIS AGE, AGAINST SPIRITUAL HOSTS OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES (Ephesians 6:12)**

Lent started but he felt abnormal weakness, bone aches, headaches and unsteady knees, all of which he endured until evening. When he broke his fast, he felt a desire for a cup of tea and once he drank it, all the symptoms of weakness disappeared. This was repeated on the first few days fasting, but it increased with longer periods of abstention. He discovered that he was a slave to drinking coffee and tea and that without several cups daily, as he used to do during the time of his studies, he could not continue his complete fasting. He realised that he was addicted to coffee and tea and that he had to choose either his addiction or fasting. He chose fasting because its great spiritual disciplining power helps one to obey the commandments and to live according to the Bible.

**WAR AGAINST ADDICTION AND DRUGS**

It is not easy for the body to get rid of the effects of the chemicals contained in drugs and which affect the human nervous system, like caffeine in Coffee, tea and Coca Cola, and Nicotine in cigarettes and the more powerful effects of Cocaine, Opium and Cannabis (Hashish) and other chemicals.

Such chemicals, once regularly administered to the body, condition the nervous system and it cannot function normally, except with these chemicals. It craves them and if they are not given, the body demands them through the feeling of many symptoms that look like diseases and this leads to more intake and that is known as “Addiction”.

The doctor had to go through all the withdrawal pains and symptoms and the weaning of the body *from* those drugs and their effects. He spent two weeks suffering from shortage of coffee and tea, but as he was patient, those pains started to disappear gradually, until he was totally liberated from their effects.

He felt very active, his sleep and his waking-up improved. He rejoiced very much for this freedom. Now he could fast as he wished, without any hindrances and he rejoiced in the words of Isaiah, the Prophet, about fasting in chapter 58 : **IS THIS NOT THE FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN, TO LOOSEN THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS, TO UNDO THE HEAVY BURDENS, TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE, AND THAT YOU BREAK EVERY YOKE** (Isaiah 58:6).

Truly how much slavery is attached to an addiction or a bad habit in one’s life, which has deprived many of fasting or receiving Holy Communion?

**A WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

In the capital city he learned that the harlots in Debre Berhan and their supporters had written a complaint against the doctor, signed by more than fifty people, copies of which were sent to the Emperor, Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Health, Education, and the Egyptian embassy in Ethiopia, in which they threw several false accusations at the doctor.

When his friends, patients, and those served by him learned about such accusations, they wrote a lengthy defense signed by more than 500 persons and addressed copies to the same destinations.

### **THE RETURN TO THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT**

His temporary work in the capital Addis Ababa came to an end and he returned to the town where he was welcomed by his friends and those served by him, but he found a hostile attitude among the street people and some of the school students and hospital workers.

He tried his best to befriend his adversaries but without success.

Later he fell very sick with a high fever due to severe flu, but none of the hospital staff came forward to visit or to offer any help to him. When he felt better, he drove his car to the capital and went to the Ministry of Health and made an application requesting his transfer to another place, or permission to Egypt after the termination of his contract.

### **THE TRANSFER TO WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL IN ADDIS ABABA**

The ministry responded by transferring him to the university hospital of “Princess Tsahai” (meaning Princess “Sun”, who was the daughter of the Emperor).

He was assigned to work in the surgical department as an assistant to the head of the department who was also the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Haile Sellas, i.e. the University.

### **A FAREWELL PARTY**

Many of his dear colleagues and friends, of many nationalities (Americans, Europeans, Canadians, Australians and Indians), were working in the town. They were touched at his leaving and organised a farewell party in the weekend and expressed their sympathy through speeches, gifts, tears and deep emotions.

### **AN ARTIST PRESENTS A PAINTING WHICH REFLECTS DEEP FEELINGS**

The wife of a Canadian teacher was a British artist, highly proficient and inspired. She was deeply touched by the behaviour of the town people towards the doctor who had served them in love and faithfulness for many years, and she described that as ungratefulness, and she painted a picture from the real life in Debre Berhan. Over many weeks she used to call on a few beggars and poor people, to pay them and to portray them as living examples.

During the farewell party, that fine lady stood up in deep emotion and offered the painting to the doctor, explaining that she had not painted it only with colours, brushes and pencils, but also with her tears and appreciation of his life amongst them.

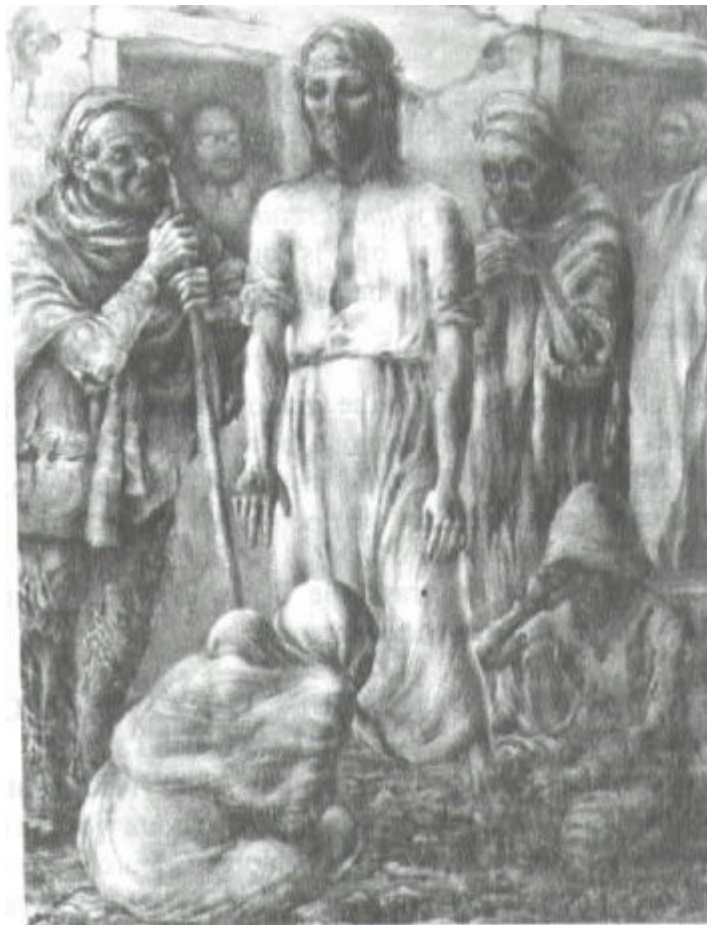
This gift was an expression of their love and appreciation of his services to these people, and she asked the doctor to promise that this painting should be in his possession everywhere and at all time. If he wanted to get rid of the painting, he should return it to her as she treasured it very much.

The doctor gave her this promise when he looked at the painting. He saw the Lord Jesus standing in the middle with the crown of thorns on His head and the scars of the nails on His hands and feet. Then he could not understand the rest of the meaning of it and he requested her to explain it to him.

She had imagined the Lord Jesus, after working many wonders of healing, raising the dead, showing to all sympathy, mercy and love and to shepherd the lost people. Then the evil people rose against Him and gave false witness. He was crucified, buried and arose. She imagined that He appeared amongst the people who used to see Him frequently, every one expressing his feelings or questions about Him.

A leper was sitting on the ground on the right side. The disease had led to his fingers falling off. He was pointing at the hole of the nail in the foot while the other hand was on his eyes to wipe off his tears of sadness about the pains of driving the nails in Christ's feet.

An old woman was standing on His left, extending her hand to put it on His shoulder while expressing much eagerness to say *“What have those evil people done to You? What is that crown of thorns on Your head? You deserve nothing of those pains or afflictions.”*



*THE PAINTING OFFERED BY THE BRITISH ARTIST*



On His right a woman, carrying her baby on her back (an Ethiopian custom), is kneeling, seeking a blessing from Him for her baby, not noticing the scars of the crucifixion.

On His right side a tall, very poor man, holding a long staff in his hand, looked at Christ with a doubtful gaze. “*Did you do any evil to them so that they crucified You, tell us the truth of the whole issue, they must have differed with You about one of many issues. Are they right in what they did?*” **OR WAS IT OUT OF ENVY THAT THEY HAVE DELIVERED YOU (27:18).** Because You are holy and pure.

At the back of the scene (on the right hand side) stand two harlots at the door, one of them expressing her anger to see Him again as if she was saying:“ *We plotted against Him, killed Him, we thought that He was wiped out without return, how could it be that He has risen alive?*” The other one is laughing at the signs of torture on Him and also of Him being surrounded by the beggars and the penniless.

On the left of the picture, within the window frame, appears a fat man who looks in wonder and surprise, how could it be that He is seen alive? That man was the true instigator of the storm, the plotter and the complainant against the doctor.

The painting in general portrays the Debre Berhan culture in which the doctor lived and served for three years.

### **KNOWING ABOUNA BASILIOUS, THE CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH OF ETHIOPIA, AT A CLOSE DISTANCE**

The doctor’s work started in the capital Addis Ababa at the beginning of 1970. At that time Abouna Basilious was the first Patriarch Catholicos in the history of the Ethiopian Church. He was promoted to such a rank early in the Papacy of H.H. Pope Kyrellos VI, on 28 June 1959. That was in the old St. Mark Cathedral (Klout Bek Street) in Cairo, in the presence of Emperor Haile Sellasie and many representatives of the state and the Church in Ethiopia.

### **A PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE TWO CHURCHES**

A protocol had been signed between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Church in Ethiopia to regulate the relations between the Churches and their Synods as well as for the consecration of bishops and metropolitans and many other items that gives

freedom in the administration of the Ethiopian Church. In that protocol the Mother Church gave the rank of Patriarch Catholicos (which means Patriarch under an Apostolic See or local Patriarch) to the chosen Ethiopian Archbishop.

It is well known that until that time the Ethiopian Church was known as the **ETHIOPIAN COPTIC CHURCH**, but after the signing of the protocol it became known as the **ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**.

We have to consider that *Coptic* means *Egyptian* that is derived from the Pharaonic name *Hakaptah* that was abbreviated to *Kiptah*, then *Cypt* or *Coptic*, and *Aegiptos* in Greek.



*1971, THE DOCTOR WITH ABONNA THEOPHILOS THE ETHIOPIAN ACTING PATRIARCH AND CHURCH MEN*

### **THE BEDRIDDEN ABOUNA BASTLIOIUS**

A few years after his enthronement he became paralysed and bed-ridden but his spirit was very high. Every now and then the doctor used to seek permission to visit him to obtain his blessings. They used to discuss many issues concerning the Church affairs in Amharic language and he once said to the doctor: *“I heard about your services and hard work in teaching the Bible to the youth and children, I wish that you meet frequently with Abouna Theophilos, the Archbishop of Harare, who is the acting Patriarch”*. The doctor promised to do so.

### **ABOUNA THEOPHLOS, THE ACTING PATRIARCH**

The residence of the doctor being in Addis Ababa, it gave the doctor the chance to visit the Ethiopian Patriarchate more than once a week for services, to meet the officials or Abouna Theophilos. There was great friendship and love between them and the doctor found the atmosphere propitious to talk about many necessary changes in the Ethiopian Church, to encourage the faithful to study, worship and take Holy Communion. He never offered the proposed changes as criticisms, corrections or instructions, but he presented them in the form of stories about the sufferings of the people and the difficulty in praying in the Geeze language that is the old language.

There was also a problem concerning the time for the liturgy services, which would be more suitable at 8.00 am rather than 6.00am, as well as the early hour at which the churches used to shut their doors causing those who came late to stand outside.

Then there was the problem of taking off the shoes within the Church area, which brought about many shoe thefts, which discouraged the people to attend Church services.

There were also the priests who resisted the Sunday school movement and youth Bible studies, and the issue of the majority of the people who were prohibited from taking Holy Communion and the necessity of encouraging people to prepare themselves through confession to partake in the sacrament.

Abouna Theophilos would listen, discuss some points then he would nod his head as if deeply thinking or approving? Then he would invite the doctor to visit him whenever he got the chance and as he wished.

**AS THE WEEKS AND MONTHS PASSED BY AND THE ETHIOPIAN SYNOD N'LET,** new developments and decisions were taken, for example

- (1) The liturgy should be translated into the tribal languages and prayed in them.
- (2) The liturgy services should be conducted at a suitable time for the people.
- (3) Recommendation from the Synod to encourage and support Sunday schools and youth Bible studies
- (4) To give the spiritual associations, like the Faith of the Fathers, Haimanote Abou, and all possible support to accomplish their goals. All in all, the changes recommended by the Holy Synod were a great joy to those who would like to see the Ethiopian Church take her full role in her ministry for the extension of the kingdom of God on earth.

### **WITH THE HA1MANOTE ABOU**

The head quarters of this spiritual society are located in the Patriarchate in Addis Ababa and it has branches all over the empire.

The doctor started to work with them and accompany them on their visits to the Churches in Addis Ababa, to establish Sunday school classes as well Sunday school teachers' preparatory classes. It so happened that he met some Ethiopian priests who doubted his Orthodoxy because he was conducting Bible studies and Sunday schools, thinking that those who do that are the Protestants only. So the priests, on several occasions, would hold a meeting to examine his doctrines and beliefs, asking him about fasting, the Virgin Mary, the Sacraments, Baptism, priesthood and the Saints. Usually, the debate was in Amharic and, as the doctor answered them in an Orthodox way, they showed their joy and comfort and welcomed him, allowing him to conduct his Bible studies, but he felt that they were keeping an eye on him secretly and surveyed his teachings to guarantee the absence of any heretical teachings. He received many invitations to visit the branches of the society in many provinces, so he used to travel during the weekend by air or by car to conduct meetings with the members of the society to establish for them Sunday school classes and preparatory service classes, and in general he would initiate for them Sunday school services. He also distributed the Amharic Sunday school curriculum translated by him and printed in Addis Ababa.

Many Sunday schools and servants preparatory classes were established in the provincial capitals of **HARARE, GONDAR, BAH DAR**, the home of the Nile or the source of the Nile and truly this town lies on the lake Tana, the source of the Nile on the Ethiopian side and Jimma which is the capital of Kafa province, the largest producer of the Ethiopian coffee which the Ethiopian call BOUNNA. You may notice the similarity between the names of **KAFA and COFFEE**.

Also other towns in Ethiopia to which the Emperor Haile Sellasie gave biblical names like **DEBREZEIT** (the Mount of Olives) and **NAZARETH** and **DEBRE MARKOS** (the Mount of Markos) and **DEBRE SLNA and DEBRE LIBANOS** (the Mount of Incense).

## **SCIENCE AND RELIGION LECTURES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAILE SELLASIE**

The activities of the Haimanote Abou society were also extended to the university where he was requested to give lectures within its lecture rooms to students among whom anti-religious propaganda and atheism was spreading.

He lectured every Friday evening, when the attendance reached 600 - 800 students. They debated much and he answered them with biblical verses. Some wanted to embarrass him by commenting in Amharic, which led to laughter, but he would answer clearly, in love and peace and patience, so that they were convinced.

Such lectures continued weekly for years. This created ill feeling among the other denominations that were trying to pull the students away from Orthodoxy, claiming that the Ethiopian Church servants were ignorant and incapable of confrontation.

The Haimanote Abou grew in services, although it was challenged with many atheist ideologies and foreign doctrines.

Bible study meetings were regularly conducted in the Patriarchate assembly hall for the youth servants and they were attended every Saturday by hundreds of male and female servants. And the doctor shared with them as much of his time and abilities as possible.



*ST. MARK THE AFRICAN APOSTLE EVANGELIST HOLDING HIS GOSPEL*

## **THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE AND THE COPTIC CHURCH**

### **EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE VISITS THE SICK**

That great Emperor was very kind and sympathetic to his people, he would share in their pains, joys and grief. Whenever his entourage would come across a wedding procession that came his way, he would stop his car, step out and congratulate the newly weds, giving them gifts and posing with them for photographs.

The same happened in times of grief and sadness. He would stop to extend his condolences and comfort families of the departed in funerals and give them financial help if they seemed poor. The news of such fatherly behaviour would spread in the capital. The people would hear it without its being broadcast on the radio, on TV or published in newspapers.

He used to visit the hospitals without forewarning, especially during the afternoon and you would find him in any hospital ward or room without private bodyguard, without blowing trumpets or announcement but with a calm, humble behaviour and sympathy towards those who were in pain.

Several times the doctor was caring for one of his patients, when he found the Emperor beside him, asking him about the diagnosis of the disease and the possibility of cure. Such gestures touched the hearts of the people very much. The casual meetings with the doctor were repeated and His Majesty (Jan Hoy was his common nickname) was finding interest in talking with the doctor in Amharic. He used to wonder, saying: *“Those who hear your pronunciation would **not** believe that you were not born here”*, and he used to encourage him.

### **THE EMPEROR’S ROYAL FAMILY**

A few months *after* the doctor started his work in the university hospital, the secretary of princess Tenagne-Werk (the eldest daughter of the Emperor, who had taken the position of the Empress Menen who had departed a few years back) asked him to visit the family in their palace and gave him the address and the time of the visit.

That invitation stirred up the doctor’s curiosity: *“What could be behind that invitation?”*

He did not know the protocol of dealing with royal families.

However, he was received with a warm welcome and feeling of love (for which he did not know the reason) and they all showed a great eagerness for his frequent visits and he was surprised and asked help and guidance from God.

They disclosed that they got to know all about the services he had rendered to the people of Debre Berhan and they saw such services as signs of true love on behalf of the Egyptian Copts, that expressed the great spiritual links between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian people for 16

centuries and the One Faith, tradition and priesthood which unites the two Churches, the Coptic and the Ethiopian.

He assured them that he had come to offer his services as the Coptic Church had offered metropolitans, bishops and leadership over many centuries.

### **ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE ALL YOUR LIFE TO SERVICE? DON'T YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF?!**

They used to gather around him, women and youth (grandsons and daughters of the Emperor) and they used to discuss with him Church affairs, monastic life and Christianity matters. One day they asked him a direct question: “*Are you so very busy with the medical and spiritual services only? Aren't you thinking about your own affairs, aren't you going to get married and have a family and settle down?*”

They offered him the Ethiopian citizenship, to spend all his life in Ethiopia, and marital ties with the royal family because he became so acclimatised to the culture, the people and the Church that they considered him an Ethiopian.

He recalled the vows that he had taken in 1964, and answered politely that this was not his way, his was another one, pointed by the hand of God. He extended his thanks for their love and confidence. He did not wish to make them feel offended or insulted at his rejection of their offer and he felt happy when they continued to invite him to more visits as if nothing had happened. He rejoiced more that the Lord used such visits as the nucleus for the visit of H.H. Pope Shenouda III to Ethiopia later in 1973.

### **THE DEPARTURE OF ABOUNA BASILIOUS, THE FIRST CATHOLIC PATRIARCH OF ETHIOPIA**

At the end of 1970 he reposed in the Lord after having been bedridden for many years. To share in his funeral, a delegation from the Coptic Metropolitans and Bishops from Egypt and Sudan came to Addis Ababa. The deep sadness of Emperor Haile Sellasie was very evident to all, his profuse tears were flowing, in the Church and on the road. The Patriarch's body was buried in the Monastery of Debre Lebanos (the Mountain of Incense) which is established on the relics of Saint Tekla Haimanote, the Ethiopian.

Abouna Basilious defended the Emperor during many situations, when some of his men plotted to rebel against him. At that time, in 1960, Abouna Basilious warned the people of Ethiopia that Haile Sellasie was an anointed king, blessed by the Holy Oil at his enthronement as Emperor and anointed by the Coptic Metropolitan, Abouna Mattaeous, in Ethiopia. His name was changed from *Ras Tafari* to *Haile Sellasie*

***Haile Sellasie*** is a compound name which means the Power of the Trinity, where ***Haile*** = Power and ***Sellasie*** = Trinity. The word ***Haile*** is frequently used in names of many Ethiopians, for example:

Haile Mariam the Power of Mary

Haile Maskal = the Power of the Cross

Haile Mikhail = the Power of the Archangel Mikhail (Michel).

### **EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE HONOURED THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH**

## **FATHERS GREATLY.**

He never entered a church, without kneeling down fully to the ground before the sanctuary. He was a Christian of prayer, fasting and frequent communion of the Holy Body and Blood. He used to greatly honour the Church fathers and in particular the Pope of Alexandria, the successor of Saint Mark, the Apostle. He used to bow before them and kiss the Cross in love and reverence and as a result, the Ethiopians served and loved him and they saw in him a true and faithful Christian king, chosen by God and the patron of Orthodoxy and the Church.

## **H.H. POPE KYRELLOS VI REPOSED ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER ABOUNA BASILIOUS**

The Church was stunned at his departure in March 1971. Everybody expected the election and enthronement of the new pope within a period of a few months, after which the consecration of a new Patriarch Catholicos for Ethiopia would take place. But the Coptic Church received a surprise request from the Ethiopian Church, to consecrate their Patriarch in May 1971 without waiting for the enthronement of the new Egyptian Pope. They also requested that his consecration should be in Ethiopia for the first time.

H.G. Metropolitan Antonius of Souhag was the acting Patriarch (locom tenant) in that period of the vacancy of the throne of St. Mark.

It was evident that the Ethiopians meant to take the chance of the vacancy of the Alexandrian throne (however the Mother Church in

Egypt did not want to leave them alone, preferring to extend to them all its fatherly love) and the Coptic Holy Synod decided to send a Coptic delegation to consecrate the new Ethiopian patriarch in Addis Ababa. And the Coptic Synod gave “the Papal status” to the acting Patriarch at the enthronement of the Ethiopian Catholicos.

## **THE CONSECRATION OF THE SECOND PATRIARCH CATHOLICOS FOR ETHIOPIA, ABOUNA THEOPHILOS**

**During** mid-May 1971 arrived in Addis Ababa a Coptic delegation, led by the acting Patriarch and made up of H.G. Anba Athanasius (the Metropolitan of Ben-Sowef) and the reposed Bishop Samuel and the reposed Bishop Boulos of Helwan, and the Protopriest Morcos Ghali (the Provost of the St. Mark Cathedral) and the deacon Dr. Youssef Mansour.

They arrived on Friday morning while the consecration was planned and the doctor was at their reception with the Ethiopian Bishops and he was doing his best to look for the following Sunday after their comfort.

On Saturday, the Coptic delegation was surprised to discover that on the programme of the consecration ceremony many churches were named and each was given 5 minutes to participate in the prayers for the new Patriarch. Even the Mother Coptic Church was given only 5 minutes, which meant a trivial ceremonial contribution, equal to other churches, but H.G. Metropolitan Antonius pointed at a book prepared and printed by the late Pope Kyrellos (containing the Rite of Consecration of the Catholic Patriarch of Ethiopia) and said *“How come that the Mother Church is given only 5 minutes to complete this apostolic rite ? We came from Egypt to consecrate him. Could it be that the Mother Church is treated like the other churches ?”*



Throughout Saturday lengthy meetings were held between the Egyptian and Ethiopian bishops. They spent many hours and much energy trying to change the programme of the ceremony so that the

Coptic Church be given the chance to complete the rite prayers, but it seemed that the result was not favourable.

### **PERPLEXED, BUT NOT DRIVEN TO DESPAIR (2 Cor 4:8)**

The doctor did not know in detail what was going on behind the closed doors, but he could easily see the sadness and perplexity on the faces of the Coptic bishops. The whole affair became very clear when Anba Antonius called on the doctor to go and make reservations for the Coptic delegation to return to Cairo on the first flight possible, without taking part in the consecration ceremony. The bookings were made for the flight leaving at 7.00am on Sunday.

### **CHANGE IN THE SITUATION**

Then there was a sudden change in the situation. Late on Saturday evening, Emperor Haile Sellasie (aware of the intention of the Coptic delegation to leave without taking part in the ceremony) gave orders that the Coptic fathers should be given the chance and time to perform the Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch. It was agreed that the Mother Egyptian Church should be given half an hour for the prayer and the Coptic head of delegation should crown the new Ethiopian Catholic Patriarch while the Ethiopian Bishops would share in putting on him the Patriarchal vestments.

### **IN THE TRINITY CATHEDRAL OF ADDIS ABABA**

Metropolitan Antonius requested that the doctor keep very close to him at all times because he needed translation of everything addressed to him in English or Amharic. On Sunday morning, at the Cathedral entrance, the doctor was singled out of the Coptic delegation and forbidden to enter, as it was claimed that he was not a member of the Coptic delegation and had no place in the Cathedral. But Metropolitan Antonius insisted on his accompanying him and said: *'If my son, this deacon, is refused entrance, I will not enter myself'*. So they allowed the doctor into the Cathedral, after much hesitations and consultations.

During the Consecration Ceremony, the Emperor was seated on the left frontal side of the Church and next to him sat Anba Antonius whilst the doctor was standing behind him, dressed in the deacon's tunic and holding the bronze serpent.

The time for the Coptic Church's prayers came and the bishops asked the deacon to lead Anba Antonius to the stage in front of the sanctuary, but one of the Ethiopian priests tried to push him back and stop him from ascending to the stage while crying at the doctor in Amharic *"Return him into his seat! Let him go back!"*.

The Emperor noticed the confusion and controlled the situation through a very sharp look. Anba Antonius stood in the centre, Bishop Samuel on his right, Bishop Athanasios on his left and the doctor at the extreme left. Archdeacon Dr. Youssef Mansour took hold of the microphone and started singing the Coptic hymns of the ordination.

A few minutes after the beginning of the prayers in Coptic and Arabic, one of the Ethiopian

bishops came to the doctor and very harshly ordered him to end the prayers and step down from the stage immediately but the doctor explained that they needed more time. However, the Ethiopian bishop insisted that the Copts should stop praying and come down. The doctor had nothing more to answer because the Coptic Bishops were very busy with the Consecration Rite. Then he was shocked when the Ethiopian bishops started to beat him hard on the left side of his chest, repeating “*Stop it, come down all of you !*”. The bishop next to the deacon could guess his pains and encouraged him saying “*Bear it, be patient, endure it until the prayers are over*”. The deacon accepted the pains of beating for the sake of the Church.

### **THE CROWNING OF ABOUNA THEOPHILOS**

The moment of the crowning was at hand and Archdeacon Youssef Mansour got hold of the crown from the sanctuary and handed it to Anba Antonius. Abouna Theophilos bowed his head and was crowned by the hands of Anba Antonius, while the Ethiopian bishops brought the remainder of the vestments and arrayed him with them whilst many photographs were taken.

When the Consecration prayers were completed, everybody sat to hear the new Patriarch delivering his speech. The crowd waited patiently until he produced a paper and put his glasses over his eyes, then he raised his hands to adjust the position of the crown over his head and to everybody’s surprise one of the Ethiopian bishops stood up and came to his help, raising his hands and started to adjust the crown on the Patriarch’s head. Then the photographers stood up to take photographs. We were wondering why they should take pictures *of* the adjusting of the crown of the Patriarch after he had been crowned already.

After the end of the liturgy service, we knew that all the films taken of the crowning of the Patriarch had disappeared and only the pictures of the adjusting of the crown by the hands of the Ethiopian bishop were displayed with labels which said that “*For the first time the Ethiopian Orthodox Church crowned its Patriarch with its own hands and in its own land and amongst its own people*”.

After the ceremony the large congregation present stood in the wide grounds of the Cathedral where Emperor Haile Sellasie delivered a lengthy speech about the Church in Ethiopia, followed by a dinner party in the Ethiopian Patriarchate.

The media in Ethiopia did not mention the presence and the participation of the Coptic delegation during the consecration ceremonies except briefly and casually. The Coptic delegation felt very unhappy and returned to Egypt with a very uncomfortable feeling about everything that had happened.



*1971, THE DOCTOR WITH H.G METROPOLITAN ANTONIUS  
AND H.H ABONNA THEOPHILOS AND (LATE) FATHER  
MORCOS DAWOUD IN THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY – ADDS ABABA.  
ETHIOPIA*

## **POPE SHENOUDA AND THE ETHIOPIAN CHURCH**

### **THE ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III IN 1971**

Through God's will the doctor had a golden chance to attend historical moments in the life of the Coptic Church in our present time. He was invited to spend a few weeks with the Christian medical commission of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

On his way to Addis Ababa he stopped over in Cairo for a few days and he took the blessing of the Liturgy (of casting the lots in the Sanctuary to choose the new Pope) on 31 October 1971, and he also attended the enthronement of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on 14 November 1971. He had an audience with His Holiness before the enthronement. He said to the doctor that now the Lord had put the Church in our hands and He will ask us to account for what we have done. So he went back to Ethiopia, rejoicing in the hope that the new era of revival of the Church had already started which, he hoped, would expand to cover all the corners of the vast continent of Africa.

### **THE MIND OF EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE ABOUT THE COPTS**

In 1972, the doctor spent his annual leave in Egypt during the month of November. On his return to Addis Ababa he found that the secretary of the Princess Tenegne-Werk (the eldest daughter of the Emperor) was looking everywhere for him. He was inviting the doctor to visit their palace at a certain time, then suddenly the appointment was changed at the last moment. When he arrived there, they received him warmly and asked him many questions about his leave in Egypt. In a short while he was told that the Emperor had come to visit his daughter and they asked him to stay in a side room until the Emperor had been received. Then he was summoned to meet the Emperor and was asked to sit on his right side.

His Majesty started by asking him about the Church in Egypt and how the situation was with the Copts? He stated that he was wondering much about the Copts who are very spiritual people and that the Coptic monks are the most ascetic and deeply contemplative monks. He added that the Copts are the most devout Christians in the world and their commitment to their faith is the deepest ever, as well as their steadfastness in the Orthodox Faith. The pastoral care and the spiritual teachings in the Coptic Church are the best in the whole world among all churches. The speech was all in the Amharic language. Then the Emperor surprised the doctor with an unexpected question: *"I want to do something for the sake of the Coptic Church and the Copts, what do you suggest?"*

The doctor felt that he could not think or utter a word, and he asked in return: *"Is it up to me to suggest?"* "Yes", the Emperor said, *"think well and take your time to reflect quietly"*.

He used to do in such situations as did Nehemiah: He raised his heart to God and said a secret

prayer; from You are the wisdom and guidance, O Lord. *“O my Lord Jesus Christ, help me!”* The minutes passed and then he had an idea that, he felt, was very good and he said: *“Your Majesty invited His Holiness, the late Pope Kyrellos VI, to visit Ethiopia twice. Such visits were a great blessing for the people of Ethiopia as well as for Egypt ... I suggest that you invite the new Pope Shenouda III to visit Ethiopia and the main Christian sites in Ethiopia. He is a great teacher and is greatly honoured among his people and everywhere in the world’.*

The face of the Emperor showed signs of happiness and he said:

*“Did I not tell you that you would give me a suitable suggestion! Tomorrow you should contact the Minister for the Imperial Palace Affairs and the Ras Asarat Kassa, the secretary of the Imperial Council, and you shall start with them the formalities of the visit. I shall give them my instructions”.*

His Majesty stood up and shook hands with the doctor who bowed in honour to his Christian Orthodox King who loved the Church, her Fathers and peoples.

### **ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTACTS FOR THE VISIT**

During the same evening the doctor visited the eldest Copt in Addis Ababa, Mr. Merit Ghali, and the next morning they went together to meet the Minister of Pen and the Ras Asarat Kassa. They suggested that the visit should be during the season of the Epiphany 1973. Such a great feast of the Lord is well celebrated in Ethiopia in a very popular manner, where thousands of the faithful gather in the large squares around big fountains of water, in the presence of the Emperor and the Patriarch and the dignitaries and the diplomats and they pray over the water and sprinkle it on the people for blessing while many of them step into the water for immersion. It resembles to some extent the rite of the water liturgy in the Epiphany (Lakkan) in the Coptic Church, but in Ethiopia it is done on a large, popular scale in the squares.

They entrusted the doctor to contact H.H. Pope Shenouda, who felt that January was very near and that such visits would need time to prepare for and he suggested May 1973.

The doctor went back to the officials in the Emperor’s palace who preferred that the visit should not be during May due to the visit of a great politician (President Pompidou of France). They wished the visit of the Pope of Alexandria to be the main feature at its time without any other events to overshadow it.

Through a further communication the doctor got the final approval of Pope Shenouda for the visit to be in September 1973, on the occasion of the Feast of the Holy Cross. This feast is celebrated in Ethiopia greatly in a great square in Addis called the Square of the Cross (Maskal Square), where thousands of people surround the square and where a large dais is fixed on which the Emperor, the officials, the royal family, the diplomats and guests sit and long processions of people, army, police, several institutions and ministries pass, carrying the Cross in all its shapes. At the end of the procession they set fire to a high pile of wood and wait until it is totally burned, as a symbol that the Cross had burned the Devil and cursed his might that is known as *Demera* and the Ethiopian celebrate it on the eve of the Feast of the Cross everywhere in and outside Ethiopia.

### **THE VISIT OF H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III TO ETHIOPIA IN 1973**

H.H. Pope Shenouda and his accompanying bishops arrived a few days before the feast of the Holy Cross in September. The reception in the Addis Ababa airport was suitable for the Alexandrine Pope, the successor of Saint Mark. The air force jets were flying as a salute to receive the flight carrying the Pope, he was received by His Majesty the Emperor who bowed and kissed his hands and the cross also did the Prime Minister, the ministers, the princes and princesses. His Majesty rode with His Holiness in the imperial car, followed by other cars carrying the rest of the entourage. The Coptic Pope and his delegation were accommodated in the right wing of the imperial palace that is located in the most beautiful and greenest area of Addis Ababa.

The doctor was given a special permit from the palace security to enter the palace any time of the day and night to care for their needs and look after their comfort.

At the same time the Ministry of Health gave him a week's holiday to accompany the Pope on his visits. This was a great blessing for the doctor and during this holiday he learned much and lived glorious days with the ancient Coptic Church in the land of Ethiopia, memories which cannot be erased by time.

### **THE LIONS IN THE PALACE GARDENS**

Emperor Haile Sellasie loved to have lions live in the palace as it was said that they protected him at night.

Whenever his Holiness or the Coptic Bishops walked in the palace gardens, they would find the lions, the large and the small, accompanied by a guard. Anyone who had the courage could put his hand over their heads without fear, as they were harmless to those who did not fear them



*THE DOCTOR WITH THE LION MOUKREYA ADDIS ABABA AIRPORT. 1971*



*THE DOCTOR WITH EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE, (LATE) BISHOP SAMUEL, BISHOP BAKHOMIUS AND (LATE) REVREND FATHER MORCOS DAWOUD AT ADDS ABABA AIRPORT  
IN THE RECEPTION OF HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III, SEPTEMBER 1973.*

The Ethiopians enjoyed talking about the Emperor as the lion descended from the tribe of Judea, although such a denomination is not true because the true lion, as is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, is ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’. **BEHOLD THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, THE ROOT OF DAVID HAS PREVAILED TO OPEN THE SCROLL AND TO LOOSE ITS SEVEN SEALS (Rev. 5:5)**

The Ethiopians also tried to link the Emperor to the ancient fathers, as they mention a story about the marriage of the Queen of Sheba with King Solomon, when she went to listen to his wisdom (I Kings 10) and the son born of her was the great-grandfather of the emperor named Menlik I.

It is well known that lions do not attack except if they are attacked or to defend their cubs, or if they are hungry. To a great extent lions usually feed on animals, but if they eat man only once, they become “man eaters”.

## **THE POPE OF ALEXANDRIA GIVES AN APOSTOLIC TEACHING TO ETHIOPIAN LEADERS AND PEOPLE**

The visit of the Pope was very successful in all respects, people crowded both sides of the roads and bowed when the Pope's procession passed. They all meant to kiss his hand and the Cross... and if they did not succeed, they would try to touch his robe or they would kiss the ground on which his car passed, to take the blessings of the successor of Saint Mark.

The Church and people of Ethiopia lived very blessed and glorious days during which the media: the radio, TV and newspapers were replaying the visit of His Holiness and his speeches on every occasion.

The doctor however, could not forget an occasion on which His Holiness, the teacher Pope, gave a strong witness of the original spiritual teachings of the Mother Coptic Church.

## **ABOUNA THEOPHILOS PREPARES A RECEPTION IN HONOUR OF H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III**

The reception was convened at the Patriarchate, invited were the Prime Minister, the Ministers, the Bishops and many of the elders of Ethiopia. Then Abouna Theophilos stood up to deliver a speech in which he said he had become the Patriarch of the Church from the Sons of Ethiopia (he did not mention Catholicos) who spoke its language, who knew its customs and traditions. He tried to stress his authority and abilities in leading the Church, as the shepherd of the Church and the head of the bishops and clergy. He spoke in Amharic that was then translated into English later.

Then H.H. Pope Shenouda was invited to deliver a speech and he said *"Who among us can claim to be the true shepherd, when we serve the true shepherd Jesus Christ who has chosen us to be tools in His Hands, and who works in us and through us"*. The speech was from the saying of the ancient fathers and it was distinguished by power, humility and deep spirituality.

Everybody listened attentively, and felt that the words were penetrating deep into their hearts, moving their souls and changing their minds from authority, leadership and presidency into the spirit of fatherhood, pastoral care and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Sitting next to me was a secular unreligious minister who looked at me and said *"I trust that such teaching does not change the hearts of the laity only but also the hearts of the clergy and of Abouna Theophilos himself"*.

## **THE COPTS IN ETHIOPIA NEED A COPTIC PRIEST**

His Holiness had several meetings with the Egyptian community in the house of the Egyptian ambassador in Ethiopia and he also spent some time with the Copts. They expressed their need for pastoral care from a Coptic priest to give them regular spiritual services. This was due to the fact that the Ethiopian Church liturgies were not suitable for them, due to language differences.

His Holiness during his visit, wanted to ordain the doctor into the monastic order and into priesthood in Addis Ababa, to be a Coptic priest living in Ethiopia and who could be a link with the Ethiopian Church as well as to serve the Copts spiritually.



In true fatherly love he gave the doctor a chance to think about it and to give an answer only before the end of the visit, but the doctor preferred to stay as he was until the Lord would give him a clear sign for the end of his services as a deacon and doctor, after which he would fulfil the vows he took in 1964 that he would be living for the Lord a life of monasticism.



*THE COPTIC COMMUNITY IN ADDIS ABABA,  
ETHIOPIA WITH HIS GRACE BISHOP BAKHOMUS, 1974.*

### **AN ETHIOPIAN CLERIC PUBLISHES DISTORTED TEACHINGS**

After the end of His Holiness's visit, in early October 1973, the doctor noticed that the Amharic newspaper *Addis Zemen* and the *Ethiopian Herald*, the English newspaper, published an article which was stirring strange questions, foreign to the spirit of the Church and which may create confusion in the hearts and minds of the faithful about the title *See of Saint Mark* and also the title of *Pope of Alexandria* and the *Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark*.

The article claimed that they do not find a meaning for such terms about the Church and the Pope, they do not use them and do not consider using them, as the Ethiopian Church has its own Patriarch and Holy Synod.

If the Ethiopian Church had been a daughter in the past, now she has become a sister church.

This article created diverse feelings among the men of the Ethiopian Church. The majority feared the separation of the Ethiopian Church from the *See of Saint Mark*, based on a prophecy in which they believe, which says "*If the Church of Ethiopia separates from the See of Saint Mark, the Empire will fall and the Church will fall into bitter temptations and the people will suffer*".

The doctor did not keep quiet but took the newspaper and went to meet the Patriarch, who pretended not to know anything about it, but the doctor debated with him, saying boldly "*The Copts inherited such holy heritage from our early fathers' and delivered it to the Ethiopian many centuries ago. Does the writer of such an article say that the Church of Ethiopia is heading for separation from the Apostolic See of Saint Mark? There are hundreds of African churches that*

would like to be affiliated to an Apostolic See and you wish to separate yourselves from our Apostolic See?!”

Do you want to change the history and the spiritual link which existed between the Coptic and the Ethiopian Churches due to certain temporary circumstances?“. It is known that such a spiritual link between the two Churches goes back to the time of

Saint Athanathios the Apostolic, who ordained the first bishop to Ethiopia in the year 329 A.D. and sent him to Ethiopia in 330 A.D. and through that the Orthodox Church was introduced in Ethiopia for the first time.

Concerning the title *Pope*, the doctor debated with Abouna Theophilos about the fact that it goes back to the most ancient Christian times as it is mentioned in the ancient liturgies and that it means the “Father of the Fathers which, in Coptic, is *Baba Abba*.

Abouna Theophilos listened to all that then he asked the doctor to discuss the issue with one of the newly ordained Ethiopian bishops as he was responsible for what was written. The doctor went and spent a long time with that bishop but he could not persuade him in any way.

So the doctor returned to the Patriarch and said The Ethiopian people hold strongly to the faith and tradition that Alexandria is our Mother and St. Mark is our Father. Such distorted teachings as are written in the newspaper must be corrected because they do not satisfy the people but only a minority that does not unite but divide.



## **RADICAL CHANGES IN ETHIOPIA**

### **REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK WHICH YOUR FATHERS HAVE SET (Prov 22:28)**

Such a proverb is from the wisdom of Solomon, and the Ethiopians believe that King Solomon, son of David, was the great grandfather of Emperor Haile Sellasie. But the church leaders did not keep in mind such wisdom and continued repeatedly to speak about the separation of the Church in Ethiopia from the Mother Coptic Church. They ignored the ancient tradition of the faith and the spiritual and clerical links which existed between the two Churches and peoples for 16 centuries.

Many signs frequently showed that the Ethiopian Church leaders were totally ignoring such links and in particular the protocol signed by the two Churches in 1959, honouring not even one of its items.

They started to show more inclination towards the Orthodox Churches, not the *Oriental Orthodox Churches*. An increasing in number of scholars were being sent to Greece, Rumania, Russia and other places, while the number of scholars sent to Egypt was decreasing.

The heart's desire of any Ethiopian monk is to visit Egypt and the Holy Land Jerusalem. That is because Egypt was blessed by the visit of the Holy Family and also because it is the land of St. Antony, the great father of the monastic life who lived in the desert. It is the land which had been watered by the tears of the hermits and the saints and was blessed by the blood of thousands of Coptic martyrs over the ages. They also yearn to visit Jerusalem, to take the blessings of the Holy Land and they wish to be buried there.

### **THE WIND OF CHANGE BLOWS**

In early February 1974 Ethiopia started to experience a very devastating wave of violence and confusion in all aspects of life. Series of strikes of workers and employees broke out and hundreds of children threw stones repeatedly on the cars in the streets of Addis Ababa. No one could imagine that this was the beginning of a communist revolution that, in the end, would depose Emperor Haile Sellasie from the throne on which he had been for forty years and take from him the title by which he had ruled Ethiopia for almost half a century. Those sad and shocking events repeated themselves and increased in frequency and gravity, which gave an indication of the loss of law and order and the lack of security.

### **SIGNS INDICATING THAT IT WAS A COMMUNIST REVOLUTION**

In the middle of 1974 the activities of the doctor in the Haimanote Abou association, the university Bible studies, youth spiritual meetings and Sunday schools were at their peak while the waves of violence and strikes were increasing and everybody was questioning the future. While the doctor kept praying for Ethiopia and its Church that he loved from all his heart, he received a strange warning.

## **A WARNING AND A THREAT THAT HE SHOULD NOT SPEAK TO OR TEACH ANY ONE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST**

The doctor received a surprise visit from an army officer, while he was working in the university hospital's outpatient clinic. The officer asked to see him alone and then addressed him: *"We know that you are making an active participation in the spiritual field and the Bible teaching at the university and in the Churches"*. The doctor answered: *"It is for that reason that I'm living in Ethiopia"*, but the officer interrupted, saying, *"Revise the items of your contract with the Government of Ethiopia, because there is a clause prohibiting you from any involvement in political or religious activities. We welcome your continuation in your medical work but you have to stop your religious activities"*. The doctor answered: *I have served for eight full years the biblical and the spiritual cause. The palace, the Ministry and the Church knew that well; my contributions were always welcomed without any objection. Therefore, in whose favour could today's prohibition be?"*

The officer answered: *"The situation has changed, you cannot continue, you should be silent, do not speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus"*. In no way could the doctor apply to himself what the Book of Acts mentioned about the attempts of the rulers to silence the voices of the apostles and the preachers, **BUT THEIR EFFORTS WERE FRUITLESS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS WAS MAGNIFIED** (acts 19:17) **LET'S SEVERELY THREATEN THEM, THAT FROM NOW ON THEY SPEAK TO NO MAN IN THIS NAME** (Act 4:17)

The doctor said: *"I find no meaning for my serving in medicine only as a stranger in this country. I shall try to discuss the matter with the officials and if they do not allow me to serve Christ, I will leave Ethiopia"*. The doctor discussed the matter with Abouna Theophilos but received no convincing answer. His services therefore came to an end and he saw that this was the Lord's sign to return to Egypt.

## **THE NEWS OF FAMINES THREATEN THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR**

Those who visited Ethiopia, and all the more those who lived there in the Fifties and the Sixties, could clearly observe the great progress in economy, construction and development which was made rapidly.

Emperor Haile Sellasie was a unique and rare leader, his abilities and gifts making him the most famous king or ruler in Africa and he was highly respected by the most famous kings in the world and by all nations. He cared to give to his people the best chances for education and development (while many rural inhabitants rejected development) but Emperor Haile Sellasie succeeded in sending many men and women abroad on scholarships and he also encouraged them to come back to serve their nation, Ethiopia. We worked, lived and co-worked with many doctors, administrators, directors and experts in all fields, with high degrees of efficiency, intelligence, skill and knowledge.

## **IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES NEWS ABOUT SEVERE DROUGHTS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES BECAME FREQUENT**

The world heard that tens of thousands of people were dying due to famines. The care of the Emperor and the efforts of the Government to save the situation were clear, but the areas of famine spread and started to appear in the central and eastern regions of Africa and many African nations suffered from the same problem. It happened that, due to lack of rain, the green lands started to disappear and deserts appeared instead. The scientists call such a phenomena

“desertification” and it has killed many hundreds of thousands of Africans in the whole continent.

It was clear that Emperor Haile Sellasie (who was so faithful to his people and Church and worked for their progress for fifty years) was a victim of very difficult natural and ecological circumstances (challenging the whole world), as well as a victim of his own Government officials who gave him incomplete reports about the situation, which led to the deterioration of the famine condition.

Those who opposed the Emperor claimed that there should be a revolution to cope with the famine situation. Was not the famine the same cause which weakened the revolution and shook it year after year until it collapsed seventeen years after the deposition of Haile Sellasie?

Or was not what happened in 1974 the fulfilment of the inherited prophecies which said “*if the Church in Ethiopia separates itself from the Apostolic See of Saint Mark, the Empire would fall and the Church would go into bitter trials and the people would suffer*”.

### **THE NAIROUZ FEAST OF 1974 (THE COPTIC CALENDAR OF MARTYRS) AND THE ETHIOPIAN CALENDAR**

That feast is the first day of the New Year in the Ethiopian calendar, as well the first day of the Coptic calendar of the Martyrs. In Ethiopia it is followed by a holiday which is the commemoration of the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist.

Ethiopians use the same calendar, but it differs in the names of the months, for example the month of *Tout* is named *Maskaram* and so on. There is no resemblance in the names except in *Hatour* that is called in Ethiopian *Hedar*. The commemoration of saints, the feasts, the fasting and Church celebrations fall on the same days. They call *Nasie* (the small month) (of 5 or 6 days in a simple or leap year respectively) *Pagomen* and they love to say that the Ethiopian calendar contains 13 months. This is used for tourism propaganda “*Come to the country of 13 months of sunshine*”

### **THE DEPOSITION OF EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE**

The first day of the new Ethiopian year in September 1974 was a strange day. It was so totally unexpected for the doctor and many Copts and Ethiopians that they could not believe what they saw or heard. While many were starting the New Year in prayers to the Lord to make it a blessed, holy year, Ethiopia lived very sad moments when Haile Sellasie was deposed, stripped of all his authorities and declared defunct through revolutionary decrees broadcast on TV and Radio.

He was taken into a small VW Beetle, squeezed between two army officers and driven through the streets of Addis Ababa. The street people and children were provoked into shouting cries unsuitable to the old age of such a great king who served his country and people and made Ethiopian honourable and respected nation that attracted international organizations to settle there.

It is known that Haile Sellasie succeeded to convince the United Nations to establish the headquarters of the E.C.A. (Economic Commission for Africa) in Addis Ababa.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also chose Addis Ababa to host its headquarters that serve all the nations of Africa.

We hoped that the fruitful efforts of such organizations would unify the nations of Africa to be the United States of Africa, like the United States of America. We worked in full cooperation to support each other until Africa would utilize the huge human and natural resources for the good of their people and the whole human kind.

## **WHAT WAS THE CHURCH'S STAND ON THE DEPOSITION OF THE EMPEROR**

Abouna Theophilos, the Catholic Patriarch of Ethiopia, did not make any move while observing what was happening to the Emperor, the palace and the members of the royal family who were jailed. All who were in authority or in high positions were executed by fire squads or disappeared to an unknown fate. None of the Church men made any statement or expressed the Church's stand towards what was happening. It was clear that they were afraid of the revolution.

The doctor did not keep silent, but went to meet Abouna Theophilos and asked him why he would not support the Emperor and declare the opinion of the Church as openly as his predecessor Abouna Basilios had done more than once. The doctor noticed that Abouna Theophilos was unsteady while he was trying to explain saying, "*Who can speak openly while the situation is so critical?*" The doctor told him that he should tell the truth, even if he became a martyr because he knew that this revolution was communist and against religion and faith and if the revolution had deposed the Emperor, one day it will also destroy the authority of the Patriarch.

He was not convinced and started to say that the revolution was not communist and against religion and he said that he knew well the revolution leaders and that all of them were faithful Christians.

But the doctor informed the Patriarch that he was leaving Ethiopia because he was prohibited from all spiritual services and that he did not see any hope of being allowed to serve under such a regime.

The Patriarch wept and said "We hoped that you would live all your life here, why would you leave us? This is your land and your country, we consider you an Ethiopian".

## **THE LORD'S CLEAR SIGNS THAT THE DOCTOR'S RETURN TO THE MOTHERLAND WAS IMMINENT**

As there were clear signs to say, "*Go out to Africa*" nine years ago, there were now very clear signs saying, "*Go and fulfil what you vowed eleven years ago*". His heart's desire was inclined towards living the commandment which says: **BETTER IS THAT YOU SHOULD NOT VOW, THAN THAT YOU SHOULD VOW AND NOT PAY** (Eccl 5:4-5).

He never hesitated to submit his resignation and prepare for his final departure, in early 1975, as the voice of the Lord, as well as many other voices were ringing in his ears, saying "*It is the suitable time to return to the mother/and and the holy wilderness of the fathers, the Saints*". He

started counting the days and the hours until the day of departure. He found no meaning for his stay, even for one day, without serving the Lord for whose sake he came. He was observing the quick, deep changes happening every day by which the revolutionary government was trying to sway the faithful Ethiopian people from worship to politics and from Christianity to communism.

**AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM WHO LOVE GOD AND TO THEM WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE** (Tim 8:29)

The Ethiopian revolutionary government issued many decrees that would interfere with the freedom of worship for Christians.

The curfew was imposed from midnight to 6:00am and driving was totally prohibited on Sundays. They also called for political meetings of the communist party on Sunday mornings, at the same time of the church services, they imposed punishments on those who absented themselves from such meetings.

In spite of all that the Ethiopians kept steadfast to their faith, their church and their doctrines. They went to the churches on foot at 4:00am, whatever the distances. They considered it to be a blessing that they walk to share in the worship.

As for the Marxist teaching meetings, they ignored them without hesitation or fear and as the majority was not attending, the Government did not find it possible to apply punishments, as it could not punish the whole nation.

All these things turned to the good as the Ethiopians felt the great afflictions getting harder on them. They turned to God in fervent prayers and vows and alms giving, the churches and monasteries became full of worshippers and pleadings and the offerings to churches were on the increase as churches were deprived from their income (all their financial resources had been nationalized).

The Ethiopian Christians returned with all their heart to the Lord. As they lost all their dependence on the palace, lands or properties, they started to study the Bible and live its words, reminding each other of its verses. **THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS SPREAD AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS MAGNIFIED** (Acts 19:17)

Many of the Ethiopians consider that what happened in Ethiopia from 1974 until today is the anger of God for the great sin and corruption existing among them and they believe that such anger can never be lifted except by fasting, prayer and humbling oneself in front of God.

**EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE DIED AND WAS NOT HONOURED BY ANY OF HIS PEOPLE**

The Ethiopian revolution tried to hide or to mar all that the Emperor had done towards progress and development for the nation and the Church. Few of the people acknowledged the virtues and achievements of this old, creative and pious king. The media focused only on the famines and death scenes whilst portraying the Emperor feeding his dogs. It is natural to care for animals as well. Who among us leaves animals without food until death. The Bible says: **A RIGHTEOUS MAN REGARDS THE LIFE OF HIS BEAST, BUT THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE**

## **WICKED ARE CRUEL (Prov 12:10).**

The revolution ruled, but the Ethiopian people felt the great difference and many tongues started to utter:” *When can we have another day of the days of Haile Sellasie*” and such voices were getting louder and the revolution found itself in a critical position if such a man lived for much longer. His history was too bright and his effects were felt very deeply in all Ethiopia. He underwent an enlarged prostate operation in the middle of 1975, and while his convalescence was very good and he improved much, they said that his health deteriorated and he died. There is information that confirmed that he was killed somehow and his body was hidden and was not buried and no funeral prayer was said for him. This happened before the new Ethiopian year, in September 1975.

## **HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA PRAYS THE FUNERAL RITE FOR THE SOUL OF EMPEROR HAILE SELLASIE**

His Holiness Pope Shenouda and the Coptic Church felt deep sorrow about what happened and His Holiness said the funeral prayer on the Emperor’s soul in St. Mark Cathedral and he delivered an obituary speech in which he said “*The world does not know the great honour and achievements which this great king has done, but time itself will put to record the glorious history of Ethiopia under the reign of Haile Sellasie which had its effects not only in Ethiopia but in the whole great continent of Africa*”.

Truly, keeping an eye on the condition in Ethiopia from 1974 until today, you can clearly see the great deterioration, politically, economically and socially which happened year after year. You could clearly see the disappearance of the Ethiopian and foreign human resources from Ethiopia because of the escape of all those who could run away from a nation ruled by steel and fire, ruled by those who do not know any language except blood, threats and killing.

## **THE DEPOSITION OF ABOUNA THEOPHILOS**

Early in 1975 the Ethiopian revolutionary government started to focus all its attention on the mistakes and the deviations in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch Abouna Theophilos. They then issued a government decree to depose him and to strip him from his authorities. They also put him in jail and none defended him. The government decided that a new patriarch should be assigned in his place and the Church in Ethiopia obeyed the government and a secretary general was assigned to be the government authority in the Church. And the Ethiopian Church sent an invitation to the Coptic Church to attend and participate in the consecration of a new Ethiopian Patriarch.

## **THE COPTIC CHURCH REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ORDINATION OF A NEW PATRIARCH OR TO RECOGNISE HIM**

The Coptic Holy Synod met to study the situation in the Ethiopian Church and the communist government there. It also studied the legality of the deposition of Abouna Theophilos and the ordination of a new patriarch. The Holy Synod decided that the deposition of Abouna Theophilos was not canonical, due to the fact that the Holy Synod, that is the clerical body, had the right to try the Patriarch if he was mistaken, to give him the chance to defend himself. If he is condemned, the Holy Synod then takes suitable action according to the Church laws.

And the ordination of a new Patriarch for Ethiopia would be unlawful, because of the presence of a canonical Patriarch. There should be no ordination of another Patriarch.



The Coptic Church informed the Ethiopian Church about that and so did the Oriental Orthodox Churches and all the churches of the world and the church councils.

It is well known that the Ethiopian Church ordained a new patriarch known as Abouna Tekle Haimanote, and during his time the Church forced many of the metropolitans and bishops to retire and ordained new bishops who agreed with the government and its ways and means.

The Coptic Church has never acknowledged Abouna Tekle Haimanote as the Patriarch of Ethiopia until this day.

When Abouna Tekle Haimanote reposed in the Lord, the Church ordained another one called Abouna Marcorius, who was the Metropolitan of Harare. He, was also not acknowledged by the Coptic Church. He was deposed when the people demonstrated. Then they ordained another Patriarch called Abouna Paulos during the Feast of the Apostles in 1992.

There were and still are repeated requests from the Ethiopian Church for the recognition by the Coptic Church of their Patriarch, but the Coptic Church affirms that there should be application of the Church Laws which have been respected and followed for twenty centuries, for this to happen.

## **TOWARDS THE COMPLETE SELF CONSECRATION**

**I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME, YOU ARE MINE (Isaiah 43:1)**

### **THE END OF THE SERVICE OF THE DOCTOR IN ETHIOPIA AND HIS RETURN TO HIS HOMELAND**

*It is the suitable time to leave Ethiopia.* This was the comment of everyone who heard the news of his return to Egypt. As the Doctor felt the Lord's hand leading him to Go to the African field in 1966, he felt the hand of the Lord leading him to return to the land of Egypt in 1975, to join the monastic life among the monks of whom he does not deserve to be one.

### **LOOKING BACKWARDS**

The hesitation that engulfed the disciple who said to the Lord Jesus: **LORD, I WILL FOLLOW YOU, ... BUT** (Luke 9:61).

It may happen to each of the many or the few who receive the call for consecrating oneself for service or monastic life and they hear the teacher saying: "*Follow me ...*", one may answer: "*I have a duty towards this or that*" or "*I should bid farewell to my household*" or "*I wish to complete higher studies*" or "*I am expecting certain degree of promotion*" or certain sum of income or pension.

**ALL THESE REASONS FOR POSTPONING TO LEAVE EVERYTHING AND FOLLOW THE MASTER COULD ALSO BE DUE TO SPARING ONESELF THE FEELING OF PITY FOR RELATIVES OR BEING TIED TO DEGREES OR PROPERTIES.**

While St. Paul, the Apostle, says : **HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON , BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS ? (Rom 8:32)**

He is teaching us not to have pity on ourselves, or spare ourselves, if we want to follow Him who did not spare himself; but who sacrificed himself for our sake.

There could have been a desire in the heart of the doctor for higher studies, but he left Ethiopia finally in March 1975. He spent a few months in England, but He who said: "*Follow Me*" also said:

**NO ONE HAVING PUT HIS HAND TO THE PLOUGH AND LOOKING BACK, IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 9:62)**

## **A BLESSED VISIT OF H.G. METROPOLITAN DANIEL OF KHARTOUM TO LONDON**

While the hand of God leads the ship in such a windy world of high waves, so, on a Sunday, in the Holy Fifty Day Season of the Pentecost, the Copts took the blessing of His Grace Bishop Daniel, who led the service of the liturgy at St. Mark Coptic Cathedral in London and the doctor took this occasion and asked for a private audience with His Grace. He revealed to the Bishop the calling and the perplexity in his heart.

His Grace urged him strongly to terminate all his links with the world and to return to Egypt without delay, to fulfil his vows. The doctor welcomed that and felt great rest and comfort, and he felt that this was the voice of God for which he was waiting to end his hesitation: *"I follow you Master... but"*.

## **THE RETURN TO EGYPT**

He went back and met His Holiness Pope Shenouda just after his arrival. His Holiness welcomed him and asked if he would prefer a certain monastery. The doctor assured His Holiness that whatever

he saw fit would be acceptable. Because he had put all his life in the hand of the Lord and that he had come to fulfil the vows that he took on 22 February 1964, it did not matter where and when the fulfilment of such a vow would take place.

His Holiness told him that he intended to renovate the Monastery of Baramos (the Virgin Mary) spiritually and physically, as the monastery had reached a condition about which the Church should do something. His Holiness told the doctor that he had chosen four monks, fathers from other monasteries, to revitalise the monastic life there, and that the doctor would be a novice, and the fifth to join them.

## **TO THE BARAMOS MONASTERY ON THE FEAST OF THE APOSTLES, 1975**



*1975, BROTHER (NOVICE) ABRAHAM IN HIS WHITE DRESS  
WITH HIS HOLINESS POPE SJENOUDA  
AND METROPOLITAN DANIAL WITH THE MONKS OF BARAMOS MONASTERY*

## **THE COMMEMORATION OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PAUL AND ST. PETER**

Only two days after his arrival in Cairo, which he spent at the family home at Faggala, did he prepare himself to travel to the monastery, leaving everything behind.

The questions were: Where to? To the monastery ... When will you come back? I do not know, only God knows ... Is it for where to a short while? That depends on circumstances ... Lots of queries, observations and puzzlement.

On the appointed time he received the blessing of accompanying His Holiness and HG. Metropolitan Daniel (who had arrived from London) in the private car of His Holiness. They arrived at the Baramos Monastery where already the revered fathers had arrived, Fr. Beladios El-Soryani and Fr. Daniel El-Soryani (now H.G. Bishop Arsanios) and Father Tadros El-Anba Bishoy (now H.G. Bishop Benjamin) and Fr. Aghathon El-Anba Bishoy (now H.G. Bishop Yakobos).

And in front of all they brought a white gown and a white head cap for the doctor, and His Holiness blessed them three times with the sign of the cross. Then they put the gown on him and on his head the white cap (this is the novice's uniform) and he was given the new name, different from the one he used in the world, of Brother Abraham, and they gave him a room to live among the monks.

## **UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE, BUT IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES MUCH GRAIN (John 12.24)**

On 29 July 1975 the Baramos Monastery was blessed by the visit of His Holiness, who spent the night among the monks to study the affairs and the needs of the monastery.

Before Brother Abraham went to retire at a late hour of the night, His Holiness summoned him, to tell him that the rite of his consecration as a monk would be conducted at dawn.

The monks accompanied Brother Abraham to the church, where they spent the whole night in prayers, meditations, readings and praises. The new monk should spend the night of his consecration sleepless in the church to learn vigilance in the monastic life, according to our Lord's saying: **WATCH AND PRAY** (Math 26:4 1).

All those who were in the monastery gathered in the church at 5.00am, headed by His Holiness, and Brother Abraham lay on the floor near the shrine containing the relics of St. Moses the Black and St. Esezeros the Priest. They covered him with a red veil and prayed the funeral prayer "*is it not that the monk died from the world and his shape, name and style of life has changed and he has risen to follow a new way of life, solely for the Lord*".



*THE KENYAN SUBDEACON JOSEPH OMANYO WITH THE MONK FATHERS IN BARAMOSE MONASTARY. 1975. BEFORE HIS TRAVEL TO KENYA, 1976.*



*THE KENYAN SUBDEACON IN THE FIRST JEEP CAR OBTAINED BY THE BARAMOSE MONASTARY 1975. (WANTS TO LEARN DRIVING)*

Then they said the prayers of consecration of monks, which are very deep and spiritually inspiring prayers. Then he stood among them all when they put on him the black outfit and on his head they put the black cloak ... His Holiness made the sign of the cross on him three times: *“Blessed be God the Father Almighty, blessed be his only begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen, blessed be the Holy Spirit, time Comforter, Amen”*.

They gave him a new name, *Father Antonius El-Baramosy*. His Holiness kissed him, offering his congratulations and saying, *“It is amazing, Father Antonius, that without any prior arrangement, monks from seven different monasteries shared in your consecration into the monastic life”*.

### **INTO THE MONASTIC LIFE BEFORE GOING OUT FOR THE SERVICE**

The days of life in the monastery were very comforting and joyful. Full of prayers, meditations and praises, especially the midnight prayers and the psalmody praises. The new monk found in it an uninterrupted source of spiritual energy that is unequalled. The Bible study gatherings with the monks were very rich spiritual food. The monastic life is a school in which the monks learn many good lessons for their earthly life as well as for their eternal life -they live the Bible and apply its commandments in their daily life.

Many Biblical commandments have been neglected in our life in the world, while the monks live the Bible and obey it in full.

He also learned some other things, which are beneficial for the service. His Holiness assigned Rev. Father Yousab (Joseph) El-Suryani (who has God’s gift for Iconography as a spiritual skill) to spend a few weeks in the Baramos Monastery to teach the monks the holy bread making (Kurban). This was such a beautiful and joyful experience that the new monk learned how to make perfect bread. He did not know that what he was learning in the monastery, he would teach to scores of his African Sons in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and many others, who come according to God’s guidance and will.

His assignment in the monastery was in the medical clinic, the pharmacy, guiding foreign visitors, the stores and the treasury. He wished to spend years and years in the monastery, where he had found comfort, spiritual fellowship, had learnt many lessons and spent beautiful times in praises, worship and meditation.

### **THE AFRICAN CALLS**

News was coming to the monastery about Ethiopia especially and Africa in general. Strong feelings moved inside the monk’s heart towards those people and nations, their sufferings and needs. And he used to ask himself: *“What is the duty of the Coptic church towards them?!”*

We have nobody serving there. We are the sons of the most ancient Apostolic Church, almost twenty centuries old, which is the glorious church in the past and the present.

Does anybody think of Africa or not?!

Many scientists and scholars wrote books about it, but does any one remember what our duty towards Africa is?

The nine years of his work in Ethiopia had given him the chance to visit many African countries, like Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Sudan and others.

Such visits were fruitful lessons. He used to stop in Khartoum, on his way from Addis Ababa to Cairo, for his annual leave, where he was warmly welcomed by Rev. Fr. Antonius El-Soryani (H.G. Metropolitan Bakhomius of Behera). The will of God enabled him to attend the consecration of the Church of El-Shaheden (The Two Martyrs) in Khartoum in 1968.

### **KNOWING KENYA FOR THE FIRST TIME**

From Ethiopia he also visited Nairobi, Kenya, in 1967 to attend the conference of the World Council for Christian Education.

He spent two weeks at Nairobi University, where he enjoyed the green which cover everything, and also the beauty of nature and the fair weather, which is everything spring and the moderate temperatures, without humidity or dryness.

He had the chance to travel into the Kenyan countryside to visit some of the indigenous churches and he was introduced for the first time to a phenomenon that is called the African Independent Churches (details will be mentioned later).

### **KNOWING ZAMBIA FOR THE FIRST TIME**

And from Ethiopia, also in 1974, he stopped in Tanzania on his way to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. He was a member of the delegation that represented the Coptic Church in the general assembly of the All African Conference of Churches.

His Grace Bishop Samuel (the reposed) was leading, with His Grace Bishop Bakhomius, and Sister Agape from the Order of The Daughters of Mary, from Beni Sowef, representing the women, and Mr. Sarwat Shehatta was the accountant of the A.A.C.C.



*1974, IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA H.G BISHOP SAMUEL, BISHOP BAKHOMIUS  
MR S. SHEHATA AND SISTER AGAPE DURING A.A.C.C ASSEMBLY*

In a private talk with Bishop Samuel in Lusaka, the bishop told the doctor about some of his experiences in Kenya. Due to his frequent visits he heard about a group of Kenyans who called themselves the *Copts* or *Coptics* and who had established a church that they called the *Coptic Church*. Did they know anything about the Coptic Church? How could they know when nobody had taught them? Why did they use the name of our Church? For the sake of reputation and fame, are we going to allow the name of the Coptic Church to be used by people who know nothing about us? We have nobody whom we can send to preach to them the true Apostolic

Church. Are we going to keep silent? As the Lord Jesus said **THE HARVEST TRULY IS GREAT, BUT THE LABOURERS ARE FEW, THEREFORE PRAY THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABOURERS INTO HIS HARVEST** (Luke 10:2).

### **AFRICA FILLS THE MONKS HEART, MIND AND FEELINGS**

Within the period of solitude in the monastery, the monk's thoughts were going towards the African countries and their people. A continent full of people, resources and also Western churches that had arrived there centuries ago. The Roman Catholic missionaries arrived at the end of the Fifteenth Century, and the Protestants came during the Eighteenth Century. Both established many churches everywhere. But the Coptic 'True African' Church has no foothold. We have no plan, while we have the desire to serve the continent. It is in the hands of God, his will and guidance.

When? Where? And how?

### **YOUNG MEN FROM KENYA, UGANDA AND THE SOUTH OF SUDAN STUDY IN THE INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES IN CAIRO**

The visits of H.G Bishop Samuel (the departed), whilst he occupied the position of Vice President of the All African Conference of Churches, gave him the chance of meeting many Africans who were eager to link with the Mother Church in Africa as the most ancient and Apostolic Church, which is also known among Africans for its strong links with the Church in Ethiopia for more than sixteen centuries, since the time of St. Athanathius, the Apostolic, the 20th Pope of Alexandria.

Those African leaders asked Bishop Samuel to establish Coptic Churches for them in Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Zaire and many other countries. He used to assure them that teaching, as well as receiving the Dogma, theology, history, canons and traditions, and in particular the sanctity of the family life are foremost, before anything else.

In the Sixties, the Church could not send teachers to all those people in their respective countries. So there arose the idea of opening an Institute of African Studies in the Coptic Theological College in Cairo, in which those young African men could be taught all about the Coptic Church.

During the Seventies fifteen young men from Kenya and Uganda were sent to Egypt to study and almost the same number came from Sudan. They were accommodated in Kotsika (a district of Cairo, near Maadi). The bishops and monks gave all their care and effort to making out of them spiritual servants who would work for their own salvation as well as for the salvation of those who listened to them

### **MOREOVER WHOM HE PREDESTINED, THESE HE ALSO CALLED (Rom 8:30)**

For those young African men (whatever their nationality) the way to study theology was clear. However many factors intervened, there was much haste in choosing them. They were pushing hard to go to Egypt, desperately thinking that they would be given a scholarship to study medicine, engineering, law or to be given the choice to study what they wanted.

In their own countries, brokers played a serious role in misinforming them about the nature of the studies and the mission behind it. These brokers aimed at gaining money from them to facilitate their travelling to Egypt. So, once they were in Cairo and had learned that the study was



to be theology; they escaped from Cairo, to go and study in other countries. And those who were chosen by the Lord to serve his word were no more than 20% of all those who came. Some of them graduated, became deacons, monks or priests and served in America, Sudan or Kenya, but the rest loved the present world and were all scattered.

### **MONK ANTONIUS EL-BARMOSY WAS CALLED TO CAIRO**

One evening of November 1975, H.G. Bishop Hedra suddenly came to the monastery, summoned the monk and told him that His Holiness wanted him to go to Cairo this same night. Although he did not know what the cause was for this sudden summon, he obeyed without hesitation. He was given a room in the Saint Bishoy Monastery guesthouse in Cairo, where he spent the night. He knew that he would be ordained into priesthood the next morning, which was 30 November 1975 and His Holiness' blessed him by laying his hands on him.

His Holiness was always listening to him, whenever he visited the monastery. So he had heard about the doctor's call to serve in Africa. He prayed for him and gave him much advice that sprung from deep wisdom, spirituality and experience.



*NOVEMBER 1975, THE LITURGY PRAYER AFTER HIS ORDINATION  
WITH H.H. POPE SHENOUDA AND H. G. BISHOP BISEPTY*

## **TO THE MISSION ...GO**

**GO YOU INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATION (Mark 16:15)**

### **COME ACROSS TO KENYA AND HELP US**

H.G. Bishop Samuel (God bless his soul) told him that he had just returned from Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and that many of those in the African continent who gave themselves the name *Copts* are eagerly requesting missionaries to be sent to them, to teach them about the true Coptic Church and that they were waiting at the door of his room in the hotel, to meet him to express their great wish and the wishes of their people.

### **H.H POPE SHENOUDA SENDS FATHER ANTONIUS EL-BARAMOSY TO STUDY THE NEEDS OF THE KENYAN COPTICS**

In December 1975 his holiness the Pope gave the necessary documents to prove that the Father is a Coptic monk priest, sent by the Church to meet with those Kenyan groups who call themselves the Copts or African Orthodox.

The Father started to prepare himself for his journey to Kenya when it happened that a young Kenyan man, called Joseph Omanyo, had completed his theological studies in Cairo and had obtained his bachelor in divinity. He was ordained as a sub-deacon (reader) and was to help the Father in his service in Kenya. This deacon was preparing himself to fly together with the monk.

### **GOING OUT TO KENYA**

The journey started in the early hours of Sunday 11 January 1976, on Egypt Air. The Father's luggage consisted of his personal effects, the altar utensils, the Holy Plate, the Korban stamp, as well as medical equipments and a few surgical tools that could be used in emergencies. There was also a big box containing pictures of different sizes as well as the Liturgy books, the Agbia (Books of Prayers) and Sunday school curriculums. He also carried the Liturgy of St. Basil, which had been translated into Kiswahili by the Kenyan students in Cairo and printed in the Bishopric of Social Services in Anba Ruwes.

### **IN THE METHODIST GUEST HOUSE**

The Father and the deacon were received at the Nairobi airport by Mr. Sabet Thomas, who was residing in Nairobi at that time. They knew that two rooms had been reserved for them in the Methodist guesthouse and, being exhausted after the long, whole night travelling, they went to rest. In the afternoon Deacon Joseph requested to be given a chance to talk to the Father. He said for him to carry out a good service, the Church should buy for him a piece of land to build a private house.

The Father was shocked at such a request and replied *‘You know, my son, that I do not have any silver or gold and do not know what means we will have to cover our essential needs. It may be that some contributions have reached Nairobi already, but we have to see to our basic needs’* But the deacon kept pressuring him, claiming that His Holiness the Pope had promised him, as well as Bishop Samuel. *“Why was such a request not raised while we were in Egypt? I should write to enquire’*, said the Father.

*“No”,* said the deacon, *‘You should not wait. You have to act very quickly. The prices of land are rising very fast. If you wait until you receive an answer from Egypt, you may pay double’*. *“No hurry in such a matter, everything should be done through patience and study”,* replied the Father.

The deacon made the Father feel strange in this land, saying, *“We are here in our land, whatever we ask of you, you should do. Otherwise you may lose everything. You will find yourself alone and you will also find yourself surrounded by dangers from all sides - except if you win some of us to protect you”*.

The Father felt that temptations had already started on the day of his arrival to Kenya. He had not started any work yet. He had not taken any step in his mission yet.

**TURN TO ME AND HAVE MERCY UPON ME, FOR I AM DESOLATE AND AFFLICTED ... O BRING ME OUT OF MY DISTRESS.... O KEEP MY SOUL AND DELIVER ME, LET ME NOT BE ASHAMED FOR I PUT MY TRUST IN YOU (Psalm 25:16-20)**

The Father left the deacon and started to walk in the garden. He opened his Bible and found verses which filled his heart with comfort and strength: **I AM A STRANGER ON EARTH, HIDE NOT YOUR COMMANDMENTS FROM ME.** (Psalm 119:19)

Despite the fact that the Coptic monk had been accustomed to live in strange lands, his feelings of being a stranger in Nairobi was much increased during his first days in the Methodist guesthouse. He felt that he was tied with many ties, while he wanted to move and work. His ties were not from inside, but from outside. But he felt confident that the Lord was able to solve them all, one after the other.

1. The room in which he lived was very narrow. He could hardly move in between the bed, the table and the chair, its only furniture.
2. The few Coptic families in Nairobi were busy at work the whole day and none of them could help in showing the monk the way to town, to get his necessary needs.
3. The guesthouse was far from the town center and a fifteen minute walk was necessary to reach the first bus stop or shopping center.
4. The meals provided were of one kind only, to be shared by all. No difference was made whether it was Wednesday or Friday, fasting or not, or a special occasion or not. The Protestants do not sanctify fasting.
5. The tourist visa that he had used to enter Kenya was only a temporary one and he had to leave if he could not extend it or obtain a work permit through a registered church or an official organisation in Kenya.
6. In his new work, the most important thing was movement, travel and communication with people, visiting the African churches, their leaders and people. He certainly needed a car and the sooner the better.

7. The bank account of the Coptic Church, which had been opened long ago, contained some funds, enough to either buy a car or rent a house.
8. If he bought a car to start his services, he had then no place to live in. And if he rented a house and spent money on furnishing it, then there would be no car.
9. The Kenyan deacon who came with him from Egypt to assist him, kept asking for large sums of money to buy a piece of land and to build a house for his personal use, while the Church had not even a footstep in Kenya.
10. Everyone who knew that the monk was from the Coptic Church, used to link him with an African independent church which gave itself the name of *Holy Ghost Coptic Church*. He learnt from comments that the leader of that church was a young Kenyan who had given himself the title of *Baba Makatifu*, which means *The Holy Father*, while he did not have a good moral reputation.

Facing all these difficulties and obstacles, the Father stood to say: “*O Lord, the human eye may not see or find a solution. They need a sign from your divine power*”.

**OPEN MY EYES, THAT I MAY SEE WONDROUS THINGS I AM A STRANGER ON THE EARTH (Psalm 119:18-19).** But I am no stranger from you, O Lord, because you are near. I am alone, but you are with me. **INDEED, YOU LET NO ONE WHO WAITS ON YOU BE ASHAMED SHOW ME YOUR WAYS O LORD, TEACH ME YOUR PATHS, LEAD ME IN YOUR TRUTH AND TEACH ME, FOR YOU ARE THE GOD OF MY SALVATION.** (Psalm 25:3-5)

**THE GOD OF HEAVEN HIMSELF WILL PROSPER US: THEREFORE WE, HIS SERVANTS, WILL ARISE AND BUILD.** (Neh 2:20)

The Father knew that there was a post office and shopping center at a walking distance of fifteen minutes. So he wrote letters to the African Church leaders (those who met Bishop Samuel), inviting them for a meeting at the guesthouse at a certain time and he waited for them, hoping that their wishes were spiritual and heavenly.

He started to look for a suitable car at a reasonable price; it was decided to buy a Toyota Station Wagon, which could serve for all purposes. He paid a deposit while waiting for its delivery. He also looked for a school for the study of the Kiswahili language. He bought maps of Nairobi and of all Kenyan roads and he started to study them thoroughly to get a full idea of the geography of the areas he would serve and he obtained a Kenyan driving licence. It had been only a week since his arrival in Kenya, when he drove the Church car to visit the Copts at their homes and organised prayers and Liturgy services, while the Feast of the Epiphany was at hand.

In the early days he frequently lost his way, after which he corrected his way and then arrived safely at his destinations.

He requested an appointment with the Egyptian Ambassador, a meeting that was attended by Mr. Wahib El-Menyawi, who was the Councillor in Nairobi. It was a friendly meeting, in which they talked about St. Mark the Apostle, Evangelist and Martyr, who established the Church of Alexandria. The Ambassador made mention of a quotation from a recent speech by the Head of State, President Kenyatta, who said *Christianity in Africa is not imported but original in the Church of Alexandria which was established by the Apostle Mark in the first century*”. The

Ambassador hinted at how important such a statement was, for the sake of the relations between Kenya and Egypt.

The Ambassador showed his willingness to help the Father in solving the problem of his residence permit by recommending that, through the Egyptian Embassy, he is serving the Egyptian Copts and Arabs in Kenya (which was pre-arranged with H.& Bishop Samuel). The Father felt joy and comfort as the obstacles and problems were solved one by one.

**TRULY LORD, THOSE WHO WAIT ON YOU WILL NEVER BE ASHAMED.**



*MAY 1975, IN NAIROBI H.G. BISHOP BA KHOMOUS WITH FATHER ANTONIOUS EL-BARAMOUSY, THE COPTIC FAMILIES AND THE DELEGATION FROM THE HOLY GHOST COPTIC CHURCH.*

### **THE PRAYER OF THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY CONDUCTED AT THE HOUSE OF ONE OF THE NAIROBI COPTS**

At that time there were only six Coptic families working in Nairobi, in the Egyptian Embassy, at Egypt Air, at the university, or as medical doctors. The chief accountant of the All African Conference of Churches, Mr. S. Shehatta, requested the prayer to be conducted at his residence, because there was no other place available to pray at night.

This was the first Liturgy that the Father prayed in Kenya. Preceded by the Liturgy of the Water (Lakkan), it was attended by all the Copts in Nairobi. After the Liturgy they shared a meal of agape in joy and happiness, eating the traditional meal of the Epiphany.

There was a guest from Egypt who started to ask the Father many questions, to which he tried to give answers. But the questions started to turn into clear pessimism and doubt about the abilities of the Coptic Church to run a mission among the Africans. From where would they get the necessary resources? Why were they late, facing all these negative challenges? The Father put faith and belief in the Lord who called us to this service in the way and the time He sees.

Joseph, the Kenyan deacon, was listening to all this for he could understand Arabic, as he had lived in Egypt for four years. This passive state of mind was transmitted to him and the next morning he expressed his fears about the future of this service. He preferred a guaranteed Government job which would provide him with a regular salary, unable to stand a service which

depended on faith and the work of God, and His promises to all those who serve him in all the honesty of their hearts.

The Father tried to strengthen the deacon by spending with him many hours of prayer and Bible reading. He had the true hope to be able to change him and make him a true servant who would serve with all his means, without worries. At the end of all this, the deacon asked for his theological college graduation certificate from Cairo and the Father promised to get it.

## **MEETING THE KENYAN CHURCH LEADERS**

### **FACE TO FACE WITH THE FIRST GROUP OF AFRICAN CHURCH LEADERS**

At the appointed time the invited church leaders came to meet the Coptic Father at the Methodist guesthouse.

He prayed with them and opened the Bible and read for them about St. Mark from the Book of Acts (12). He narrated to them the history of the establishment of the Coptic Church (the Church of Alexandria) and how St. Mark, the Apostle and Evangelist, worked hard and poured much sweat, tears and blood into bringing the message of salvation to the Africans, namely the Egyptians.

The Africans received the message of Christ very willingly and seriously from the first day - so much so that, within decades and centuries, came out of them heroes of faith, theologians, monastic fathers, popes, bishops and martyrs. All those became living examples from whom the whole world, until today, is still learning.

They listened to what was said until one of them interrupted, asking to eat and drink. Others asked for tea, coffee or coca-cola, etc.

### **THEY STARTED TO DEMAND FOR THEIR MATERIAL NEEDS**

This one asked for his bus fare: *“Once you have invited us to meet you, you should pay us all our expenses”*. That one asked for school fees for his children, another one requested the Father to purchase land and a house for him, the next one came driving his old car and requested five new tyres from the Church.

The Father remembered what His Holiness Pope Shenouda had told him before he left for Kenya *“The Africans will try to know how much benefits and money they can get from you, so they may follow you and love you”*.

While the Father knew that the Church was unable to respond to all those requests, he changed the subject and asked each of them to tell about his church and congregation. Do they have church buildings and land? Where do they gather, in the open field? On the seashore? Are their churches registered?

### **THEY STARTED TO SPEAK ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHURCHES**

This one calls himself Arch-Bishop \*\*\* that other one is Bishop \*\*\* that one is Prophet \*\*\* that one is Pastor \*\*\* Among them was an old man who introduced himself as an Orthodox priest, belonging to an *African Orthodox Church*. The Father knew that most of them belong to what is known as the African Independent Churches, or African Indigenous Churches



*WITH THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX PEOPLE MASENO. 1976*

Each one claimed that he had thousands of followers or claimed that his church was international (worldwide). The father did not comment, but he recorded their names and addresses and promised to visit their churches and congregations to meet them and be introduced to them and to convey to them the image and story of the First African Apostolic Church.

At the end he asked one of them to close in prayer. He prayed in a very loud voice in Kiswahili, in great excitement and too long a prayer that many children came from the garden to see what was the cause of such shouting?

When the Father escorted them to the gate, to say goodbye, they started to ask for money to buy tyres, transport fares and much more. The Father gave them what was enough for their bus fare and prayed for their safety and blessed them. Apologising for his inability to give them more, as he had no silver or gold, as he left the world and all its affairs.

After they had left, the Father stood in a state of great perplexity, knowing that many people had joined the mission churches for benefits and material gain only.

Their habit was to attend the church with the expectation that they would get, at the end, a packet of rice, sugar or dry milk. From such gifts the needy and the not needy were taking as they considered this to be their right and that is why they were called *Rice Christians*.

### **THE SITTING ALLOWANCE**

Another style of requesting material benefits was that the person assumes that his presence in the service is very necessary, so he requests payment as wages for his sitting in the Church to listen.

All such ways were changing the Church into a business institution that is more or less concerned with showy presence and quantity or numbers, more than about the spiritual service, where the quality of the spirit does matter.

### **CAN THE COPTLC CHURCH ACCEPT THIS KIND OF WORSHIP?**

Or was her duty to keep the spirituality of the Coptic Church and the originality of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as the Church had lived it for approximately twenty centuries.

The Church cared for the needs of the poor without lowering her standards to persuade the people to attend the spiritual worship by material means.

The Father sat, thinking deeply about this issue and he opened his Bible at Chapter Six, from the



Gospel of St. John, and he read **Jesus answered them and said: MOST ASSUREDLY I SAY TO YOU, YOU SEEK ME, NOT BECAUSE YOU SAW THE SIGNS, BUT YOU ATE OF THE LOAVES AND WERE FILLED. DO NOT LABOUR FOR THE FOOD WHICH PERISHES, BUT FOR THE FOOD WHICH ENDURES TO EVERLASTING LIFE, WHICH THE SON OF MAN WILL GIVE YOU, BECAUSE GOD THE FATHER HAS SET HIS SEAL ON HIM** (John 6:26-27)

### **NEED OR GREED**

The sympathy that the Lord Jesus had towards the crowds who followed him was very clear. He received them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and healed those who were sick.

This was clear from such a debate with the Disciples

The Disciples: “*Send the multitude away*” (Luke 9:12)

The Lord Jesus: “*You give them something to eat*” (Luke 9:13)

The Disciples: “*We have no more than ...*”

**THE LORD MADE A GREAT MIRACLE AND FED THE THOUSANDS OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.** (Luke 9:17)

But what happened in the morning had its powerful message the Lord Jesus feared that the spiritual way would be used to run after material and fleshy gain. So the material gifts may not hinder the spiritual aim:

**BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.** (Math 6:33) (John 6:27)

If the Lord had pity on the multitudes and he gave them to eat in a situation of need, due to place and time, this did not mean that their desire for him should be only materialistic and of the body.

As the Lord gave them, he taught them also about giving and offering in the Sermon of the Mountain (Math 6). He taught giving before he spoke about that of prayer and fasting. The importance of alms giving in worship is not less than that of prayers and fasting. If we taught our African brothers prayer without fasting, our worship is deficient. If we taught them prayer and fasting without alms giving, this also is a deficient worship and an deficient relation with the Lord.

If the rich and poor adopt the habit to take from the Church due to need or greed, how can we then teach them about alms giving and sharing in the needs of others ? How can we teach them sharing in the needs of the Church? And how would they hear the Word without being busy thinking about what they should take. Then, their priority would be material gain from the Church. Solomon the wise said

**RECEIVE MY INSTRUCTION, AND NOT SILVER, AND KNOWLEDGE RATHER THAN GOLD, FOR WISDOM IS BETTER THAN RUBIES, AND ALL THE THINGS THAT MAY BE DESIRED ARE NOT TO BE COMPARED TO IT.** (Prov 8:10-11)

### **STARTING TO STUDY THE KISWAHILI LANGUAGE**

The Lord's care provided a course of Kiswahili in a language school that belongs to the (C.P.K.) (Anglican) Church Province of Kenya. The course was an intensive course for six weeks, starting

only two weeks after the Father's arrival in Nairobi. The course kept him busy the whole day, during which he learned the basics of Kiswahili. Then he continued to study it on his own, through reading the Bible in two languages together. He had used such a method when he learned the Tegrinia in Asmara and the Amharic in Debre Berhan, in Ethiopia. He also discovered the likeness of Kiswahili to Arabic, because of the fact that all those languages were branching off from the *Semitic Language*.



*MARCH 1976, WITH THE CLASS OF KISWAHILI STUDY  
AT C.P.K LANGUAGE SCHOOL.*

From Semitic stems Hebrew, Arabic, Geez, Tigrenia and Amharic. But Kiswahili is a mixture of the Arabic and Bantu languages. Kiswahili appeared due to the interaction between the Arab merchants from the eastern shores of the Red Sea with the shores of Africa, west of the Red Sea, or the Indian Ocean. When the Arab merchants met the African people, they invented a language through which they could communicate, and so emanated a language which is almost 40% Arabic and the remainder of it Bantu. They called it Kiswahili and that is an Arabic name, meaning the *language of the shores*, by adding the prefix *Ki*. This prefix is followed by the name of the language, so Arabic is known as *KiArabu*, French is *Ki-Faransa* and English is *Ki-Ngerezwa*. In Kenya the languages are named after the tribes, i.e. the Tribe of Akamba speaks *Ki-Kariba*, the Tribe of Meru speaks *Ki-Meru*, the Tribe of Luhya speaks *Ki-Luhya*. Some of these languages are interconnected, but others are far apart. So much so that some tribes can never communicate with another. There, English, French, Portuguese, or Kiswahili, can come in as a common language.

The Kiswahili language originated from Tanzania and the Island of Zanzibar. This language then spread in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Northern Zambia and Eastern Zaire.

### **BEING INTRODUCED TO THE CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF DEVELOPMENT AND VOCATION TRAINING**

The Father was spending his evenings paying visits to the Coptic families, undertaking Bible studies at their homes, studying the Kiswahili language, studying the other Churches' activities in helping the needy, the jobless and the poor.

In Nairobi there are the head quarters of the United Nations Environment programme (U.N.E.P.).

An Egyptian who was working there at that time, Dr. Ramsis Mikhail, invited the Father to attend an evening on the activity of the Anglican Church in Nairobi, in which coloured slides would be projected. The programme was very informative and interesting, giving true insight into the needs of the poor in Kenya, the way of their development through training them into

handicrafts and skills by which they could become self-supporting and could earn their life by their own efforts.

The Father received such experience with joy, because he was seeking, from the Lord, a way to serve the poor in Africa, in the field of development, as well as basic principles which could be the way by which the mission would proceed.

### **SEARCHING FOR A SMALL CHURCH FOR REGULAR LITURGY PRAYERS IN NAIROBI**

It was very difficult for the Father to spend Sundays without praying the Liturgy, without the comfort of the Word of God, the readings and Holy Communion. He met some of the Ethiopian families who invited the Father to visit them at their homes for prayer and blessings. They especially found interest in talking to him in Amharic.

They welcomed the news of the establishment of a Coptic Church in Kenya and offered to share in its activities and needs. Many of them were Ethiopian refugees who had left their country due to the political and economic situation at that time, under the dictatorial rule of Mengistu Haile Mariam.

The question was, when and where could it be possible to gather all the Egyptian Copts, the Sudanese, the Ethiopians and the Kenyans, in a settled place for prayers and worship, because until then, the Liturgy had been prayed at the homes of the Copts.

The Father went to meet the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, which is known as the *Church of the Province of Kenya*. He was welcomed by the Prelate, who asked him many questions about his congregation, his services, his aims in Kenya. The Archbishop invited the Father to his home, where there was a private, small chapel. Because it was not used on Sundays, the Father asked to rent it for three hours every Sunday.

The joy of the Father was great, because the chapel could accommodate up to forty people and there also was a table that could be used as a movable altar.

The British had colonized many African countries and they had spread their doctrine and established churches and built the head quarters opposite the State House, in the best area of Nairobi, where both the political and religious authorities were present, face to face. Therefore this small chapel was located in the residence of the Anglican Archbishop.

### **WE WANT A LATE SERVICE WHICH SHOULD END EARLY**

Every Sunday the Father used to carry the big box containing the altar utensils and pray the Mass in one of the houses of the Copts, turn after turn. Now he had a small rented church, where regular and steady Mass could be held.

He was surprised that the Copts wanted the Liturgy to be once every fortnight, because they wanted to go to picnics on Sundays. There was a majority vote on this. Whilst this was very difficult for the Father, he realised with time that this was the plan of God, to give him a chance to serve the Kenyans on each other Sunday as well.

The services were conducted twice a month, but the people used to arrive very late at the

Service, just before the end of the Liturgy. They used to ask when does the Liturgy start, and when does it end. As this happened repeatedly, the Father asked them about their coming earlier to the church. There they disclosed the fact that they like to entertain themselves until late on Saturday evenings, so they wake up late on Sundays. Therefore the service should start later, and as they want to go to picnics on Sunday afternoons, so the service should end at an early time on Sundays. So, as a joke, the Father asked them *“How can we start the Service at 11.00 am to finish it at 10.00 am?”*

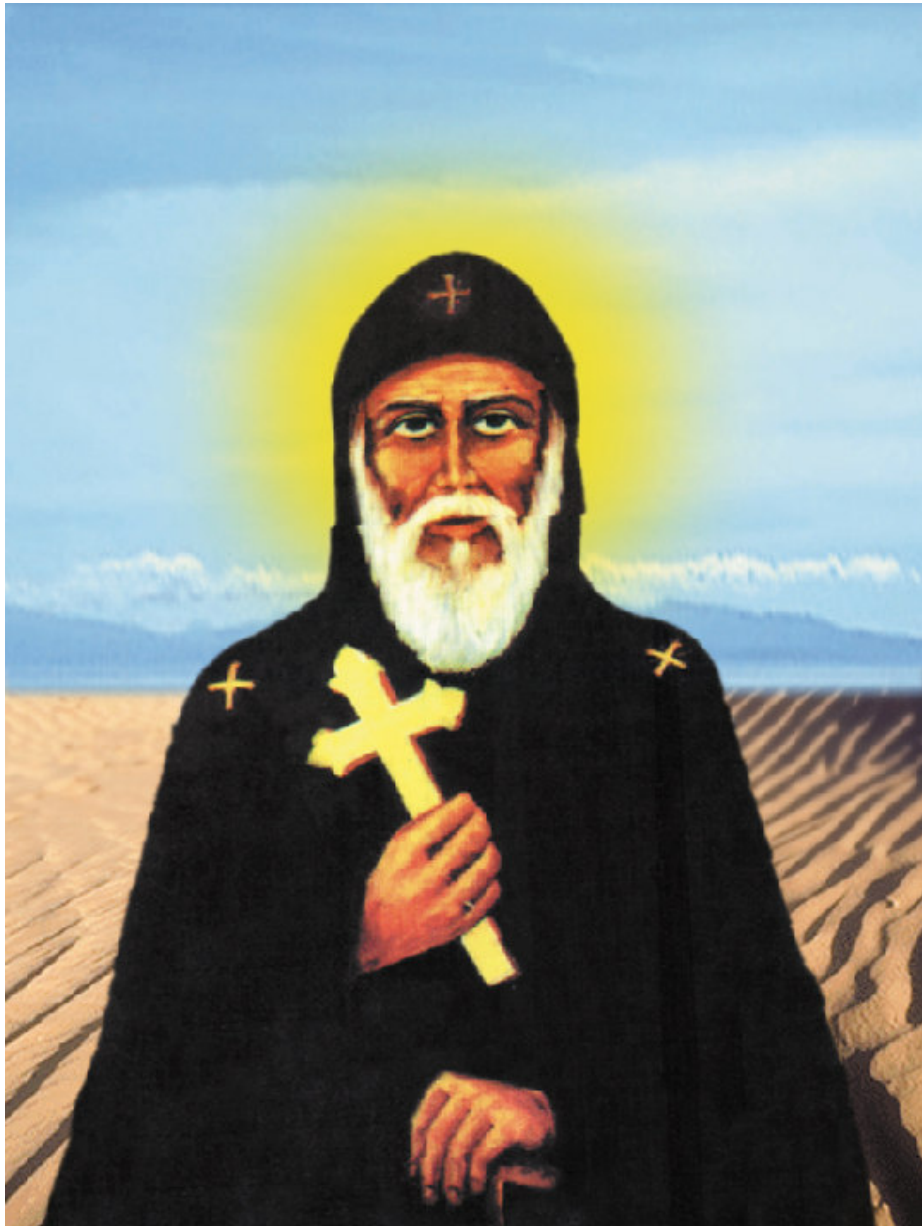
He realised that such luke-warm worship was due to the lack of pastoral services and the lack of habit to attend Services regularly for many years. But once the Service became regular, and home visits and Bible studies were conducted, they started to respond willingly. Later, they showed great enthusiasm in all spiritual activities, in confession and communion, and also in early attendance to the Service and in encouraging their children to attend Sunday schools.

### **ACCOMMODATION IN THE GUEST HOUSE BECAME A HINDRANCE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

The Lent of 1976 started, and the guesthouse was still offering one type of food for all. The Father could not share in such food, and he tried to convince the matron to prepare vegetarian meals, but they insisted on him eating whatever was offered. He proposed to pay them for special food, but they refused.

Also, praying in the rented chapel had revealed a new problem. The Father had no place where to make the offering bread (the Kourban). When he had prayed the liturgies in the houses of the Copts, he used to make the Kourban there, but now he no longer had the facilities to do so.

It was only a few days later that he learned that Mr. S. Shehatta, an accountant for the A.A.C.C, would be away from Nairobi for six months on a scholarship and it was agreed that the Father should move into the residence owned by the A.A.C.C'. The Father felt great joy to move into a house that gave him the freedom to prepare suitable fasting food, the facilities to prepare the Kourban and to receive guests and to conduct Bible studies for the Kenyan Copts so that they may know the apostolate, originality, spirituality and dogma of the Coptic Orthodox Church.



*ST. MOSES THE BLACK  
THE POWERFUL MAN, GREAT SAINT OF REPENTANCE*

## **PRUNING THE VINE**

**MY WELL BELOVED HAS A VINEYARD ON A VERY FRUITFUL HILL, HE DUG IT UP AND CLEARED OUT ITS STONES (Isaiah 5:11)**

### **THE CLAIM OF THE PRESENCE OF SERVICES OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN MASENO FOR A FULL YEAR**

On the first day of the month the Father was surprised by the arrival of a man called Richard, who had come to request his monthly payment, as well as his transport fees from and to Maseno on the Equator (at a distance of 400km) and his hotel bill in Nairobi.

The whole matter seemed strange to the Father and he started to investigate it thoroughly. He found out that Richard was an Anglican in his forties, married with a large family and working as a primary school teacher in the Maseno area. He had been introduced to (the late) Bishop Samuel through a relative, working for the A.A.C.C. and had requested Bishop Samuel to grant him a scholarship in order to obtain his master's degree in divinity from Egypt, so that he may serve the Coptic Church in the Maseno area.

The Coptic Church sponsored his journey to Egypt, so he resigned his job and went to Egypt and was baptised.

He was accommodated in the Amba Rewes buildings, among the Kenyan and Ugandan students, as he started his studies in the Coptic Theological College in the "Department of African Studies".

Only a few weeks later Richard started to become restless, requesting not to observe the days of fasting in the Church and refusing to attend the regular liturgy services and lectures. However, he wanted to obtain his master's degree and return to his country, his family and children, arguing that it was enough sacrifice to have resigned his job, left his country and move to Egypt. Were these not enough qualifications to obtain the degree and go back home?!

A few months later he received a telegram saying that his wife was seriously ill and he returned to Kenya, after having collected a large amount of used clothes and gifts, claiming that he would serve the Coptic Church and translate its prayer book into Kiluhya (the language of his tribe).

The Father discovered from the accounts that this man was receiving big monthly salaries and frequent sums of money (as loans), although the Church never knew what services he was rendering.

### **THE CONFRONTATION**

The doorbell rang and it was Richard, asking the Father to pay for the taxi in which he had come.

As he stepped through the door, it did not take long for the Father to realize that he was drunk, the smell of alcohol was strong and his eyes were red.

They sat down and the Father asked him of what exactly consisted his services for the Church. Richard answered that it were meetings and translations. *“What do you say in those meetings?” “I teach about the Coptic Church?” “What do you teach about the Coptic Church, how much do you know about the Coptic Church, what are the sources of your knowledge?” “What I learned in Egypt.” “How many months did you spend in Egypt?” “Six months.” “Do you teach the Doctrine of the Coptic Orthodox Church?” “How should I know it?” “Do you conduct Coptic Church services every Sunday?” “No, I attend the Anglican Church on certain Sunday services to take Communion!”*

In addition to his salary he started to ask for more money for his children’s school fees and for extra loans for many reasons and he reported that his children had been sent away from school due to lack of school fees.

The Father raised his heart to God and prayed to God, saying, “You, O Lord, know everything and nothing is hidden before Your eyes. Let me discover all the truth about that man. What are his real needs? You know, Lord, how much I want to be honest towards your money as well as to be merciful to this man.”

Then the Father surprised Mr. Richard by saying: *“I came to know that you have returned to your Government job as a primary school teacher!”* Here Mr. Richard showed signs of confusion, answering, *“Yes! No. Yes, I returned to my job. No. Yes, I did not yet take my salary. Yes ... No. Yes, now I am employed by the Government.”* The Father said to him: *“We thank God that you are back to your Government job, and we also thank God for the help the Church could extend to your family during the time of your joblessness, after your resignation for the purpose of going to Egypt. We shall give you a financial assistance and your hotel and transport expenses and I shall go to Maseno after a week and we shall study the situation of the services which you are rendering there.”*

At that moment Richard pulled out from his pocket a letter from the Government, showing a decision to re-assign him to his former post, and to pay him his salary from 1 January 1976.

A few weeks later the Monk arrived at Maseno, to find that Richard and his family were prominent members in the Anglican Church, while he was not holding any meetings for the Coptic Orthodox Church, but he was only proclaiming himself a representative of that Church. Concerning the Prayer Book’s translations, he presented half page of the Agbia Book.

## **THE BEGINNING OF TRAVELS IN KENYA**

Once the Father finished his Kiswahili language studies and passed the exam, he organised trips to the areas in Kenya where the Kenyan Copts and the African Orthodox reside

The first trip was in the second week of March 1976. He drove the Church car, accompanied by the Kenyan Deacon Joseph Umanyo. The distance to travel was about 400km. The roads were very rough in many areas, whilst very well paved in others. They passed by vast areas of land covered by a green plant spreading like a beautiful carpet. He knew that those were the tea plantations that bring great fame for Kenya. The nature and the scenery all along the road were

very rich and extremely marvelous. It was green everywhere in shades from the lightest to the darkest green. The weather too was very fair, without coldness or heat, no dryness or humidity. It was ideal weather.

The trip started at 9:30am. They reached Kisumu, the capital of the Nyanza Province, at 2:00pm. There were still 30km more to go to reach the Equator, where the African Orthodox Copts were waiting for them.

In Kisumu, the capital of Nyanza which is located on the shores of Lake Victoria, they took a short rest and ate a little of fasting food, as it was the time of Lent. They found no place where to eat, except the station wagon.

Then they continued their trip to Maseno, which they reached at about 4:00pm. Then Deacon Joseph looked at the Monk and said *'Father, you have driven the car continuously for the distance of 400km. I expected that you will feel tired and fall off before crossing the long distance.'* The Father answered, smiling: *"How can we be tired or fall off, while we have not yet started? The work is great and the journey is long."*

### **IN MASENO ON THE EQUATOR**

The way to Maseno is uphill from Kisumu climbing slowly, on top of mountains. Early you notice the change of weather, from the heat of Kisumu to the cool, fair temperature in Maseno. This is because of the altitude of Kisumu, which is at 2,500 feet above sea level, while Maseno is at 4,500 feet.

To reach the area, you pass by the Equator on which you find a nice sign made out of a yellow globe (Earth), divided by a red line symbolising the Equator. This sign is fixed on a stand made out of four legs - two of them symbolising the Equator and the other two a man putting one leg in the Northern Hemisphere and the other leg in the Southern Hemisphere. At this point, on both sides of the road, big signboards denote the line connecting them to be the Equator and indicate the altitude.

They crossed the Equator to the Northern Hemisphere and arrived at Kima (meaning Monkey, because the mountains around are inhabited by monkeys). They reached the house of Mr. Richard (he who claims to be the Coptic Church representative). The people in that area are from the Abaluhya tribe and speak the Kiluhya language. Such a language is unique in the area because it uses the letter "kh" like in the word "Bwakhira", which means "Good Evening", but this language is similar to the most common language in Uganda, the "Baganda".





*AT THE EQUATOR WITH COPTIC EGYPTIAN VISITORS.*



*MASENO KENYA, AUGUST 1977,  
THE BISHOP WITH FR. KORNILIOUS, FR. PHILIMON, REV. JAMES OMWAKWE AND  
SOME CHURCH MEMBERS.  
NEAR THE HOME GIVEN BY MR. JULIUS OTENYO.*



*MASENO KENYA, 1977  
MR. JULIUS OTENYO WITH HIS LARGE FAMILY. THEY GAVE THE NAME ANTONIUS  
MARKOS TO THEIR YOUNGEST SON.*

## **THE FIRST MEETING WITH THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX**

In Maseno, the gathering was on the afternoon of Wednesday 10 March 1976, in the hut of Father James Omwakwe, which was a house built of mud and tree branches. The windows were too small to be enough for ventilation; the furniture consisted of simple wooden tables and chairs, while the people gathered there were many women, men and children.

They had come to see for the first time a monk father from Egypt. The monk looked strange to them, in his dress, with his long beard and the cover of the head. They were greeting him with surprise. But children were afraid to come near him or to shake hands with him.

The Monk from the Baramous Monastery did not know that such first gatherings were the nucleus for establishing the Monastery of Saint Menas in the same area and the adoption of many of the areas inhabitants into the Coptic Orthodox Church, after seven years of hard and continuous work and travels.

The people started to sing with their pure and beautiful voices, using drums and timbrels, saying “*Nyasaye Numlahi*” which means “*God is good*”. They were expressing their joy for receiving the Father from the Church of Egypt and the Apostolic Original African Church for whom they had waited for so long.

They offered tea, peanuts and sweet bananas, which were remarkably small, as each is not bigger than twice the size of the human finger. All this food the people produced by planting the fertile land on which they live. The people there have no problem of water or irrigation, as the rains are almost continuous the whole year round, and so the fertile land is rendering them many good benefits. That proves the common saying that there are poor people in Kenya, but there are no hungry people. It is interesting to mention that Kenya has the highest rate of population increase in the world.

## **THE PROCLAMATION OF SAINT MARK WAS THE SUBJECT OF THE TEACHING IN THE FIRST MEETING**

The Father spoke about the great blessing bestowed upon the people of Africa and Egypt through the arrival of St. Mark at the town of Alexandria in North Africa. He told them about the Apostle who brought the light of the Faith in Jesus Christ to us.

The Father was speaking in English and Mr. Richard was translating sentence by sentence. All were listening very attentively even children, youth and women. You could easily see in their eyes many expressions of eagerness to learn more about this subject. Especially when they were told the story of St. Mark in detail, from his arrival at Alexandria and his first miracle of healing which God brought about through him, until the establishment of the first theological school and the establishment of the Church of Alexandria and his martyrdom in the streets of Alexandria.

## **OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON (Hos 1:11)**

### **OUT OF AFRICA I CALLED MY SON**

The reaction of the people made the Father discover the importance of the teaching that Egypt is a part of Africa. Egypt sheltered and hosted the Holy Family and the early Fathers, the Patriarchs like Abraham (and Sara), Jacob, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, Moses was born in Egypt and Joseph lived and became a ruler in it. Jeremiah the Prophet also lived in Egypt.

Egypt played that important role on behalf of the entire African continent and the African people because

**AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO JOSEPH IN A DREAM, SAYING: ARISE, TAKE THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER, FLEE TO EGYPT AND STAY THERE UNTIL I BRING YOU WORD (Math 2:13)**

So it is the Lord who chose the land of Africa in general and Egypt especially to come to, to live in, to bless and to eat from its food and drink from its water.

### **THE LORD JESUS DRANK FROM YOUR WATERS**

The Father told them that the rains that fall on their lands here, flow in rivers until they gather in the Lake Victoria. This water flows North, into the White Nile which becomes the river Nile and we drink its waters in Egypt. From this water the Lord Jesus. our Holy Mother the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph drank early in the first Century.

Such facts stirred joy among the Kenyan people, so much so that they clapped, beat the drums and shouted Alleluia, in joy and happiness. Such teachings present the link that ties the people of the one continent through the links of Faith, the Bible and blood, because the story of Noah ties all the African people through blood and flesh relations.

The Bible affirms that we Africans are all the sons and daughters of Ham, the son of Noah:

**NOAH WAS A JUST MAN, PERFECT IN HIS GENERATIONS. NOAH WALKED WITH GOD AND NOAH BEGOT THREE SONS SHEM, HAM AND JAPHETH. (Gen 6:9)**

**THE SONS OF HAM KUSII (Ethiopia) MISRAIM (Egypt or Misr) PUT AND CANAAN. (Gen 10:6)**

That gives an indication that all the peoples of Africa are the children of one man, who is Ham, the son of Noah, out of whom came the people who belong to the Continent of Africa.

## **IS THERE ... A FOOTHOLD**

**EVEN THE SPARROW HAS FOUND A HOME AND THE SWALLOW A NEST FOR HERSELF (Psalm 84:3)**

**CAN WE FIND A DWELLING PLACE IN MASENO ON THE EQUATOR?**

On that day the Coptic Orthodox Church did not have a foothold in the Continent of Africa, South of the Equator.

The Father tried to find a place in which they could spend the night after such an exhausting trip, driving the car for more than 400km, followed by the two hour meeting with the people.

He asked about a hotel or motel. He was told that there was one in Kisumu, about 30km away.

He also asked about a permanent residence, a house for rent in which the Church servants could dwell. He was guided to a landlord named Mr. Julius Otenyo who had a house nearby for rent.

They left for Kisumu where the Father was not able to search much, but he found a sign saying "East View Hotel". He stopped to ask for a place to rest. By that time the disc pains in his spine became severe. He was told that there was no room except a double room for him and the Deacon Joseph. This he accepted without hesitation due to severe exhaustion and pains which would hinder him from looking for another place.

When he was deeply asleep, he was awakened after midnight by loud noise and music and cries of drunken people, the cracking of glasses and bottles increasing in a severe way.

In the early morning he tried in every way to find another place, where he could find a separate room as well as a quiet hotel without a drinking pub.

The enthusiasm of the people the day before, induced them to go back to Maseno once more, to try to meet the people and local leaders. They also wanted to try and rent a house that would become the mission center to serve the area.

They went to the house of Richard and the Monk sat with his children and they showed him their school certificates. It was clear that they were exempt from school fees.

When Richard returned home, he invited them to dinner, then he requested the Monk to pay the school fees for his children, but the Father told him that he got to know that his children were exempt from school fees and that he was also back to his employment as a teacher. *"We are happy that your affairs are going well. Also your wife is employed as a teacher which shows that you are well off. You should not expect the Church to give you any more money. You should leave the Church to play her role toward the needy and the poor who do not have any jobs as you and your wife have. If you wish to help the service, you are welcome, but do not request any*

*more money”.*

**WHEN I SENT YOU WITHOUT MONEY, BAG, SACK AND SANDALS, DID YOU LACK ANYTHING? (Luke 22:35)**

**THE DISCIPLES SAID NOTHING**

The Monk stood wondering what happened and prayed, saying:

“And we also, O Lord, we lack nothing. As we see Your hand working and Your encouragement is great. Your deeds, O Lord, are assuring us that we lack nothing and we shall never lack anything in the future, whatever the duration of our mission”.

**THESE ARE THE DETAILS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED**

On the second day of their arrival at the area of the Equator, which was Thursday 11 March 1976, they tried to trace the owner of the house that they hoped to rent. This was fruitless. They spent the day among the people, visiting many homes. The moment the people knew that the Monk was a medical doctor by profession; they started to request medical advice and asked for medicines.

At sunset they prayed with them, then they started their journey to Kisumu. On their way they passed by the house of the landlord and when they found him, they negotiated renting the house. His brother was present and he demanded a very high rent of about US \$100 per month. That was too much, in view of the area and the general condition of the house.

The Monk requested renting half of the house only and the owner agreed on a fair price. When the Father offered money to pay for the second half of the month of March, the landlord's brother objected and insisted that the Church should pay the whole monthly rent, claiming that Church organizations own lots of money.

The Father tried to explain that the money in his hands was God's and that he should be careful about every shilling and should not give himself the right to waste it unfairly, and then he said “*I have left my job and profession for the sake of serving God and his people. I have no silver or gold, hut only what God sends to us*”.

The father and his companions were surprised by the landlord, Mr. Julius Otenio (may the Lord reward him with the eternal instead of the temporal) saying to the Monk: “*I do not want any amount of rent from you. You can reside in this house as long as you like, free of charge. Please consider what I should charge you as my contribution to your Church...Father you have come to help and serve our people spiritually and medically. You are requested to cover the electricity bill only*”.

The Monk extended his thanks to him and prayed with them, asking God a special blessing for Mr. Julius and his family.

**SURELY I WILL NOT GO INTO THE CHAMBER OF MY HOUSE, OR GO UP TO THE COMFORT OF MY BED, I WILL NOT GIVE SLEEP TO MY EYES, OR SLUMBER TO MY EYELIDS, UNTIL I FIND A PLACE FOR THE LORD, A DWELLING PLACE FOR THE MIGHTY GOD OF JACOB. (Psalm 132:3-5)**

Once the Father came out of such meeting in which the Hand of God had shown itself very

clearly, giving him a free dwelling place in Maseno, he raised his eyes to Heaven and blessed the Lord who is near to him in his lonely mission in this great continent, to start from nothing.

Here we have found a dwelling for the people and the servants. Can we find a house for the Lord?

On Saturday, 13 March 1976, the Monk and the Deacon went back to Maseno to organise the Sunday services. They searched for a Church in which they could conduct the prayer with the people and they met Father James Omwakwe who informed them that there was a Church building near Luanda, whose owner wants to meet them because he intends to offer it to the Coptic Church. The heart of the Monk jumped with joy for he could not believe all these gifts from God, all at once.

**I HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE YOU THIS LAND AND THIS CHURCH AS A GIFT ...  
BUT PAY THE PRICE**

The man came and he was introduced to them as Mr. Cain (the Monk was surprised that some Africans use the name of Cain, the murderer of his righteous brother Abel). The man said that he had decided to offer the land and the building as a gift to the Coptic Church.



*1976, THE POOR CHURCH BUILDING NEAR LUANDA, KENYA.*

All became enthusiastic to go there immediately in great eagerness to see the place and rejoice. They saw a Church built with tree branches and mud, and the roof made of rusty corrugated iron sheets. The land all around was not even, but covered with bushes.

The Monk gave thanks, asking God to reward him and expressed how grateful they were. But the man posed a little and said that he wanted the price and he said that Bishop Samuel had come there and agreed to pay 41,000 Kenya Shilling for it (equivalent to US \$6000).

The Monk was surprised. How could it be a gift and he should pay for it?

The man answered that this was the agreement with Bishop Samuel.

“Did he sign any document for you ?“ “No”

“Do you have any written document ?“ “No”

The Monk said, “We do not have the funds to buy this land nor the building. But if you are willing to help in the service of the Word of God, we request you to allow us to use the building in the prayer meetings as your contribution to God’s service”. Mr. Cain accepted and it was

announced that the service on Sunday (the next day) would be in that Church, because the hut of Father James Ovwakwe was too small to accommodate the people.

The people were assembled and they sat in the Church on seats made of split trees, supported on stones. They were taught about the history of St. Mark and the Coptic Church and also about the oneness of water and blood that links all Africans together as well as the Egyptians as African people.

When the people left, the Monk and the Deacon went back to Kisumu. In the evening they watched the sunset on the shores of Lake Victoria, offering such great beauty of nature, and they sang the Psalms of Vespers and said the Compline Prayers before they retired to the hotel.

### **THE CATECLIUMENS LITURGY IN KISWAI-ILI FOR THE FIRST TIME**

The Father and his Deacon Joseph Omanyo went back to Maseno on Sunday morning 14 March 1976, carrying the Censor, Incense and Prayer Books, raising the Incense and the Liturgy in Kiswahili. (It was translated and printed by the Bishopric of Social Services in Cairo).

More than 100 people gathered, the majority of them women and children. There also came many of the Elders of the tribes, who belonged to the African Orthodox Church.

The Father conducted the prayers in Kiswahili, raising the early morning prayers, then the readings of the day, the Pauline, the Catholic Epistles, the Acts, then the Psalm and the Gospel, followed by the Sermon which was translated into Kiluhya language by one educated person. The people started to sing in the vernacular many of the tribal songs while clapping and using the drums and timbrels, creating a great atmosphere of joy and happiness.

Then Father Ovwakwe informed the Monk that there was a funeral nearby and he saw that it was a good chance to introduce the Father to the inhabitants of the whole area, due to the fact that for a funeral a big crowd usually gathers. They were warmly welcomed and they asked the Father to preach, where he made the sermon in English and it was translated by two persons into the Kiluhya and the Luo languages.

Later in the afternoon there was a gathering of the leaders and elders of the Orthodox Churches in the area, expressing their happiness for the presence of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Kenya and hoping that Orthodoxy will be strengthened and promoted because it was weak among many other denominations.

### **THE HOBBIES AND GIFTS OF CHILDREN SHOULD BE SUPPRESSED OR ENCOURAGED AND EDIFIED SO IT MAY BECOME A BLESSING FOR GOD'S SERVICE**

The Monk received the keys of the house of Mr. Julius Otenyo and examined it well, but he discovered that it was in a very bad condition. It was not possible to live in it without many repairs. The landlord promised to make the necessary building repairs, but the electric supplies did not work in most of the rooms. How could they live in a house in such a condition?

On Monday, 15 March 1976, they bought mattresses, kitchen utensils and what was necessary for spending the night in Maseno until the settlement of the situation about the house that is to be a centre for the service of the Coptic Church in the area.



Arriving at the house in Maseno, they found Father James Omwakwe and the women and men of his Church, working actively in cleaning the house and making it ready for the Fathers dwelling.

They found old furniture that could be used to save them buying new one. The Father asked for an electrician to repair the wiring, but he was told that it might take weeks to call one from Kisumu or the nearby towns. As the hobby of the Father was electricity since his childhood (that hobby or gift which was discovered and encouraged by his parents since he was ten years of age, so much so that his late father noticed that the young man spent most of his pocket money on buying and repairing old electrical equipments, even adding his summer allowance to satisfy his hobby), he did not hesitate to climb up to the roof, under the corrugated iron sheets and there he started to examine the wires, connecting one to the other and repairing them until all the lights and plugs were working perfectly.

The Africans present were wondering how a monk and priest could do such a kind of work with his own hands. How could he know about electric connections while they feared them very much, believing that electricians must have got very special abilities not to be killed by the current.

The experience was very difficult due to the heat under the iron sheets and also due to the presence of many rats and bats that infested the roof and ate the wires.

When the landlord came, in the evening, and found the house full of light, he was surprised and asked how that was done. When he received the answer, he shook the hand of the Father, saying: *“We cannot believe that you can also work in electricity. As long as you accept to do any fruitful and constructive work for God’s service without fear or slackness, I trust that your mission will be successful in these countries”*.

The Monk had nothing to answer, except: **“YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS WITH ME”**. (1 Cor. 15:10)

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE EQUATOR AREA**

The Father decided that teaching and education was the foundation of everything and he instructed the Deacon Joseph Omanyo to dwell in the house which became suitable for residence and made for him a program of teaching the youth and the children the true Coptic Orthodox Doctrine, history, prayers, the life of Saints and the Word of God.

He encouraged him by reminding him that he was a graduate of the Theological College in Cairo and that he would receive a salary equal to the local university graduates. They started to gather the youth and the children in the house and taught them and gave many books for reference.

#### **THE RETURN TO NAIROBI AND PREPARING TO TRAVEL TO DAR-ES-SALAAM IN TANZANIA**

After spending nine days in the area of the Equator, the Father returned to Nairobi, passing by Lake Victoria and the capital of Nyanza, Kisumu. At that time there were no Churches or people there. He was accompanied by two leaders of the African Orthodox Churches. Due to the roughness of the roads and the long distance, the back pains of the Monk started to increase and he was in need of rest and painkillers.

He did not get enough rest from the long travel, as the Copts in Dar-Es-Salaam called by phone, asking for a pastoral visit to provide them with the chance of confession, a liturgy prayer and the Holy Communion.

The Father could not apologize or postpone his visit, knowing the great spiritual need of the five Coptic families living there. He had to obtain a visa and he arranged to arrive in Dar-Es-Salaam on Friday, 26 March 1976.

## OBTAINING A LICENCE FOR MEDICAL PRACTICE IN KENYA

The Monk had applied to the Kenyan Ministry of Health for a medical licence to practise medicine. Wherever he went, he carried with him the medical examination equipments and medicines to help the sick among the Kenyan people as a charity.

Because all his degrees had been issued in his name, before his monastic vows, he had to present certain documents from the Patriarchate proving that the named doctor became Father Antonius El-Baramosy.

The Ministry of Health acknowledged his credentials and issued a licence for him to practise medicine for one year, renewable. But later, at the time of renewal, the Ministry gave him a lifetime registration as a medical doctor.

When he went to receive such document, the officers were laughing at the title Doctor Bishop, which he acquired after his ordination as Bishop for African Affairs.



**IN MUCH PATIENCE ...  
IN MUCH TRIBULATIONS**

(2 Cor 6:4)

**WHERE ARE THE MILLIONS OF SHILLINGS SENT FROM EGYPT BY POPE SHENOUDA?**

A person suddenly asked the Monk in a meeting, saying: *“I have received a confidential letter which states that His Holiness Pope Shenouda has given you twenty million Shillings for us (That was equal to (US\$200,000) But it is clear that you ate our money”*. Another one confirmed that and so did a third person.

All that happened while the Monk was sitting among them, pleading to the Lord in his heart, saying:

**IF IT HAD NOT BEEN THE LORD WHO WAS ON OUR SIDE, WHEN MEN ROSE UP AGAINST US, THEN THEY WOULD HAVE SWALLOWED US ALIVE ... BLESSED BE THE LORD WHO HAS NOT GIVEN US AS PREY TO THEIR TEETH. OUR SOUL HAS ESCAPED AS A BIRD FROM THE SNARE OF THE FOWLERS. OUR HELP IS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH. (Psalm 124:2-8)**

The Monk asked them if he could see the letter that they received from the Pope

*“No, it is confidential...!”*

*“Then such story is not true. His Holiness did not send anything to you, for a simple reason: he does not know your names and also because we came not to give money to individuals, but spirit and teachings”*.

One of them asked *“Do you mean that you did not bring money with you, like the other missionaries?”* The Father said: *“I have abandoned my work and my salary for the sake of God and for the sake of the work for the salvation of your souls. I have no silver or gold, but I have one thing that I love you and I want to serve you”*.

*“But you must serve us as we want, not as you wish yourself. We want money, gifts, houses, lands, cars... The Father answered “If I had the abilities, I would not withhold it from you.*

They said : *“If you truly came without money or big gifts, certainly you would lose the battle! He asked them “is there a battle?” They said ‘Yes, a battle between different denominations! Do you not know that a missionary without money is like a soldier without a gun? How did you come to enter a battle without weapon?’”* The Father answered, *“In truth I am the soldier without a gun...the gun is a weapon for killing”*.

**BUT FOR US THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL BUT**

**MIGHTY IN GOD FOR PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS, CASTING DOWN ARGUMENTS AND EVERY HIGH THING THAT EXALTS ITSELF AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. BRINGING EVERY THOUGHT INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST (2 Cor. 10:4-5)**

Then our weapon is prayers and the Word of God that is life and spirit.

The meeting was in the evening, in one of the populous districts of Nairobi.

The Monk realized that it became dark and he tried by all means to end the meeting while the others were pressing to continue, claiming that they had much more to say.

The Father left and sat in the driver's seat and he noticed strange, suspicious movement from the group. One of them sat next to him, while another proposed to drive the car for him while he rested. The Father felt that they wanted to get rid of him, steal the car and run away, leaving him alone in the street at night. The Father requested the one in the front seat to alight, to direct him to turn the car. Once he stepped down and gave him directions, the Father quietly locked the car doors from within and he drove fast while crossing himself and the road.

The Father did not know well the right way out of the area, but he asked God's guidance and he found himself on a main road, which led him safely home, rejoicing and praising the Lord.

Since that time, the Father refrained from meeting these people, but they used to telephone him, asking for his address, so as to visit him, but he always answered that he was living in Nairobi, and that all they wanted they could say on the phone or write in letters.

**FURTHER TROUBLES AND WARS**

Once the Father arrived at home and started reading his Bible, the telephone rang and it was Deacon Joseph calling from Maseno, to report that a hotel owner in Maseno had summoned him to pay 2,200 Kenyan Shillings because one African Orthodox Father, called Father Ndege (bird or airplane) dwelled in the hotel, ate and drank for several days and left, claiming that he was the guest of the Monk Father Antonius of Egypt who would pay his bill.

A few days later, Deacon Joseph called by phone again to say that the owner of the land and the church is requesting 1,500 Kenyan Shillings as rent for using the church in services. The Father promised to meet and talk with him on his next visit.

As he went back meditating on his Bible, he found these verses:

**THEREFORE DO NOT CAST AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE WHICH HAS GREAT REWARD, FOR YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE, SO THAT AFTER YOU HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD, YOU MAY RECEIVE THE PROMISE, FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE AND HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME AND WILL NOT TARRY.**  
(Heb 10:35-37)

**A PASTORAL VISIT TO THE COPTS IN TANZANIA**

The Monk contacted the Copts in Dar El-Salam to prepare for the Liturgy Prayer on Sunday 28 March 1976, and he arrived there on Friday 26 March 1976. He was met at the airport by an agricultural engineer, Mr. Sabry Botros and his family. He was working as an expert in the

cotton administration in Kiswahili Mamlaka Ya Pamba, which meant the Cotton Kingdom.

The name Tanzania is a compound name, made up of abbreviated names of Tanganika and Zanzibar. With independence, the two nations were united into one country, named Tanzania.

The Monk was accommodated at the house of Mr. Sabry and he visited the Copts in their homes or their offices at work. There were four families. Some were professors, working at the university or in the U.N.D.P. (United Nations Development Programme), or with the Tanzanian Government.

In the early hours of Sunday, the Monk made the Bread of Offering (Kourban) and the Prayer was attended by all the Copts as well as some of the native families, so that he had to pray parts of the Liturgy in English.

The Tanzanians shared in the Meal of Agape. When they started to ask about the Coptic Church, it was the chance for the Monk to tell them about the history of the Church, her Establisher and her Saints, her authenticity and her African originality.

Before his return to Nairobi, he visited the Egyptian Ambassador in his office, who had prepared lunch for the Monk and all the Coptic families, at his residence. This was a very courteous gathering, full of love and friendship.

A few days later the Monk returned to Nairobi, to start another series of travels and responsibilities.

### **RE-TRANSLATION OF THE KISWAHILI LITURGY FOR RE-PRINTING**

The joy of the Monk with the Kiswahili Liturgy, translated and printed in Egypt, was very short lived because once they started to pray in it together with the congregation, the educated among them started to ask: “*What is this language you are using? “Kiswahili of course”* They said, “*No, we could not follow the prayers clearly*”. The many comments of those who knew the Kiswahili language indicated that the translation of such a Liturgy was distorted greatly and did not give meaning to the prayers. It looked as if words had been put next to each other, without grammar. This forced the Father to discuss it with Joseph the Kenyan Deacon, who stated that the translation had been done by himself and his Ugandan colleagues who were studying in Egypt. Their first language was several other languages, so that their translation was meaningless, grammarless and done without revision.

The Father thought: “*I have to start anew and translate all this again. From You, O Lord, comes all support and understanding*”. He found comfort in the words of Solomon the Wise: **FOR THE LORD GIVES WISDOM, FROM HIS MOUTH COME KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING. HE STORES UP SOUND WISDOM FOR THE UPRIGHT. HE IS A SHIELD TO THOSE WHO WALK UPRIGHTLY.** (Proverbs 2:6-7)

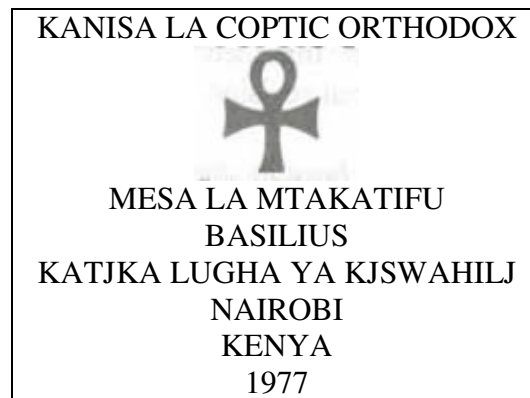
He enquired among the Kenyan Church leaders if any could help in translating the Prayers and the Liturgy. One of them presented himself as one who had lived in Tanzania for many years and who had mastered the Kiswahili language. He presented himself as the Arch-Bishop Joshua Kiarie. He agreed to organise daily sittings with the Father to translate the Liturgy from English, sentence by sentence. The Father felt that such work might take a long time. What about

printing?

This is your word, O Lord. You are able to give me the means to print it. So Your people may worship You.

The Father felt again the sense of strangeness, because he did not know where to go. He went asking, and the price for typing one page was about 20 Kenyan Shillings, which was equivalent to US \$3. By calculating, it proved to be very expensive to complete the whole work. Then he remembered that he had brought with him a portable typewriter which was in good condition and useful. The Father had taught himself how to type while he was in secondary school, on a typewriter brought by one of his relatives at home.

The speed of his typing was slow, but it was good enough. He gave thanks to God who gave him such abilities to complete his work.



### **THE PURCHASE OF A USED STENCIL PRINTING MACHINE**

The Father went to Nairobi, downtown, and the people in the streets were looking at him in amazement, while whispering, smiling or pointing at him. They had not seen such a uniform and style before. A man dressed in black with a beard and on his head a cloak embroidered with white crosses.

They must have been questioning themselves about who this man was, and of what religion and denomination. But the Father used to walk fast, not turning left or right, but heading to the offices of the Gestetner Company. There he found a new duplicating machine, but it was too expensive, compared to his financial abilities.

He was advised to look for a used one at the Catholic bookshop. And truly, he found a used electrical one in good shape, which cost him only one fourth of the price of the new one.

Once he installed it at home, he felt very happy and rejoiced. Now he had obtained all the facilities for typing and duplicating. Through God's power, he had to work hard to translate, typeset and duplicate the Kiswahili Liturgy.

He did not realize at that stage that he had a long way ahead of him to translate and print the Liturgies, as well as many other Books of Prayers of the Sacraments, such as baptism, funerals, house blessings, matrimony, unction of the sick, and also the prayers of the week of Passion and

Sinyxaruim and many other important books into several vernaculars such as Kikarnba, Kikuyu, Kiluya and Luo. (By the year 1994, 42 Prayer Books have been produced).

## **I AM A BISHOP, I AM AN ARCH-BISHIOP, I AM A PATRIARCH, I AM THE POPE OF AFRICA!!!???**

### **SELF- MADE LEADERS**

The long hours that the Father spent at his residence with Mr. Joshua Kiarie (claiming to be Arch-Bishop) to translate the Liturgy of St. Basil into Kiswahili were a good change to know more about the African Church leaders.

Very interesting and entertaining talks were held to discover the African Independent Churches and their leaders who give themselves such titles and ranks which are all self-given.

Someone calls himself “His Holiness The Pope Of Africa”, another “The Apostle”, or “Prophet”, “The Most Elder Apostle”, or “The Most Vigilant Shepherd” “His Eminence”, “The Spiritual Chief”. Who ordained such leaders, who gave them such ranks, positions or titles?

They made themselves, but the followers encouraged them and supported them, and made from them leaders as they followed them.

Do they not have any Apostolic succession or laying of the hands, no ordination ceremonies?

No, the people gather and debate the matter and decide who will be their leader and what title they would give him Bishop, or Archbishop, Patriarch ... Then the people would stand in two rows, facing each other at a distance of one meter. Then they would raise their hands upwards. The candidate passes under their raised hands while they repeat “... *So and So Bishop*” or “*So and So Patriarch*”. When he emerges at the other end of the two rows, he becomes a Bishop or a Patriarch. Then they sing, clap their hands, dance, say spontaneous prayers, preach and speak. Such are their rituals of ordination!

The Father asked the Archbishop “*Have you been ordained in such a manner?*“ “*No ... While praying at home in the early hours of the morning, I heard a voice saying “Wake up and go and call among the people, saying ‘I am an Archbishop’. I took it from Heaven .”*

“*Do you think that such an ordination is valid? There are no witnesses to anything of what you claim is a voice from Heaven!*“

“*There are no witnesses, but once I told the people about it, they accepted me and they addressed me as Archbishop and dealt with me accordingly*”.

“*Are there any Bishops or Priests under your leadership?*”

“ *...No, that does not matter. I am an Archbishop. That is all’.*

The Monk prayed to God, asking for wisdom to be able to convince such man that the smallest deaconship rank in the Apostolic Church is much greater than the biggest false title that he can give himself or which is given to him by the people without Apostolic Ordination and laying of hands.

### **THE HOLY CHURCH OF EVANGELISTIC APOSTOLIC FAITH**

The Monk asked: “*Do you have people, churches, followers? Do you have any priests whom you*



*ordained?”*

He answered: *“I have churches in Ukambani, which were recorded in the name of ‘The Holy Church of Evangelistic Apostolic Faith’”*.

The Monk said:” The Coptic Orthodox Church is truly the Holy Church and its faith is biblical and because it was established by St. Mark the Evangelist and Apostle, so it is also an Apostolic Church. Then ... our Churches are very similar”.

The Archbishop said: *“It is so, but we are one”*. And the Monk rejoiced at such a comment and asked if he could visit those churches to be introduced to them and the Arch-Bishop welcomed the Monk. And he added that he would inform the church committee and the people and he would fix the first meeting with them.

### **WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO WORK AMONG US. WE WOULD APPLY FOR YOUR WORK PERMIT FOR YEARS**

The Monk also received many other invitations from groups of African Church leaders. They introduced themselves as Rev. Kassasa, Rev. Cherago and Rev. Dr. Otchwata and they asked the Monk to visit their churches and people to serve them. (Latee the Monk discovered that they had neither peoples nor churches). They added that they wanted to follow the Coptic Church.

The Monk met with them several times, while they repeatedly asked how he obtained work permits in Kenya, and to what Church he belonged, as the Coptic Church was not yet registered? The Monk did not want to give them details about his private affairs, but he used to say: *“I have a work permit to serve the Egyptian Copts for one year”*.

They repeatedly offered him all necessary help and documents to apply for a work permit to work with their church. Such a repeated offer was a surprise for the Monk, but he left the whole matter in the hand of the Lord.

He travelled with them to remote areas, where he found very poorly built mud houses and almost no people. Then they requested to accompany him in his trips to Nyanza and Maseno. The Monk accepted their company, knowing that such contacts and gatherings were good in making many discoveries in all the surroundings and the fields of the Mission.

### **THE SECOND VISIT TO THE EQUATOR AREA**

One week after the Monk’s return to Nairobi, on 18 March 1976, he traveled again to the area. On this trip his car was full of the African Church leaders, who told him: *“Because you are African, and we are convinced of your relations with us through the link of blood and water as you taught us, we are going to cooperate with you if you understand our aims...!”* The Monk asked what their aims were. *“You are going to know them at the proper time. The most important thing is that you should be able to pay all that would be requested from you”*.

### **THE LORD IS MY HELPER**

**I WILL NOT FEAR. WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME? (Hebrews 13:6)**



*THE YOUTH OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF EVANGELISTIC APOSTOLIC FAITH.  
UJAMBANI, KENYA 1976.*



*THE CHURCH FROM INSIDE WITH MR J.J. NQUKA FROM LESOTHO.  
KINYUI, UKAMBANI 1978.*



*THE BISHOP WITH THE CHURCH ELDERS AND SELF-CLAIMED ARCHBISHOP JOSHWA KIARIE. UKAMBANI, 1977.*



*THE WOODEN CHURCH WITH THE COPTIC MONKS.  
VISITORS FROM EGYPT, ETHIOPIA, LESOTHO, AND THE CHURCH ELDERS.  
1978*

## WHO ARE THEY? WHERE ARE THE KENYAN COPTS? AND HOW DO THEY WORSHIP?

The Coptic Monk was driving his car on a very mountainous and curving road and for long distances the road was unpaved or broken. The potholes were disturbing his back too much, due to his disc problem, from which he had been suffering since 1965. Whilst he drove the car, the African Church leaders were speaking about their aims and requests. The Monk's thoughts would go to the Kenyan Copts, about whom he had heard that they were present in the area of Lake Victoria and particularly in Kisumu, the capital of the Nyanza province.

He was asking himself: *"Who are they? Are they after benefits and material gains, like the African Orthodox? Where are they and how can we reach them?"* He sought God's guidance.

Here he was going once more to the area and his mind was busy as to how to find them. He wished to be introduced to them and their leaders, so that he may experience by himself how they worshipped. What he had heard about them from the late Bishop Samuel, had raised much eagerness in his heart to serve them, because they had requested to know the true Coptic Orthodox Church. The guide to that area was Mr. Arthur Litu (a friend of the late Bishop Samuel) who had visited Egypt and informed the Church about the presence of the Kenyan Copts.

Bishop Samuel gave the Monk Mr. Litu's telephone number. Once the Monk arrived in Kisumu, he tried to telephone him, but out of the phone only came strange musical sounds. He kept trying to find the printing shop of Mr. Litu, but he could not find it. Then he asked someone, who informed him that the phone numbers had been changed a short while ago.



*MR. LITU AND HIS FAMILY WITH THE BISHOP  
AT HIS MARAGOLI RESIDENCE*

Mr. Litu received the Monk with a very warm welcome, telling him about his memories when in



Egypt, his great appreciation and love for His Holiness Pope Shenouda, and his great admiration for the most ancient African Apostolic Church. The Monk knew that Mr. Litu was a follower of a church called “*Friends*” or Quakers. It had been established in Kenya through a mission from America, while it originated in England through the family of Quakers who made and sold products of oats, named “The Quaker Oats”.

### **VISIT TO THE HOLY GHOST COPTIC CHURCH**

Our friend, Mr. Arthur Litu, left his printing press and bookshop and very willingly drove his car, taking the Monk with him, to visit the Kenyan Coptic Church on the road to Kakamega, very near to Kisumu.

It was around 10:00am on Friday 2 April 1976 when they arrived at the gate. Some young men came to open it. On the right side of the gate was a sign saying “*The New Coptic Home*”. They also noticed a big sign, fixed on the main road on which was written

<p>The Holy Ghost <b>COPTIC CHURCH</b> 20th Century <b>Mission of Saint Philip</b> Dela Neri</p>
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It was evident that the founder of this church in Kenya had obtained the name “*Coptic*” from Egypt in some way or other.

In time it was discovered that he had bought the name from a member of the Kenyan Liberation Front who struggled for the liberation of Kenya in 1963. At that time President Naser used to receive, shelter and encourage all the independence movements in the continent. So he hosted in Egypt many of the Kenyans who carried with them the name of the Coptic Church on their return to their country. One of them sold that name to the founder of the church, who was trying to register his African Independent Church and was searching for an attractive, famous name in the continent and the world. Once he had bought that name, he added to it “*The Holy Ghost*” and the “*20th Century*” and the name of St. Philip from Neri. This portion is not understood and does not have any meaning as nobody could interpret it.

### **THE FIRST MEETING WITH THE CHURCH LEADER (HIS HOLINESS)**

The gate was opened and they parked the car and walked in a wide field which contained a few simple buildings surrounded by green gardens. “They met a young Kenyan man of a huge, fat build, dressed in fair colored pajamas whilst walking barefoot. He spoke to them in Kiswahili, welcoming them Then he asked their names and from where they had come. He started to dance, showing great joy, when knowing Mr. Arthur Litu. Then he welcomed the Priest from Egypt, saying: “*It is a miracle to receive a Coptic Monk from Egypt*”. Then he introduced himself as “*His Holiness the Pope of Africa, Father...*”.



*PHOTO OF THE SIGN – BOARD OF THE COPTIC KENYAN CHURCH AS SEEN BY FATHER ANTONIOUS IN APRIL, 1976. HOWEVER THIS SIGN – BORAD HAS BEEN CHANGED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 1986 WHEN THE WORD COPTIC WAS OFFICIALLY OMITTED AND REPLACED BY THE WORD “HERMETIC”.*



*THE ENTRANCE OF THE NEW “COPTIC” HOME AS SEEN IN THE SEVENTIES. IT WAS*



*THE FALSE FATHER, HEAD OF THE CHURCH, RAISING  
INCENSE.*



*I MUST TAKE THE BISHOP'S CROSS STICK AND HEADGEAR.  
THE FALSE FATHER IN HIS PRIESTHOOD CLOTHES AND  
BEHIND HIM THE BISHOP.*

### *CHANGED TO BE HERMETIC HOME.*

He then said: *“Forgive me for meeting you in pajamas, but I did not know that you would be coming to visit us at this time. I work little, pray little and preach little. I ask you to excuse me so that I can go and change my clothes. I have so much to tell you. I want to talk to you about too many things, without end Oh, Oh! I cannot believe that we have here a Father from the Copts of Egypt”*. Then he knelt and put his palms close to each other and on his chest and he fixed his eyes upwards and said in a very soft voice *“Bless me Father. Bless me”*. The Monk put his cross on his head and he prayed to God, saying: *“O Lord, please work in this heart and this mind, so that he may be Your disciple and learn the true Coptic Church and may lead the people towards You and may become a blessing for many everywhere”*.

Once the Monk had finished the prayer, he gave him the cross to kiss. But the *“Holy Father”* licked the cross with his tongue and then he licked the hand of the Father. The Monk was surprised and retreated. But Mr. Litu understood the feeling in the heart of the Monk.

Then the *“Holy Father”* ran, whilst saying: *“Five minutes ... Ten minutes only. I shall change my dress and come back to you. Now, immediately, without delay, now, now!”* Then he disappeared in one of the nearby buildings.

They sat on wooden benches in the shade. Time passed while they were talking ... They waited much longer than was expected. One hour, then two and more. Mr. Litu started to get restless because the time for the lunch break closing of the shop was at hand and his workers should be sent off for their lunch.

Mr. Litu started to walk around the place, looking for somebody to give him permission to leave. At last he found a young man at the gate, but the guard refused to open the gate without receiving an order from the *“Holy Father”*. Mr. Litu tried to convince him to call on the *“Holy Father”* who delayed so much. But the man answered very quietly : *“I cannot draw near the residence of the Holy Father. You will have to wait for him. He should come, whatever the delay”*. Mr. Litu felt very distressed at such undue imprisonment. The Monk asked his pardon for the delay, which was because of the Church’s affairs, but Mr. Litu answered politely: *“It is not your fault. I know my people, many of them do not know the value of time”*.

The Monk proposed that they pray together, to find a solution. Ten minutes later the *“Holy Father”* appeared suddenly, arrayed with much decorated golden robes of more or less Catholic style, while holding a large metal cross which, with great pomp, he put on the Monk’s mouth to kiss, and the Monk kissed the cross willingly.

### **YOU MUST ATTEND TOMORROW’S SERVICE WITH US. THIS IS NOT A REQUEST BUT AN ORDER**

Mr. Litu also kissed the cross and insisted that they should leave immediately, due to much delay. The *“Holy Father”* tried by all means to stop them, but Mr. Litu insisted strongly that they leave immediately.

The *“Holy Father”* permitted them to leave on condition that they should attend the service to be conducted on Saturday, in the house of the area chief where he will pray the liturgy to consecrate the daughter of the chief.



Mr. Litu was trying to recall if the next day's programme would allow him to attend or not. But the "Holy Father" said, *"To be here both of you tomorrow is not a request but an order. You have to abide by it without hesitation"*. And he added, *"The Holy Father says something, it must be done. If you have any appointments tomorrow, you should cancel them, so you and the Father should come"*.

Then he addressed the Monk, saying *"I am also a monk like you ...I did not marry because I am a Pope"*.

The guard had to ask for permission from the "Holy Father" before he opened the gate. Once they reached the road, Mr. Litu sighed deeply, saying: *"I wonder what will happen tomorrow if we attend his service?"* The Father offered to come alone, as he knew the direction. But Mr. Litu said, *"No, I should not leave you alone with those people. We do not know their intentions. I shall adjust my time to accompany you at 10:00 am tomorrow as arranged"*.

### **IN THE HOUSE OF THE CHIEF, VERY LONG WAITING FOLLOWED BY A (COPTIC) KENYAN LITURGY**

On the appointed time they drove the Church car to the new Coptic home. It was Saturday, 3 April 1976.

They were told that the service had been delayed due to their late arrival. Then they were directed to the house of the chief, where a shed had been erected in one corner of the garden.

The shed was made of very primitive material, and under it was a table, carrying all the Altar utensils and equipments.

The sun's heat was very strong and the shed was too small to give any shade. They had to keep moving to escape the heat of the sun, while their waiting again was too long, although they were repeatedly told that the service would start soon, when *"His Holiness"* would arrive. But his arrival was late and the heat was increasing.

At long last, at 2:00pm, the "Holy Father" appeared in a big procession, dressed in golden robes, like a Roman Pope. He was accompanied by his bishops and priests, walking to the beats of drums and large cymbals.

He started the Liturgy prayer in which he used several languages, saying many sentences in Latin 'Cyclom, cyclorum' He spoke mainly Luo and Kiswahili.

It was evident that the Catholic style had affected him very much. The way the Altar was arranged, the way of signing the cross, the way of raising the incense, the huge Liturgy book put on a brass lectern.

The prayer was very irregular, part from here and part from there.

### **HOLY COPT: A REPEATED SLOGAN**

During the course of the prayer, the leader would interrupt himself every now and then to cry *"Holy Copt"*. Then all would answer in a loud voice, raising the right index in the air *"Coptic"*. This was repeated three times, and then he would continue the prayer.

The young women of the church were beating big drums in a regular beat. When the drumming started, the ladies dressed in white started to dance, clapping their hands, while trilling their tongues in what was known among them as “*Gala Gala*”.

Once the singing and dancing reached their peak, the leader would cry “*Gala Gala ... Holy Copt... Coptic*”.



*THE FALSE NUNS, THE WIVES OF THE CLAMED HOLY FATHER*

The real prayer did not take more than a few minutes. The rest was bells, drums, and singing. Then they received communion. The leader drank the whole chalice. Then suddenly they asked the Monk to deliver a speech, having been presented as a priest who came from the Coptic Church in Egypt.

### **ST. MARK THE AFRICAN APOSTLE WAS THE SUBJECT OF THE SPEECH**

There were gathered three hundred or more people.

The speech was about St. Mark, his life’s history, his mission, the Church which he established in the land of Africa, his main titles Saint, Evangelist, Pure, Martyr and Beholder of the Lord.

The speech was interpreted sentence by sentence by one of the (at that time) Archbishops who was a highly educated man and who was working in an important post in one of the larger companies in Nairobi (we shall talk about that man later).

The Monk repeated with them the titles of St. Mark, the Apostle, until the people knew it by heart. He also told them about the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt, as well as about the visit of the early Patriarchs to Egypt, such as Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and the twelve Tribes of Israel, Joseph, who became ruler of Egypt, Moses, who was born and educated in Egypt and Jeremiah the Prophet, who died in Egypt.

The “*Holy Father*” was sitting, listening attentively without any interruption. The Monk learned later that he was trying to gather all such information in order to use it in showing his knowledge and abilities.

After the speech was finished, the “*Holy Father*” stood up to welcome the Monk as the messenger of His Holiness Pope Shenouda and the Egyptian Coptic Church. Then he asked the Monk to bless the people one by one.

Each of them came to kneel and put his palms on his chest. The Monk would put his cross on the head of each and ask God’s blessings for him.

The chief then asked for his home to be blessed. The Monk welcomed this and they prayed over water and sprinkled the house with it.

The service was finished after 6:00pm. Then they were invited to eat their lunch. At that time they were greatly exhausted and only wished to go and rest at home. But the “*Holy Father*” insisted that they should return to the Coptic home. They tried by all means to postpone such visits to a later time, but he insisted, saying, “*This is no request, it is an order. You are a Monk and I am the Holy Father. You have to obey*”.

### **TO EGYPT SEND ME TO BE ORDAINED PATRIARCH ON KENYA AND AFRICA**

Once they reached the house, the “*Holy Father*” asked the Monk to bless the “*Coptic home*”. The Monk sprinkled the place with water and blessed it by the sign of the cross. But the “*Holy Father*” desired something else. He wanted to have a private talk with the Monk. He therefore took him into a corner of the garden. There he told the Monk eagerly “*I have chosen the life of celibacy. I am not married*”. He claimed that he was a patriarch of the Coptic Church in Kenya and all Africa and he claimed that he had many followers in many countries of the world. (The Monk later learned that the “*Holy Father*” not only was not celibate, but had eight wives).

The Monk said to him “Before we speak about the Patriarchate, you have to correct many things to become a true Coptic Orthodox in Dogma!”

The “*Holy Father*” said “*I am a Coptic Orthodox!*”.

“*But the service which you conducted today is Roman Catholic in style*”.

“*You should not put obstacles and create differences*”.

“*Should there not be a period of education, learning and discipline in Orthodoxy as concerns history, theology and Dogma?*”

“*Yes, maybe, it is possible, but it should be short and secret...*”

“*There is no objection that it should be confidential, but we should not limit the time, as it should be complete*”.

“*I know so much through the Holy Spirit. I do not need anybody to teach me, because I am ‘Holy Father’, in Kiswahili ‘Baba Mtakaifu’*”.

“*Can you explain to me why you lift one finger and say ‘Holy Copt’?*”

“*Because we believe in the one nature ‘monophysite’*”

“*What does that mean?*”

“*We do not know, but it is the Monophysite Religion ... We should have enough time to learn about it in detail, ... when you are sending me to Egypt to be ordained as Patriarch!*”

“*Give me time, we should have lengthy discussions on many issues!*”

“*I do not like discussions, only immediate action ... buy me an air ticket and give me a letter to Pope Shenouda. I should travel immediately, yes, yes!*”

“*I am very tired I need to rest now. We can resume later*”.

“*No, No ... You cannot go now, without giving me a promise to do what I desire I*”

Silence.

The Monk prayed deeply to God to save him ... but the “*Holy Father*” started to use his hand to press the arm of the Monk, saying

“*Say Yes ... Am I going to travel tomorrow, next week... You are going to arrange my travel to Egypt soon ... Will you?*”

The Monk prayed to God to save him from this situation. The Lord responded by the sudden appearance of Mr. Litu, who came to say that it was now 800pm and that they should be allowed

to go to rest as they had arrived before midday. Mr. Litu repeated firmly that this was not the last time that they would come, that they would come again. He did not give the "*Holy Father*;" any chance to object, but took the Monk's hand and started to walk towards the car. The "*Holy Father*" followed them, asking them to come back the next morning, on Sunday.

They left the place exhausted, due to the heat of the day and the long stay.

Mr. Litu enquired as to what language they had been using to communicate. The Monk answered that the "*Holy Father*" did not speak much English and that they had been talking in Kiswahili.

On Sunday the Monk conducted the service with the Orthodox Africans in Maseno and returned to Nairobi on Monday.

## **THE LORD AT HAND**

**BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING. BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKS GIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS (Phil 4:5-7)**

The Monk arrived in Nairobi very tired, after driving the car for more than seven hours. He passed by the Post Office and found an official letter from the Kenyan Government.

Eagerly he opened the envelope to know what it contained and found a letter from the Department of Immigration, warning him that his work permit, obtained through the Egyptian Embassy to serve the Coptic Egyptians in Kenya, was cancelled.

Accordingly, he should apply for another permit through the African Churches whom he served. Otherwise he would have to leave the country in two weeks time.

This was a great shock. The Monk felt that he could not think of anything to do but to seek God's guidance.

*"You are near, O Lord, I should not worry or entertain conflicting thoughts in my mind. Everything is in Your hands, O Lord, and according to Your will".*

The Monk arrived at home, took care of his luggage and closed the door to kneel and pray *"Your will, O Lord, brought me here for the sake of Your service if it is Your will that I should return to my monastery, show me Your will. If it is Your will that I continue here, show Yourself and Your power"*. The Monk continued in deep prayers and was disturbed only by the ringing of the telephone. He continued praying, but the telephone kept ringing persistently, which gave him the feeling that it might be an important matter.

On the phone were the leaders of the African Independent Churches, saying that the Church Committee had decided to apply for his work permit through their registration.

The Monk glorified God with all his senses and felt a great power invading him for the quick response to his prayers. *"Yes indeed, O Lord, You are near, so very near"*.

He accepted the offer of the African Churches, trying to persuade them to meet the next day, but they insisted on meeting him immediately in town, with the official papers.

In a coffee shop in town they completed the necessary forms and presented the application for a new work permit the same day.

### **THE MONK OBTAINS A WORK PERMIT THROUGH THE AFRICAN CHURCHES**

A few days later the Monk received a work permit valid for five years, and his passport was

stamped, cancelling the one year permit obtained through the Egyptian Embassy. He felt that the Divine hand had opened for him a way in spite of many obstacles.

### **WE WANT YOU TO WORK AS A MEDICAL DOCTOR**

The leaders of the African Independent Churches asked the Monk to accompany them to a private hospital in downtown Nairobi, for a visit. There they introduced him to the owner of the private hospital, who welcomed the Monk warmly and with great respect. Then they took him on a tour of the hospital.

Then, in the management office, they offered him a job as resident doctor of the hospital, offering him a monthly salary on the basis of their knowing him to be a qualified doctor with long experience.

*“Yes, but now I am serving the Gospel and the Word of God I have entered the monastic life and thus I have given all my life to the Lord and I have abandoned my assignment for His sake. I do not want job or salary or money, but only one thing, which is the expansion of God’s kingdom”.*

*“But you must serve the Kenyan people with all your abilities...”*

*“There is no harm in helping the people medically but as an act of love and mercy (as a charity service) and according to availability and time and not for material gain”.*

*“We want you to work and we take the salary for the Church’s needs!”*

*“But I do not have the time to give all my time and energy to medical work!”*

They started to use pressure, by threatening to withdraw the work permit. He should submit to their wishes and agree with all their requests, because now he is considered to be seconded by the Coptic Church of Egypt to work with them. He tried to clarify his position as a Monk and Servant of God, saying that there were so many who were working in medicine, but that there were few who were working in the spiritual field.

### **THEREFORE PRAY THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABOURERS INTO HIS HARVEST (Like 10:2)**

### **THREATS AND A CHASE BY THE MEN OF THE AFRICAN CHURCHES**

The Church leaders were not convinced that a Father could not be a source of income for them and a good investment. They started to chase him by all ways and means, by telephone and letters. They tried to obtain the address of his residence, but he refused disclosing it to avoid their pressures and harassment.

### **LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR EDIFICATION (1 Cor. 14:26)**

In the early Church, during the time of the Apostles, the greatest concern of the Evangelists and Apostles was to edify the souls on the basis of faith, doctrine and the Word of God. They were not occupied with where they were gathering to edify one another: it could be in caves, graveyards, houses, under the shade of a tree or on the seashore. When the group of faithful was built in faith and spirituality, they shared, contributed, worked and laboured to build the churches and cathedrals everywhere. Then *“Where should we start”? What is the correct approach?”*

### **AND THIS I PRAY THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND STILL MORE AND MORE IN KNOWLEDGE AND ALL DISCERNMENT. THAT YOU MAY APPROVE THE**

**THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT, THAT YOU MAY BE SINCERE AND WITHOUT OFFENCE TILL THE DAY OF CHRIST ... BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH ARE BY JESUS CHRIST, TO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD. (Phil. 1: 9-12)**

The eagerness of the leaders and men of the African Churches to meet the Coptic Monk was very clear. But when they talked to him and presented their requests and wishes, one discovered that they were after bodily and material things like money, fame, titles, authority, leadership and prestige.

Few of them were after knowledge, spiritual matters, salvation of the soul and finding the Lord.

There were many differences among them and within them. They needed much spiritual work for the perfection of the spirit, for the building up of the body of Christ that is the Church's purpose.

The perplexity in the heart of the Monk was increasing. He met with them. From the Lord he was seeking the means through which he could find an effective way to lead them to their unity in faith and mind to make their aim towards the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth.

What St. Paul wrote to the people of Philippi had a special resonance in the heart of the Monk, as he found great similarity to his own conditions of service. The epistle gave him inspiration and opened a way for him.

### **INVITING THE AFRICAN CHURCHES LEADERS FOR A GENERAL MEETING IN NAIROBI**

The Pomwani (a district of Nairobi) social hall filled on the afternoon of Saturday 10 April 1976 with more than two hundred leaders from many churches.

Everyone had the ambition to hear what he wanted.

*The Monk delivered a speech in which he said: "In the first three months of my stay in Kenya I found a true thirst towards the Apostolic teaching of the Coptic Church. Among us there are now three churches that believe in the commendations of the late Archbishop Danial William, Alexander, who instructed you openly to follow the Dogmas of the Church of Alexandria. I also found the same thing mentioned in the constitution of one of the African Churches amongst us now. It is also to be mentioned that one Kenyan African Independent Church has given itself the title of the 'Holy Ghost Coptic Church'. All that shows that we are responsible for making a unified effort to satisfy such needs.*

*We have to work all together, without divisions. Our main aim is to establish a theological institution for East Africa which can offer the spiritual teachings of the original Apostolic Ancient Church to the church leaders and young men.*

*The Coptic Church has a long and ancient history, reaching back almost two thousand years, since its establishment by St. Mark and the establishment of the Theological School of Alexandria that is still functioning in our times.*

*The Coptic Church is the Mother Church in Africa and we are very willing to extend to you all our fatherly love and pastoral care to help you in preparing future leaders, servants and deacons*

*to serve your congregations and people”.*

Once the Monk had finished his speech, many requested to speak and express their feelings about what the Monk had said. Someone said that he had a doctorate in theology, another that he was able to lecture because he was a prophet. Someone else said that he should be assigned to the management of the college because he was qualified, able and experienced. The fourth one stood up to ask that he should be given the right to select the students who should study in college; he added that, after their studies, the Coptic Church should send them abroad for completing their studies elsewhere.

The religious brokers were also present at the meeting in a great number. They asked the Monk to prepare the payrolls and letters of assignment immediately.

The meeting had to be terminated when two men started to fight with each other, as one of them stood up and attacked the leadership of the others church.

The Monk controlled the situation by terminating the meeting with prayer and then called it off.

### **THREATENING LETTERS FROM AN ADVOCATE IN NAIROBI**

Pressure from the African Churches leaders on the Monk were increasing steadily. Their telephone calls became very frequent, asking to meet him because they wanted money. Others wanted to offer him another type of hospital or medical work, thinking that the first hospital he had visited was not to his liking.

With a big effort the Monk tried to explain that the matter was not about a certain hospital or medical work, but about spiritual service, mission, theological education and the Bible. He told them that we need to live the Bible and proclaim it.

He felt it might be good to write to them a lengthy letter, explaining his ministry: **FOR WE DO NOT PREACH OURSELVES, BUT CHRIST JESUS THE LORD AND OURSELVES, BOND-SERVANTS FOR JESUS' SAKE. FOR IT IS GOD WHO COMMANDED LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS, WHO HAS SHONE IN OUR HEARTS TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST (2 Cor. 4:5-6)**

Once he had sent the letter off, he started to put the matter into prayers that the Lord may open the eyes of their minds to long for the Gospel and to respond to his spiritual cause.

One week later he received a registered letter from a Kenyan advocate, instructing him to obey the Church commands and that he should accept the assignment into a medical job. Otherwise they would be forced to cancel his work permit and he should be deported from Kenya without delay.

This letter caused the Monk some concern, but he sought God's comfort and guidance.

### **A LETTER OF SUMMONS TO STAND IN FRONT OF THE COURT**

The next day the Monk found another registered letter of summons to stand in front of the Court in Nairobi on a certain date and time.



At the first glance he thought that this was another kind of pressure from the Church leaders, but when he had read the letter attentively, he discovered that it was from the Traffic Court...?

For a traffic offence he had to stand in front of the Court. They wanted him to plead guilty and be fined, but he insisted on meeting the judge and explaining the situation. When he was asked if he was guilty, he answered *“Not intentionally and unknowingly. Whilst I am new in Nairobi, I may have made a mistake which I shall not repeat again”*.

He was acquitted as innocent.

### **TEACHING AN INTENSIVE COURSE TO THE PASTORS OF THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT PENTECOSTAL CHURCH**

The Monk received a surprise visit from a Parliament Member who came to ask if the Coptic Church had decided to finance projects of building primary and secondary schools for the African Independent Pentecostal Church. The Monk answered that such projects needed several international organisations to finance them and he asked, *“Why should we not begin with the spiritual ecclesiastical way? Why should you not try to convince the Archbishop Kahihya of that?”* The Parliament Member answered *“The whole Church Administration Board is agreed to give you the chance to teach and train the pastors and deacons of the Church, but the Bishops refuse that we should help you and protect you until you complete your great responsibility which we appreciate so much”*.

*He added, “We have organised that you should start next week at Kinyoho” (a small village about 55km in the east of Nairobi,).*

*The Coptic Monk started to give an intensive course to fifty-two pastors of the Church who were gathered from the nearby districts and attended the lectures regularly and with enthusiasm.*

*The Monk used to drive there every morning, to return in the late afternoon.*

He felt great comfort in the enthusiastic response of the pastors to the teachings of the Apostolic Orthodox Church.

He continued to teach five days every week, for several weeks, until the start of the week of Passion.

### **CELEBRATING THE WEEK OF PASSION WITH THE COPTIC FAMILIES IN NAIROBI**

The Kenyan Copts, who were baptised, did not know anything yet about the week of Passion. As the Coptic families were very busy in their jobs and schools, there was no time for them to attend morning services of the week of Passion. So the Monk had the chance to continue teaching his courses at Kinyoho in the morning, while conducting the week of Passion prayers in the evenings at one of the homes of the Coptic families.

The Monk conducted the Covenant Thursday Liturgy for the Water and the Holy Communion in one of the Coptic homes. Attendance was very poor and it was very difficult for the Monk to conduct such rich and lengthy prayers with the help of one deacon only, but they felt the comfort

and spirituality of the tunes and the readings of the week of Passion.

On the great Friday, they gathered at noon in the home of Mr. Wahib El-Minyawi (who was the Counsellor of the Egyptian Embassy in Nairobi). They continued the prayers until the evening hours, while fasting.

The celebration of the Feast of Resurrection of the Lord (Easter) was attended by all the Egyptians and the Ethiopians and it was conducted in the small chapel in the residence of the Anglican Archbishop. To the Monk's surprise, the Act of Resurrection was admired by many of the Copts, who attended it for the first time in their lives. The deep spiritual meaning of the Feast of Resurrection was admired by all who are strangers in a foreign land, away from home.

## **THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF KENYA OFFERS RESCUE**

**BECAUSE HE HAS SET HIS LOVE UPON ME, THEREFORE I WILL DELIVER HIM. I WILL SET HIM HIGH, BECAUSE HE HAS KNOWN MY NAME ... HE SHALL CALL UPON ME AND I WILL ANSWER HIM, I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE, I WILL DELIVER HIM AND HONOUR HIM. WITH LONG LIFE I WILL SATISFY HIM AND SHOW HIM MY SALVATION.** (Psalm 91:14-16)

After Easter 1976 the pressures and atrocities from the African Church leaders became too much, although the Monk had many meetings with the advocates and the hospital owners. But they never ceased to renew their threats by telephone and letter, that the'~ were going to terminate the Monk's work permit.

The Monk's heart was pleading to God: *"You are with me in the time of difficulty I trust that you are behind the cloud. I shall see your salvation soon"*.

Truly, truly, his salvation was at hand: a few days after Easter the Monk received a telephone call from the Secretary of the National Christian Council of Churches in Kenya (N.C.C.K.). The Secretary had just arrived from Cairo, where he and his wife had been guests of the Coptic Church and Bishop Samuel. He mentioned that Bishop Samuel was worried about the threats of those African church leaders and he relied on the Secretary to help solving this problem.

Within a few days a new work permit was issued through the N.C.C.K. for one year, and the one obtained through the African Church was cancelled.

The Monk was contemplating the ways of the Lord: how he works in marvellous ways to give him freedom to serve without threats, the amazing timing of the visit of the N.C.C.K. Secretary to Cairo and the escape the Lord had given him from the snares of greedy people. Is it not that: **HIS NAME WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.** (Isaiah 9:6)

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTERING THE COPTLC ORTHODOX CHURCH AS AN OFFICIAL BODY WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF KENYA**

Whilst going through such tribulations and threats, the Monk sought a radical solution to save the

church from such shocks and temptations. He was told that to register the Church under the Societies Act was the only way to give her freedom of service and it would also give her the right to apply for work permits for her ministers.

When he enquired about the registration of the Church, he was told that the Kenyan Government had suspended any new registrations. He sought the guidance of Canon Burges Carr, the Secretary General of the All African Conference of Churches (A.A.C.C), who gave the Monk a copy of the Constitution of the A.A.C.C and advised him to see a lawyer. The Monk kept asking where he could seek the registration of the Church, but nobody told him...

### **IT IS TIME FOR ME TO BE A FULL TIME MIRACLE MAKER WHILE YOU SHOULD TAKE OVER MY CHURCH BURDENS**

On Thomas Sunday, the Monk was invited to attend the Sunday service in Nairobi, conducted by the “*Holy Father*” of the “*Holy Ghost Coptic Church of Africa*”.

They were celebrating the dedication of a baby girl. The gathering was in a social hail and they started singing and beating drums. The “*Holy Father*” called on the Monk to walk with him in the garden. There he went on talking about the miracles of healing which he was making every day. The Monk asked him many questions to explore the powers that the “*Holy Father*” claimed for making such miracles. The “*Holy Father*” claimed that his Holy Spirit was making such miracles.

The service started at 11:00am and continued until midnight. They kept drumming and singing hour after hour. The Monk suggested that there should be a time of teaching. He was given a chance to speak about St. Mark, but when the “*Holy Father*” noticed how attentive the people were to what the Monk was saying, he suddenly stood up to interrupt him, saying “*Enough, enough. You have spoken too much*”.

The loud singing and drumming going on for hours was too much for the Monk to bear. He finished all the aspirins and analgesics that were in his pocket and he kept reading his Agbia and his New Testament. The drumming did not stop except for an hour, when they shared food.

Several times the Monk tried to leave, but the “*Holy Father*” insisted that he should stay until the end.

The Monk noticed that the “*Holy Father*” had given his orders to the people for their response during the service, such as

Leader “*Peace be with you all*”

All: “*And with your Holy Spirit*”.

The Monk objected to such responses and said to his Bishop that they should tell him that “*Your Holy Spirit*” should be said only to God.

They went to tell the “*Holy Father*”, whilst he was standing beyond the altar, arrayed in very ornamented robes. He shouted at them very loudly, ordering them to do what he told them.

They interpreted the “*Holy Father*” sermon, which proved to be very superficial and attacked other churches bitterly.

The whole experience was painful to the Monk, due to the very lengthy service as well as his

headache and back pains.

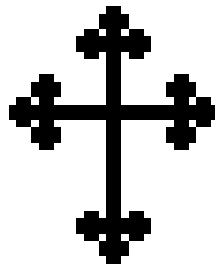
**THE FEELING OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF THE LORD**

Your presence gives my soul joy and on the day of my trouble I call: **IN THE DAY TIME YOU GIVE COMFORT, IN THE NIGHT TIME YOU OBSERVE. YOU ARE MY SALVATION ON ALL SIDES** (Coptic song)

One of the Nairobi Copts, who followed all that was happening to the Monk from threats to troubles, problems and enduring for many hours and days, asked the Monk: *“How can you bear all that?”*

The Monk answered *“the feeling of Lord’s presence at all times gives real support and joy”*.

They sang the well-known Coptic song that gave them comfort and joy and he used to sing it whenever he saw challenges coming. It filled his heart with comfort and peace.



## **A THORN IN THE FLESH**

**(2 COR 12: 7)**

### **IN NAIROBI HOSPITAL FOR AN OPERATION TO REMOVE A PROLAPSED DISC FROM THE SPINE**

Driving the car every day on bumpy roads, as well as frequent traveling since he started working in Ethiopia in 1966, had provoked disc pains that caused much pressure on the nerves of the left lower limb. This had caused much pain, starting in 1965, when the Monk experienced his first prolepse, when, on his way to the Saint Bishoy Monastery, he tried to lift the car that was stuck in the sand.

But in Nairobi, in May 1976, the attack was acute and severe. It appeared suddenly, in one early morning. The Monk tried to treat it by complete bed rest and analgesics. But that was impossible, as he was living alone and had to open the door for visitors and to answer telephone calls. The pains were so severe that he had to inject himself intravenously with strong analgesics, repeating the injections every few hours.

This continued for three full days, until the Monk could feel that the muscles in his left foot weakened and some serious action had to be taken without delay.

The few Coptic families in Nairobi were caring for him as much as they could, and so he was transported to Nairobi hospital, where a British surgeon, Dr. David Stuart, examined him.

When the surgeon learned that his patient was a surgeon himself, they started to discuss the case. It was agreed that an operation should be done as soon as possible. Dr. Stuart proposed to operate two days later, but the Monk proposed to do it the next day. The surgeon smiled and said *“You do not fear surgery. We shall try tomorrow”*.

### **HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III GIVES UTMOST CARE AND LOVE TO HIS SON, THE SICK MONK**

Only a few days after His Holiness had been informed about the operation, which had taken place on 18 May 1976, arrived in Nairobi His Grace Bishop Bakhomious (now H.E. Metropolitan Bakhomious of Bahira and the Pentapolis), on 27 May 1976, to visit the Monk, the son of the Church, who was sick in a foreign land.

It was 6:00 am when the telephone rang in the residence of the Monk. He heard the voice of His Grace the Bishop on the telephone, enquiring about his health.

The Monk thought that His Grace was in transit for a conference in another African country, but His Grace asked for the address of the Monk's residence, as he had been sent by His Holiness to see to the Monk's safety.

## **HIS GRACE BISHOP BAKLIOMIOUS VISITS THE AREAS OF SERVICES IN KENYA**

His Grace lived in the same residence as the Monk whilst the Monk was on his bed in convalescence. They talked very often about the services of the Mission in Kenya. The Monk explained the visits, meetings and gatherings, as well as the groups of Kenyans whom he taught and had baptised.

His Grace also received many of the Kenyan Church leaders who came to visit the Monk.

The Parliament Member, Mr. Tadeo Mwaura, also spoke to the Bishop about the area of services of the Monk and invited the Bishop to visit them. His Grace accepted the invitation, but the Monk, due to his illness, could not travel with them.

## **LIKE THE LOST SHEEP THAT FOUND ITS SHEPHERD AND THE PRODIGAL SON WHO RETURNED TO HIS FATHER**

The Monk also received the visit of the leaders of the Holy Ghost Coptic Church, and when they learned about the Bishop's presence in Nairobi, they informed the "*Holy Father*", who also came to meet the Bishop.

His Grace the Bishop invited the leaders of the Holy Ghost Coptic Church to attend the Liturgy which he prayed in the small chapel of the Anglican Archbishop on Sunday Morning. The leaders also invited His Grace and the Monk to attend their services on Sunday afternoon in a social hall.

So, the Monk was obliged to drive the Church car and to share in the Liturgy prayers, although it had been only eleven days since his operation.

In the afternoon he also drove to the social hall to attend the services of the "*Holy Father*", although the pains from the operation were severe.

They had to wait until after 5:00 pm when the "*Holy Father*" appeared in a pompous procession, and the service ended only at 7:00 pm.

They then asked for another opportunity to visit His Grace at home, as they had an important matter to discuss. In the residence, the "*Holy Father*" handed to His Grace a written application, seeking affiliation to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

His Grace received their letter in happiness and joy and promised to raise it to His Holiness the Pope, to receive his guidance and instructions.

## **THE MONK TRAVELS TO EGYPT WITH HIS GRACE BISHOP BAKHOMIOUS**

With love and sympathy the Bishop informed the Monk that His Holiness desired the Monk to complete his convalescence in Egypt. His Holiness also wanted to consult with the Monk about the affairs of the services during the first five months in Kenya, which were the first Coptic Church services South of the Equator.

They arrived in Cairo on Friday 4 June 1976, ten days before the Feast of the Pentecost.

When the Monk had been given a room to rest from the back pains and travel fatigue, he had a surprise visit from His Holiness, who is full of love and humility.

His Holiness came to the Monk's room to enquire about his health and also to invite him to meet the Pope in his office whenever he had the chance.

The Holy Ghost Coptic Church  
P. O. Box 73923  
NAIROBI (or P.O.Box 1162, KISUMU)

2nd June 1976

Your Grace Bishop Bakhonius  
Coptic/Orthodox Church  
P. O. Box 55  
Damanhour  
Egypt.

Your Grace,

I greet you in the name of the Lord whom we are on earth to serve.

Following our meeting with you on Saturday the 29th May at Father Antonious's residence it is my inspired desire to confirm all the points we discussed with you in the presence of Father Antonious and senior members of my church.

Before doing that I would like to express my deep gratitude to you for having come all the way to see our dear brother Father Antonious whom we have heartily welcomed to Kenya particularly as one of us in the Holy Ghost Coptic Church of Africa.

During my speech with you, I called you our FATHER and we all knelt down to greet you. I would like to confirm that our church has been like the lost sheep which has now been found by the owner. We have been like a baby without parents - born by the Holy Ghost but we have now found a parent - the Coptic/Orthodox Church of Egypt. I have been meditating all these points in my sleep and rest moments and I have fully decided that our church would like a full affiliation to the Saint Mark Church of Alexandria and we would like to forthwith follow Saint Mark's teachings in all our church services as opposed to the Catholic way we have been using.

These sentiments should be passed on to His Holiness Pope Shinuda through your Grace. As agreed when my time for visiting Egypt comes, I shall be pleased to meet His Holiness and discuss these points with him. In the meantime, we are desirous of urgently changing our service order to that of Coptic Church rather than Catholic one. Here we seek your guidance.

In conclusion, I must thank you for all you have done for us through Father Antonious and praise the most High God for having arranged our meeting with you. Please rest assured that through the help of the Lord Jesus Holy Ghost Coptic Church of Africa is left in your hand (rather church) for guidance and assistance.

May the Lord be with us all and unite us for ever.

Your brother in Christ

Rev. Father John





## **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GENERAL BISHOPRIC FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

In his office, His Holiness listened to a report by the Coptic Monk concerning his experiences with the Kenyan Christians.

His Holiness explained the importance of the establishment of a Bishopric to care for the affairs of the services in Africa. And the presence of a Coptic Bishop, among those who claim to be patriarchs, arch-bishops and bishops, would give a true image of the Coptic Church in the continent of Africa.

The Monk was wondering about that, thinking that His Holiness meant another monk, when His Holiness asked him if he preferred consecration in one of the dioceses of Egypt. The Monk answered *“Your Holiness knows that the Lord has called me to this service in Africa when I was still a student of medicine. And the vision that I saw at the dawn of that day is still bright before my eyes. I cannot resist such a call and the desire which God has put into my heart and I cannot ignore this vision about service in Africa”*.

It was therefore agreed that the Monk should be consecrated as a general Bishop for African Affairs. This was the announcement made by His Holiness during the Monks consecration as Bishop.

### **WITH FATHER MORCOS EL-ASKITY (late)**

On the eve of the Pentecost Rev. Father Morcos El-Askity, the Ugandan Monk arrived in Egypt. He met with His Holiness and His Grace (late) Bishop Samuel. Then he met with the Monk who was to be consecrated Bishop of African Affairs.

Father Morcos asked many questions about the services in Africa and Kenya, what the possibilities were, what was expected of them.

The Coptic Monk invited Father Morcos to come to Africa to serve with him all the people who are eager to establish Coptic Churches among them. As the Father was a Ugandan citizen, born near the borders, he knew well the languages of the people, as well as their habits and the best ways to train them and produce servants from among them.

At that time however Father Morcos El-Askity was studying in North America, and was assigned to be the Pastor of the Coptic Church in Huston, Texas

### **THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES WAS BUILT FROM BASE TO TOP**

The Monk spent several hours trying to convince Father Morcos to leave America and come to his people and his country, as God had given him the talents of monastic life and priesthood and as he knew the local languages. He proposed to Father Morcos to come to work with him and to

follow in the steps of St. Mark who had converted many thousands, out of whom the base of the Church was formed, from which there could be chosen deacons full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to serve the people. Then from such deacons could be chosen those who are qualified and meet the criteria of priesthood according to the conditions of the New Testament, to be ordained into priesthood to serve the deacons and people. And then the Church would be in need of a bishop to oversee the Church's affairs.

And the same can be observed in all the nations where the Coptic Church is to be established. All should be following the See of St. Mark in Alexandria.

The Monk gave Father Morcos the example of the pyramid, which should be started from the base, then the second layer and the third, until it reaches the peak. All that for the sake of the service and the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth. And he told him that the establishment of a General Bishopric of African Affairs opens the way for the establishment of many national churches and bishoprics in many nations of Africa.

### **ALEXANDROS, OR ANTONIUS OR MARKOS**

The name to be given to the new Bishop was discussed - as the Coptic Church was known historically as the Church of Alexandria, it was suggested that he should be called Alexandros. Considering that the establisher of the Church was St. Mark, it was suggested that he should be called Markos.

But the prevailing suggestion was that as the Monk was already known among the Kenyans by the name of "Antonius", it should not be changed, but to add to it the name "Markos", because it is the service of the See of St. Mark.

His Holiness welcomed this name, as it is acceptable to have two names for a bishop. This is indeed well known in the Syrian Orthodox Church; where her Patriarch is always named "Ignatius" and added to this is the name of the Patriarch, as for Mar Ignatius Zakka, their present Patriarch, or Mar Ignatius Jacob, the former Patriarch.

It was therefore agreed that his name should be "Antonius Markos", as St. Mark is the establisher of the Church and St. Antony is the father of all monks, both are witnesses of the Coptic Church in Africa.

The Monk was sharing in all these discussions with a deep feeling of not deserving any of those Saints' names.

### **THE FEAST OF PENTECOST 1976**

On 12 June 1976, at the evening Vespers celebrations, the Monk was led among the Bishops and Monks to Saint Mark Cathedral in Anba-Rewes, Cairo, where the cathedral was full of many different dioceses.

The people gathered to celebrate the consecration of the new Bishops for the dioceses of Minya, Malawi, Samallout, Al-Oksor and Munu Fiyya.

His Holiness declared the consecration of the new Bishops while the multitude was shouting joyfully whenever they heard the new Bishop's name.

However, the new Bishop for Africa had no people as yet. In spite of that the Church was happy about the establishment of a new Bishopric for African Services for the first time in the See of Saint Mark.

This happened in the new era of revival in the Church in the time of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

Such happiness was pure, full of hope in the power of God to give the Church the ability to witness to the Lord in the middle of many people in such a vast continent where we have no foothold.

### **THE STAFF OF AFRICA**

On the day of consecration, June 13 1976, six new Bishops were consecrated with the change of Bishop "Bimen" (late) from a general Bishop to the Bishop of 'Malawi'.

There were consecrated

Bishop Arsanius, Bishop Benjamin, Bishop Amonius, Bishop Bafnotius, Bishop Isaac (a general Bishop) and at last the Bishop for African Services.

During the consecration the Monk felt himself to be too small for such a great responsibility, which is new of its kind and just starting in its abilities.

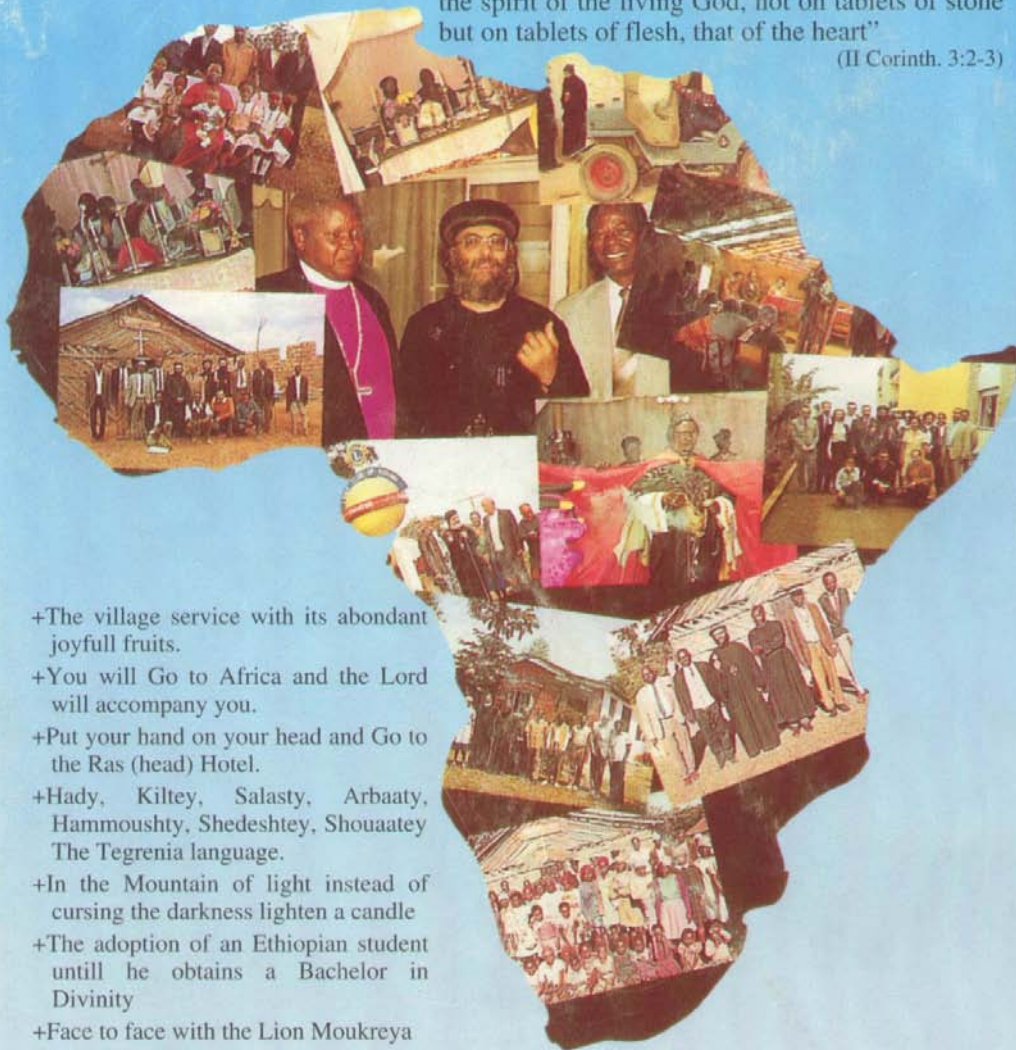
The hours of the consecrations and the Liturgy prayers seemed too long to the Monk, due to his back pains from the operation, only twenty-five days before.

The joy of His Holiness was clear and his enthusiasm was great when he handed over to the new Bishop the Shepherd's Staff, saying in a loud voice *The staff of Africa* ", amidst the shouts and clapping of thousands.



"You are our epistle written in our hearts known and read by all men, clearly you are an epistle of christ ministered by us, written not with ink but by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that of the heart"

(II Corinth. 3:2-3)



- +The village service with its abundant joyfull fruits.
- +You will Go to Africa and the Lord will accompany you.
- +Put your hand on your head and Go to the Ras (head) Hotel.
- +Hady, Kiltey, Salasty, Arbaaty, Hammoushty, Shedeshtey, Shouaatey The Tegrenia language.
- +In the Mountain of light instead of cursing the darkness lighten a candle
- +The adoption of an Ethiopian student untill he obtains a Bachelor in Divinity
- +Face to face with the Lion Moukreya
- +In an Amharic discussion with the Emperor Haile Sellasie.
- +Your services should be suspended,.. it is a revolution.
- +Come across to Kenya ... and help us
- +Egypt and Africa

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