



MONASTICISM

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**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ King of Kings and
Lord of lords**

Icon designed by Dr. Youssef Nassief and Dr. Bedour Latif



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*

COPTIC MONASTICISM

“...leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” (1st Peter 2:21)

Egypt has always been the cradle of monastic life, since the founder of monasticism is St Anthony the great, who is from Upper Egypt.

In Christian life, the effect of monasticism in relation to the church is like the role of the heart in relation to the body. It preserves life.

My dear reader, come with me and enter a wonderful, very colourful garden full of different flowers, of different colours, fragrances and shapes. This garden is monastic life with all its magnificent saints.

Great work has been done by Mark Mikhael, a blessed young man from the Coptic Orthodox Church in Melbourne, Australia.

May the blessings of this angelic monastic life, and of our beloved saints and the prayers of our honourable Patriarch Pope Shenouda III be with us all. Amen.

Yours sincerely,

Fr Daniel Al-Antouny

CONTENTS

WHAT IS MONASTICISM?

BY H.H POPE SHENOUDA III

THE CALL TO MONASTICISM

BY HIS GRACE BISHOP MITTAUS

TYPES OF MONASTICISM

BY H.G. METROPOLITAN ABRAHAM OF JERUSALEM

SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT

SAINT PAKHOMIOS FATHER OF THE COMMUNITY

SAINT MACARIUS THE GREAT

THE ROLE OF COPTIC MONASTICISM IN WORLDWIDE
CIVILIZATION

THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT IN THE COPTIC CHURCH
TODAY

TOUR OF SOME COPTIC MONASTERIES.

PLACES OF THE SAINTS



WHAT IS MONASTICISM?

BY
H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

What is monasticism, as known to our Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church when it was founded and blossomed in the early centuries? Yes, what is the monasticism that attracted many tourists to Egypt so they might be able to see our fathers in the desert and hear a word of wisdom from their mouths. Or they might learn the lessons from their fathers' lives.

*Yes, what is the monasticism that our holy fathers lived and which Bladious, Rofinos, and John Kasian wrote about? And who of the Saint Athanasious explained a version in his book about St. Anthony? **Monasticism is not only a name or belonging to a monastery. It is not the monks dress, or appearance from their kolonsowa (head garment) to their belts.***

Monasticism is a way of life to rid the inner self of materialism. Our fathers have lived angelic lives. It is said that the monks are earthly angels and heavenly humans. They are people who deprive themselves of every thing, live humbly, and in contemplation in its highest level. And they execute the word of the Holy Bible. "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1John 2:15-17).

"When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (John 2:15,17) And this way they rid themselves of all the worldly desires such as money material things, positions, or fame. They leave everything so that God may be their world.

They no longer desire worldly ways or their positions, but they choose poverty exactly like their hero St. Anthony who fulfilled the word of the Bible "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; and come follow Me (Matthew 19:21). So he went and gave away all of his possessions to the needy before he began his monastic life, and he lived as a poor monk in the ascetic life.

It is true that monasticism and wealth are complete opposites which are cannot travel in the same path of life. It is also true that monasticism and luxury do not correlate, because luxury is a easy way of life, to which poor people, other than monks, are not

exposed to. Monks leave the world to live in the desert, mountains, and caves in order to live with God... the God they dedicated their lives to. How deep is the everlasting expression which identifies monasticism. Monasticism is a total withdrawal from every person and every material thing to connect to the One and Only "God", who fills the heart, mind, and time. The monk shall never achieve this spiritual level if he still desires worldly things. Here we remember what Jesus Christ said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42).

The goal of true monasticism is a continuous life filled with prayers. A life of continuous prayer is the main feature of a monk's life, which ordinary people cannot live because of their worldly tasks and interests.

He who begins a monastic life trains himself to a continuous life of prayer. When he succeeds, he then begins a life of isolation, which then helps him in his prayers and contemplation.

This is why monasticism is the life of loneliness. From loneliness, originated the name of the monk. The word in Greek (monakes) means lonely. In French (moine) means a monk. In English...etc.

In loneliness a monk may continue a life of prayer, contemplation, and songs without delay or distraction of any kind.

A true monk escapes people to be with God. This is what St. Arsanious the Great had done. St. Macarius of Alexandria once asked him saying,

*“Father why do you flee from us?” He answered saying, “The Lord knows that I love you all, But I cannot speak with God and people at the same time.’ This is why the spiritual elder in his deep wonderly expression once said, **“The love of God made me a stranger to humans and their ways.”***

***FOUND IN St. ANTHONY’S MONASTERY (IN CALIFORNIA)
MAGAZINE CALLED “MY CHURCH” JULY 1995 EDITION***

THE CALL TO MONASTICISM

BY H.G. BISHOP MITTAUS

By asking some of the Fathers and the monks about the way they were called to monasticism, and by listening to stories about incidents which happen to others, we hereby enumerate the following truths.

One of the Father's told me: "Before I graduated from school, I often had day dreams about marriage, children and the ideal home. But when I graduated, I was not able to find a job, and this was a hard experience for me. I came nearer to the Lord, and asked him for his help in finding a suitable position. I attended church regularly, went to confession and shared in the Holy Communion. Shortly afterwards the Lord answered my prayer and I was appointed in a position I had never dreamed. From this ambiguous details of the appointment, I knew that the hand of the Lord was powerfully working with me. I therefore thanked Him and went to one of the cities, for my new job.

There, I met a colleague, who also served with excellence and was a social leader for the young persons in the town. He showed me the way to service and its methods; I learned from him and devoted myself to the service. He had some tendency towards monasticism. I continued to serve and read many

spiritual books. The thought of chastity started to amplify in my mind; with its importance to the young man, in his service and in the constancy of his strong relationship with the Lord, with no obstacle or hindrance.

The thought of marriage started to evaporate from my mind. My parents persisted in writing to me about marriage, but I postponed the idea. At every holiday, when I went home, they opened the subject to me, but I evaded it, for one reason or another, or by changing the conversation. I felt shy and embarrassed in talking about this subject and I breathed freely when I could escape and get rid of it. However, until that time, I did not know the way to Monasticism, and even the thought of chastity had no particular aim or plan; but it was obscure and awesome. I left the matter in the hands of Him who knows what is best for us.

One of my colleague's friends came to him; he intended to go to the Monastery, as he had the thought of Monasticism for a long time. They both presented the subject to me for discussion. My friend took a passive attitude, as though he was not convinced about monasticism and its call. This of course was not the matter under discussion, but it was to test the other man's determination and the stability of his principles. The latter started to defend Monasticism and its philosophy and spirituality, insisting on his total conviction in joining it. The meetings and the discussions continued. Until then, I sat with them, listening only. Soon I found myself drawn towards the friend who supported monasticism, and I was greatly encouraged by the thought. I asked the Lord to show me the way to this Holy Call.

Shortly afterwards, the friend who loved Monasticism went to the Monastery. He asked me to accompany him, but I declined, postponing the matter until the thought became clearer to me and I could make the necessary arrangements. My friend and my other colleague were then transferred to another city. I remained alone, all my emotions were filled with the thought of Monasticism, and I started to read, with eagerness, all the books about Monasticism. During that time, I read the "Garden of the Monks," and I copied some of the sayings in a special notebook. I also read a book by Dr. Hakim Amin, on studies in the history of Monasticism and the Egyptian Monasteries; the book about the Monasteries of Wadi-El-Natroun, by Dr. Mounir Shukry; the book "Release of the Soul", by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III; the "Life of St. Anthony," by St. Athanasius, the Apostolic.

My friend, who had gone to El-Baramous Monastery continued his encouragement to me. He always reminded me of the subject of Monasticism, whenever my energy diminished, because of the occupations, troubles and problems of the world, and because of the results of the fight with the enemy regarding this Holy thought.

I visited the Monastery once, for a week, and there, the Lord arranged for me a long consultation with one of the spiritual fathers. The thought increased and settled in my heart. I departed from the Monastery, longing for the day when I will come back to it, with no return to the world. I remained for approximately two years, in conflict with my thoughts; between monasticism and service; between the love of God and the love of parents; between the vocation

and the position. The subject was occupying me totally, in every prayer, in every supplication.

Finally, at the time chosen by the lord, I was given a leave from my work. I had neither requested nor expected it, because I had return from my vacation, about a month earlier.

As I said, I went to he Monastery, just to spend this leave which was forced upon me; and there, a miracle happened. It was only a meeting with one of the good fathers. He encouraged me and dissolved the fears that had remained within me. He resolved the problems that I thought were complicated and had no solution. I cannot deny that the spirit of God was working, during this session, in a miraculous way.

At the end of the meeting, I decided to resign from my job, to leave immediately to bring some of my books and belongings and to return to the Monastery without delay. I achieved everything quietly, and return to the Monastery, not as a visitor, but as a student. Only a few months later, the Lord allowed that I wear the Monastic clothing and I became a monk.

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TYPES OF MONASTICISM

BY H.G. METROPOLITAN
ABRAHAM OF JERUSALEM

The early Christians were affected by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, by His seclusion and meditation in the wilderness and on the mountain. The life of Saint John the Baptist was also one of celibacy and asceticism until the day he started his ministry, as was the case with the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

*The early Christians, especially the Egyptians from the day Saint Mark the Evangelist preached to them the Good tidings in the middle of the first century were greatly affected by the Bible. The life of our Lord and His announcements about the ascetic way of life, celibacy, seclusion and obedience, stirred spiritual enthusiasm in the pious believers, causing them to live resembling Him. Saint Peter, the Apostle said, **“....leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”** (1st Peter 2:21)*

1. The Origin and regulations of Coptic Monasticism:

It is mentioned that Frantionius, a wealthy man of Alexandria, left for the nearby dessert in about 150 AD

with him 70 others, and in 190 AD, Saint Paul of Thebes left for the Eastern desert; he was followed by Saint Anthony the Great in 270 AD, who established the Hermetic system of monasticism and became the father of all the Monks all over the world. Saint Anthony had left for the desert after hearing the Gospel in Church which was, **“If you want to be perfect, go, and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me”** (Matthew 19:21).

In 320 AD, Saint Pakhomios established the life of Cenobitic Monasticism in upper Egypt, which many orders of monasticism still follow, including the Benedictine monks, whose motto is ‘ora et labora’, that is ‘Prayers and labour together’. In 330 AD, Saint Macarius the Great set down the monastic rule called ‘Laura’, which had all the advantages of the two previous rules. Monks lived individually but near one another and assembled together every Saturday evening, until Sunday, for spiritual talks; they also celebrated the liturgy, which was followed by an ‘agape’ meal which they shared before returning to their cells.

2. The Principles and Origin of Coptic Monasticism:

All of the above monastic regulations observe the following basis principles, namely: (a) Celibacy, (b) Obedience, (c) Meditation in seclusion, (d) Manual labor, and (e) Self chosen poverty (asceticism), and these five principles were derived from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible in the following way:

- A- Our Lord lived a life of celibacy and spoke about **"...those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God..."** (Matthew 19:11). Saint Paul the Apostle also spoke about celibacy in Chapter 7 of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.
- B- About voluntary poverty, asceticism and hermetic life, Jesus said, **"If you want to be perfect, go, and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"** (Matthew 19:21). **"For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.."** (Luke 12:33 - 34).
- C- On meditation in the wilderness and living as strangers, our Lord said about Himself, **"..the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head..."** (Luke 21:37). In this way lived the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and thus also was the life of Saint John the Baptist.
- D- Regarding the life of obedience to God's Word and His ministers, the Bible said about Jesus, **"Though He were a Son, yet He learned obedience through the tidings He suffered.."** (Hebrews 5:8)
- E- On the point of manual labour and its importance, God called His prophets and disciples while performing their work. Our Lord said about Himself, **"..the Son of Man came not to be served , but to serve.."** (Matthew 20:28).

And so the principles and basis of Coptic Monastic life are a practical echo of the life and words of our Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples as announced in the Bible.

3. The spreading of Monasticism throughout the whole world:

Monasticism spread throughout the Eastern and Western deserts of Egypt; from the Northern coast to Nubia. Before the Arab conquest of Egypt (641 A.D.), there were around five thousand monasteries and nunneries. Monasticism spread from Egypt to Ethiopia in the fourth century, it was also spread to Palestine and Syria by Saint Hilary of Gaza.

Monasticism spread to the West through the Coptic monks who were preaching in Ireland, and from there to Scotland and the rest of Europe. It also spread through the Western travellers who visited Egypt and lived in its monasteries and among their monks, from whom they adopted the spirit of Coptic monasticism and transferred it to the West, through their books or by example of their lives.

*Examples of such people include: John Cassian (360-435 AD), who wrote the **Institutes** and the **Conferences**; Paladius (363-431), who wrote the **Historia Lausica**; Rufinus, who wrote **Historia Monachorum**; Jerome (342-420); Evagrius; Melanius, a man of Spanish origin who travelled from Rome to Egypt with Rufinus in 373; and Paul, a Roman who visited Egypt with Jerome in 385.*

4. The role of Monasticism In Civilisation:

Coptic monasticism and its monasteries were a centre of spiritual illumination, civilisation, and culture in Egypt throughout the ages, especially the Middle Ages, when they were almost turned into small universities. In the West, the role of monasteries and monasticism in

preserving knowledge, science, culture, civilisation, and education was instrumental.

5. The revival of Monasticism in Egypt:

During the present century there has been a revival in monasticism in Egypt for the following reasons:

- 1. Good spiritual example.*
- 2. The leaders of the Church have shown a true interest in erecting monasteries and encouraging monastic life.*
- 3. Allowing visitors to enter monasteries, and the young to take retreats there.*
- 4. The pavement of roads, making travel to monasteries easier.*

The Spirit of God is still working in the Church, and in the hearts of true believers who love Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." (1st John 4:19)

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SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT

St. Anthony was born in the year 251A.D in the city of Qimn El-Arous, Egypt to rich parents who loved the church and the poor. They raised him up in the fear of the Lord. When he was twenty years old, his parents departed, and he had to take care of his sister. Once he entered the church, and he heard the words of Christ in the gospel, saying, **“If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come follow Me.”** (Matthew 19:21).

He returned to his house, decided to fulfill this commandment and considered it directed to him personally. He gave his wealth to the poor and needy, and he took his sister and placed her with some virgins. At that time, monasticism had not yet been established. All those who wanted to live a solitary life went and lived on the outskirts of the city. This was what St. Anthony did as he dwelt alone, worshipping and living an ascetic life.

The devil fought him there by afflicting him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women. He overcame the devil's snares by the power of Jesus Christ, and he used to say to them "If any of you have the authority over me, only one would have been sufficient to fight me." By saying this they used to disappear as though as smoke. He was always singing this psalm, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him."(psalm68:1) During the time of persecution, St. Anthony longed to be a martyr. But God preserved him according to His will, for the benefit of many, As a result, he traveled to the inner wilderness of the eastern desert that took him three days to get to the spot where he found a well and some palm trees. One time, St. Anthony was bored, and he heard a voice telling him, "Go out and see." He went out and saw an angel who wore a tunic with a cross, one resembling the tunic of monks (El-Eskiem), and on his head was a head cover (Kolonsowa). He was sitting while braiding palm leaves, then he stood up to pray, and again he sat to weave again. A voice came to him saying, "Anthony, do this and you will have rest." Henceforth, he started to wear this tunic that he saw, and began to weave palm leaves, and never got bored again.



THE MEETING OF THE GREAT SAINTS

St. Anthony thought that he was the first person to seek dwelling in the wilderness, and that gave

him a feeling of self satisfaction. While he was thinking about that, he heard the angel of the Lord saying to him, that there was a man living in the wilderness who surpassed him in ascetics, in fighting, and also spiritually, and that God let it rained and became moist through that man's prayers, and that the whole world was not worthy of his foot steps. As Abba Anthony heard the angel, he was deeply shaken, in repentance because he thought too much of himself, and in happiness because he was eager to meet this angelic man who was complimented by God. Guided by the Lord St. Anthony arrived to the cave St. Paul (the first earthly angel).

After three days St. Paul told St. Anthony that God have sent him to bury his poor body, and asked him to bring Bishop Athanasius's garment to cover his body with it. St. Anthony went to his monastery and on the way back, he saw the angels, the crowd of prophets, the apostles, and saints carrying the blessed soul of St. Paul. St. Anthony arrived to the cave and found the dead body kneeling, the head was held up, and the hands were stretched in praying. As he was thinking how to bury the body, two lions came, and started digging with their paws the tomb. St. Anthony buried the blessed body of St. Paul who departed to be with Christ which is far better.

St. Anthony buried St. Paul the first hermit after he had clothed him in a tunic which was a present from St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the twentieth Pope of Alexandria. When



St. Anthony felt that the day of his departure had approached, he commanded his disciple to hide his body and to give his staff to St. Macarius, and to give the sheepskin cloak to St. Athanasius, St. Anthony lived for one hundred and five years, struggling in the way of holiness and purity. May his prayers be with us all and Glory be to God forever. Amen.

**FOUND AT St. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY (IN MELBOURNE)
A SERIES OF PAMPHLETS GIVEN OUT.**

SAINT PAKHONIOS

FATHER OF COMMUNITY



Pakhomios was born in the town of Thebes (Luxor) of pagan parents. He was born in the year 290 AD , It means he spent his youth years among pagan's who worshipped statues. He always disliked to worship statues as the people done in that time. When Pakhomios and his parents would come near the temple the pagan priest of the temple gets mad, angry and shouts "Take him away; he is an enemy of the gods, Do not let him enter our temple."

One day his father gave him food and asked him to deliver it to the workers. On his way the devils attacked him like dogs. With the help of God he defeated and managed to escape. The devils appeared to Pakhomios again in the shape of an old man asking him to obey his parents and worship the idols. The saint looked up to heaven and wept, As soon as the devils saw him weeping they disappeared. When he arrived to the workers he slept there. Then the devils started fighting with him again. There was a beautiful daughter of one worker who saw Pakhomios and wanted to commit Adultery with him. He refused

and was frightened he said "How can I do wrong with my sister I am not a dog to do this".

HIS FAITH

At 20, as a soldier in the Roman army, his squad was ordered to travel to Ethiopia to quell a revolt. On their way through Upper Egypt they had to stop in Latopolis (now Esna). Esna was full of Christians. There, Pakhomios was impressed by the manner of Christian people, who brought them food and drinks. They told him, "Christians are merciful to all men; even to their enemies. Christians bear the name of Christ the Son of God, and do good to all men, as commanded by Him who made Heaven and Earth." Hearing of such Grace, his heart was filled with veneration and awe. He stretched his hands, and prayed, "O God, the creator of Heaven and Earth, If You are indeed the Only True God, deliver me from this distress, and I will serve You all the days of my life.

Pakhomios struggled to stay away from all sins. After a few day's and before the arrival of the soldiers to Ethiopia, Constantine won the war against his enemies. Then he returned his soldiers to their cities. From the life of the army Pakhomios learnt discipline, obedience and social life. He felt that the hour had come for him to become a Christian. He went to the village church to meet the priest. Pakhomios opened his heart to the priest and told him about his desire to become a Christen, Pakhomios registered his name and stayed in a dessert temple near the river. His daily food was vegetables and dates. He did not forget all the people passing by, They all loved him and stayed close to where he was staying. From time to time he

would go to church to meet all the other Christians. He finally understood and had great knowledge of the faith. When the priest found out that he was ready to be baptized he brought him to Anba Serabion, Bishop of Dandara. Pakhomios was baptized and had communion in the year 314.

On the night of his baptism God showed him in his sleep, drops of water from heaven falling on his head, on his right hand, the water then became honey. It has been increasing and continually falling down towards the ground. He was surprised then he heard a voice calling to him from heaven saying "Understand this Pakhomios, because all of this will happen to you soon."

Soon after Pakhomios woke up and was very pleased from what he saw, and his heart was full of God's love and joy. Pakhomios stayed in the one place for three years serving the people with love, offering the needy from what the earth gave. More people surrounded him because of his love and kind treatment to them. During the period he remained with them, a very dangerous disease arose and many people died as a result of this disease. He always served the sick and carried wood to keep them warm, until the disease left there bodies.

MONASTICISM

Everyone who touched Pakhomios could feel the love of God in him. Many people surrounded him from near by villages. Pakhomios then felt the quite life and left to become a monk.

Pakhomios then heard of a saint named Anba Palemon. Many student's lived under Anba Palemon's

instruction. St. Palemon was fervent in his asceticism and worship. When Pakhomios knocked on St. Palemon cell, The old man looked from an aperture and asked him, "Who are you O brother? and what do you want?" Pakhomios answered hastily, "I, O blessed father, am looking for the Christ, the God Whom you do worship, and I beg your fatherhood to accept me and to make me a monk." St. Palemon told him, "O my son, monasticism is not an unrestricted labor, and man does not come into it as he pleases, for many have adopted it not knowing its hardships, and when they adopted it they could not endure it, and you have heard about it without knowing it's contention." Pakhomios replied, "Do not turn down my request, and my desire, and do not put off the flame of my zeal, Accept me, be patient with me, and examine me, and afterward do whatever you see fit with me." St. Palemon told him, "Go, O my son, test yourself alone for a period of time so you might know your own self, then come back to me, for I am willing to labor with you as much as my weakness allows, The monastic piety needs thoughtless asceticism, and I will teach you first its extent. Then you go and examine yourself if you could endure the matter or not. My intent in that, God knows, is for the sake of your teaching and discipline and not for any other reason. When we, O my beloved son, knew the vanity and trickery of this world, we came to this distant place, and carried on our shoulders the cross of our Christ, not the wooden rod, but the overcoming of the flesh, subduing it's lust, and wasting it's power. We spend the night in prayer and glorifying God. Often we vigil from Sunset till the morning, praying and working much with our hands,

making either ropes, braiding palm fibbers, weaving palm leaves or hair to resist sleep and to have what our bodies need and to feel the poor as the apostle said, 'Remember the needy.' We entirely do not know the eating of oil, cooked food or drinking liquors. We fast till the evening of the summer days, and two days at a time during the winter then we break the fast by eating only bread and salt. We keep away the boredom by remembering death and how close it is. We refuse every pride and exaltation and guard ourselves from all evil thoughts by Humility and piety. By this ascetic strife that is accomplished by the grace of God, We offer our souls as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, Not only once but many times. For according to the strife and how much we exert ourselves in it, We realise spiritual gifts, remembering the saying of the Lord, "Those who overcome themselves, seize the Kingdom Of Heaven."

When Pakhomios heard from St. Palemon these sayings that he had never heard before, he was assured by the spirit, and was encouraged in facing the hardships and enduring the pains. He replied saying, "I am confident in The Lord Christ first, and by the support of your prayers second, I will be able to fulfil all the precepts, and persevere with you till death."

Pakhomios then kneeled (METANIA) and kissed his hand. St. Palemon preached to and instructed him about the importance of mortifying the flesh, The humility and contrition of the heart. He told him, "If you keep what I tell you, do not go back, or vacillate between two opinions, We will rejoice with you." Then he told him, "Do you think, my son, that by

all that I mentioned to you from asceticism, praying, watching and fasting, we ask for the glory of men? No my son, it is not like that. We lead you to the works of Salvation so we would be blameless, for it is written that every apparent thing is light, and we must go through many tribulations to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Now go back to your dwelling place so you might examine yourself for a few days for what you are asking is not an easy task.” Pakhomios answered him saying, “I have examined my self in everything, and I hope with the grace of God and your Holy prayers that your heart will be pleased towards me.” St. Palemon answered, “Good.”

St. Palemon accepted him with joy, then left him for ten days testing him in prayer, watching and fasting. Three months later, after testing his patience, endurance, strife and will, he prayed over him, clipped off his hair, and put on him the garb of the monks (El-Eskeem) in the year 314 AD

They persevered together on asceticism and prayer as they worked in their spare times in weaving hair and knitting clothes to gain their bare necessities, and what they spared they gave to the needy. Whenever they were vigilant and sleep overcame them, they went out of their cells and moved sand from one place to another to exhaust their bodies and remove sleep from them.

Saint Palemon went on preaching to Pakhomios and encouraged him by saying, “Be courageous O’ Pakhomios, let your devotion to God always be flamed with the fire of love, and be before Him, in fear, humility, and perseverance in praying and kneeling

without boredom. Be watchful lest the tempter examine you and grieve you."

After a long life of struggle St. Palemon's soul past away on the 25th of Abib (Coptic Calendar), 1st of August. All the brothers gathered around the body of the Saint. They spent all night reading the psalms and the bible. In the morning the brothers did a liturgy and had communion, they carried the body with tears in their eyes. They buried him near a cave in the mountain and they then returned to their places.

Saint Pakhomios returned back to his cell sad because he lost his teacher, but sadness did not let him weaken. God looked after him for his loss and sent him his brother Yohanna, (Pakhomios and Yohanna had been separated since Pakhomios joined the army). After living together for a while, three other brothers came to them and asked them if they could live with them. Saint Pakhomios accepted them and put them under his instruction, once they had completed being tested they were clothed in the monks' clothes. As time passed other people joined until there became one hundred people. He built a church to pray in and the priest of the village comes every Sunday to pray with them. Saint Pakhomios did three meetings every week to talk with his sons to grow spiritually they would also study the bible. When the number of monks increased he built another monastery. Which became later on the first of all the Coenobitic monasteries. There became nine Coenobitic monasteries. The number of monks reached five thousand monks. They all gathered together twice yearly, Once on Holy Week (Easter),

and another time before the end of the Coptic year in, the month of Mesra.

CONVENT

When Mary the sister of Saint Pakhomios heard that her brother became faithful, she found out where he was and went to him at the monastery. She told the man responsible at the door she wanted to meet her brother so she waited outside the monastery. The man went to call the Saint to tell him of his sisters visit. Saint Pakhomios told the door man to tell her "That it was enough that she knows I am alive, but if she wants to share in this life with the brothers then we will build her a home." When she heard of this news she asked the door man to tell her brother of her desire to live with Christ. So Saint Pakhomios accepted her and the brothers built her a home near the monastery. In just a short time many sisters joined her and gave their lives up for the Lord. They made a Convent for the Virgins and the Saint sent them an old monk with the laws of the convent. The convent became bigger and the number of nuns reached four thousand which made the Saint build one more Convent. The Saint put a law to them, which stated that no man shall be allowed to enter the convent unless a priest and deacon were present, when they go in on Sundays for the liturgy. If any brother would like to see any of the virgins, he is supposed to go see Saint Pakhomios who will send him to this elected responsible man, who then goes to the head of the Convent who calls the Virgin and other Virgins for the visit, and then the visit will conclude with a prayer.

SATANIC WARS

God gave Saint Pakhomios spiritual sight that he can see the devils spirits surrounding the brothers. He always warned and told the monks to take care. He also faced a strong war with the devils, they fought him from trying to stop him from praying. He knew their tricks, but he did not give up he knelt down on the ground to thank God faithfully, then they ran away from him. He always heard God's voice saying "HAVE COURAGE I AM WITH YOU AND WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU". Because of Satan's wars the Saint asked God to take the sleep and give him enough energy to stay awake all night to continue to fight against their wars. God gave him his wish not to sleep until Satan escaped away far from him and stopped fighting him. Saint Pakhomios usually told his students about these wars, he told them, that once he was sitting with Father Matawehed, when he saw a dirty old ghost hanging on the door, he did not give it any attention when time came to eat, Tadros (Saint Pakhomios's student) passed by and Saint Pakhomios asked him to prepare the table for Father Metawahed before he left. When Tadros left the Saint repeated it to another monk. He also did not bring the food. He also repeated that with a third monk. At last the Saint went and prepared the food him self. When Fr. Metawahed left the monastery Saint Pakhomios asked his student Tadros "If your Father asked you to do something do you disobey him." He answered "No" Then he told him "Then why did you disobey me and not prepare the food as I asked you." Tadros answered "Forgive me Father I thought you told me to go because you wanted to be alone." When the Saint

called the second monk he told him the same, his reply was like Tadros. Then the Saint said "Now I know what that ugly ghost was hanged on the door it was satan who changed the conversation to make battles between the brothers." The love of Saint Pakhomios led many people to the Christian life. The Saint is always working for the brothers. He never shows that he is tired, he always shows and takes interest to the monks. He also wept for 50 days for 10 monks who's thoughts started to go astray. He offered for them many prayers that God have mercy on them and to clean their thoughts. He also fasted for them, he only ate once every two or three days. When one of the fathers asked him why he wept, he told him of the monks, then the Fathers said to the Saint "If your soul will be taken from you because of those, the best thing to do is to kick them out and not to die for them, I also see that you get rid of them from your life better than your death which will let us be sad. The Saint answered him "What did you say, you did not hear about what Mosses the prophet did when he defended his people and said to God if you want to finish them, then wipe me from your book where you write me in. Also that is my way to do my best by asking God that even if not all of them change, at least some will. After some days one of the monks whom who's thoughts had gone astray came to him after he changed and continued to obey his father. Once a man came to Saint Pakhomios speaking in the Greek language, he asked him to talk to him about matters that he did not want anyone else to hear. Then Saint Pakhomios entered his cell and prayed to God to let him understand the language. God gave him what he had

asked for, then he started to listen to the man. During the sickness of Saint Pakhomios, Tadros took a woolen cover and put it on him, but the Saint said "Take this cover off me and put the normal cover like the rest of my brothers!" God then gave him good health. He refused to be different from others.

HIS MIRACLES

God gave him strength of doing miracles. Once a man came to the monastery with his daughter who had a devil in her body. The man asked the monk on the door to tell Saint Pakhomios that he want's to meet him to pray for his daughter. The monk went and told the Saint who said to the man "What has happened to your daughter because she did not keep her virginity, if she would live a good and pure life then God will have mercy on her and save her." When the girls father heard that he became sad and asked his daughter of that, she told him that it is true. The girl promised her father that she will change. When the Saint heard of that he prayed on oil and sent it to her, when the oil got put on her she became well and the devil ran away from her.

One day while he was sitting with Tadros he heard some hymns. Then Tadros asked his teacher about these voices, he answered these voices are the angels, it came to be with a good soul of one of the brothers.

There was an illness spread all over the coenobitic monasteries. The Saint was going from one monastery to the other serving the sick. Many Monks died from this illness. Saint Pakhomios became ill, his health had been worsen. When he felt that his hour

came closer, Three days before his departure he called all the herds of the monasteries and monks and said to them "The time has come, I am going like our fathers, you know how much I have been between you in love, I never blamed anyone of you unless it was to save himself. If anyone blamed me I never got angry with them, Now I say to you if you do not do as the laws which you received, there will be rest for you, when there should not be, and I said that to you because the bible told us "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:13)

HIS DEPARTURE

All the fathers left to the council, they stayed there for three days, praying and asking for mercy of the lord. After the three days the Saint sent to them and said "Enough crying, because God sent his order and I am going to rest." Then he looked at Tadros and



held his beard saying "When God takes me, do not leave my body in the place where I am supposed to

be buried. Tadros answered by saying "I will do as you say." The Saint repeated his words three times. On the third time he said "Tadros, take care of what I said to you, do not leave my body in the spot I am supposed to be buried in. Always tell the brothers of the Laws, always tell them to go back to what God told us. After he completed what he said to his student, Tadros did the sign of the Cross three times. His soul went to the hands of God, It was the 14th of Bashans 64 A.M (Coptic Calender), 22nd of May 348 A.D. God showed in the eyes of the Saints surrounding him, angels carrying his soul to Heaven, and praying, the smell of Incense was everywhere. The brothers surrounded their father and weeping and kissing his blessed body. They spent all night in prayer, then a liturgy, followed by communion. The monks carried the body with prayers to the mountain where they buried him. After they finished the burial, Tadros came with three monks and carried the blessed body and buried him in another spot as he previously ordered him to do.

*THE SAINT WHO FOUND HIS LIFE WITH GOD,
DEPARTED AT THE AGE OF SIXTY, ALTHOUGH
THIRTY-NINE YEARS WERE SPENT WITH THE
MONKS. MAY HIS PRAYER BE WITH US ALL.
AMEN.*

**FOUND AT St. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY (IN MELBOURNE)
A SERIES OF BOOK'S CALLED "FROM THE PARADISE OF
THE SAINT'S"**



SAINT MACARIUS THE GREAT

Saint Macarius, one of the founding fathers of monasticism, was born in Upper Egypt around the year 300, and died in 390. The area where he lived, and in fact the whole of Egypt, had been profoundly affected by the ascetic efforts of Saint Anthony the Great, whose desert settlement was known far and wide as a place of holy living. During his early years, Saint Macarius lived in an atmosphere of respect and reverence for the monastic life, and he chose to follow that path himself fairly early in life. Several extraordinary things, however, happened to him on his way to this solitary life.

He began as a monk and was soon approached by churchmen who wanted him to be ordained, but like other great monks such as Saint Anthony and Saint Paphomius, he wanted to avoid ordination, so he escaped to another village. At this new place, he was to have an experience that almost changed the course of his life completely. An unmarried pregnant girl accused him of fathering her child. The pious saint did not protest; he quietly accepted the responsibility she had unjustly laid on him, and was attacked and beaten by the villagers and the girl's family, who demanded that he support her.

He did so, selling the baskets he wove and giving the money to her parents.

When the time came for the girl to give birth, she cried out that it was not Saint Macarius, but another man who was her baby's father. As soon as they heard this, the villagers felt ashamed of the way they had treated the saint, and went to ask his forgiveness. When they had arrived at his little hut, they found it completely empty; he had fled from their praise and flattery.

Saint Macarius was now on his way to Scetics, where he would spend most of his remaining sixty years of his life.

Saint Macarius' relationship with his fellow monks was a very special one. To them he was the 'aged youth' because, although he was young, having been thirty when he came to Scetis in the year 330, he had depth and wisdom of a person much older. But for all his wisdom and the high regard in which people held him, Saint Macarius had no wish to be treated with awe and reverence.

The monks knew that Saint Macarius was kind and extremely vigilant in his personal discipline, though very privately and secretly. There were those who knew that when Saint Macarius visited a sick monk who asked for sherbet to cool his burning tongue, the saint went in secret haste to bring it all the way from Alexandria.

Saint Macarius also knew how to be kind to those outside the Christian community. He knew that loving words had a greater effect than harsh ones. The story is told of his once having walked with younger monk, and meeting a pagan priest whom the

younger monk greeted rather insultingly. But Saint Macarius gave him a loving greeting, so much that the pagan asked why Saint Macarius was so thoughtful. The monk answered that he felt sorry for one who did not know that all his worship and effort were in vain. So deeply impressed was the pagan that he ended by joining the monastery, and becoming a model Christian, who attacked many other pagans by his own love and care for them.

Saint Macarius' love for his brothers led him to take the most unusual step in the year 340. He felt the need for the monks to worship together at Liturgy in their own monastery, not traveling forty miles or have occasional visiting priests as they had done up to then, so he was ordained. The monks could receive the sacraments together, which would serve to strengthen the bonds of love and mutual care among them all.

By the year 374. Saint Macarius' strength was to be tested in the most severe way. Saint Athanasius the Apostolic died, and his crusade against the heresy of Arianism was over. An Arian bishop was forcibly put at the throne of Alexandria, with the support of Emperor Valens. Saint Macarius was quick to join other of the Orthodox Faith who resisted this move, refusing to acknowledge the new bishop, or to preach heretical doctrines. With many other monks, priests, and bishops, Saint Macarius soon found himself exiled to a small pagan island in the Delta.

While he was there with Saint Macarius of Alexandria, a pagan priest's daughter began to have terrible fits, and everyone agreed that she was possessed by a demon. The two monks were able to heal her, and in gratitude, the people tore down there

pagan shrine and replaced it with a church. Hearing of this, the authorities were quick to send both monks back to their respective monasteries.

Following this incident, Saint Macarius returned to Scetis, where he continued to build on the foundations of monastic living laid by Saint Anthony and Saint Pachomius. His monastery grew and prospered, as did monastic life in general.

May his blessings be with us all.

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THE ROLE OF COPTIC MONASTICISM IN WORLDWIDE CIVILIZATION

1. As the Coptic monasticism had an ecclesiastical role in Egypt, it also had a preaching role outside Egypt. It had a civilizing role in Egypt and elsewhere, also.

+ Copts are the direct descendants of the Great Pharaohs - the ones who

were leaders in civilisation, history, education, science, arts, literature, and inventions. Copts are the ones who kept this civilisation through the library of Alexandria and it's famous University of Theological Studies which was moved to the wilderness of Shiheat after the chalcedonian conflict. This made the wilderness of Shiheat the centre of civilisation in the world and Egypt which put Egypt in the spotlight and from Egypt the rest of the world was lit. Egyptian monks spread civilisation, Christianity and monasticism in various countries of the world. This is where a strong tie developed between civilisation and Christian Monasticism in particular to the point where the monasteries and convents that the Copts established in all the countries of the world, are the centre of spiritual, civilised, and scientific lightening to the countries in which they exist now. Therefore, it is not

strange to hear that most of the scientists were monks. That is why the whole world acknowledges this favour to the monasteries and monks in the form of honouring and dignifying monasticism in general and its source, ie. Egypt in particular.

2. On the local level, the leaders of society used to come

from the monasteries as teachers or priests or bishops or patriarchs and they used to transfer science and civilisation from the monasteries to the public. That is why it is not strange to find that the schools spread in Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia through the Copts - monks, deacons and teachers. The Egyptian elementary schools that were supplementary to the schools worldwide is a clear indication of the spread of human, education and scientific civilisation so that it reaches the depth of rural areas and covers all the countries even extremes far from reach and the distant oasis as if it were the Nile that covers the jungles with its plentiful waters. These schools were the only blaze of civilisation in our dear Egypt and its neighbouring countries. This blaze took its oil from the abundant offers of civilisation that flows from the Coptic Monasteries through the ages and until nowadays. It is good to know that during many centuries, Egypt only had Coptic schools and Monasteries as a tool for education that was strong and effective, to the point where one of the rulers asked the Coptic Pope to either close the churches or the schools that supplemented them, so the Pope chose the churches to be closed and to keep the schools opened!! So the ruler was astonished at the Coptic Pope's wisdom and

his love for education and he left both the churches and schools open.

Coptic used to dedicate themselves and compete in teaching and spreading civilisation inside Egypt and outside of their love to give, like the Nile that rushes to spread it's waters, riches and fruits, ministers; writers, technicians, engineers, doctors, pharmacists, and other Egyptian Copts used to serve Egypt, its government, kings and their dear country throughout the ages, inside Egypt and outside. Until a close time we used to hear that all the ministers of Sudan and Ethiopia were graduates of their Coptic schools. In Egypt, four prime ministers graduated from the Coptic High Schools a short time before the Revolution of 1952. They are Boutros Basha Ghaly, Youssef Wahba, Abd El-Khalek Tharwat, and Hussein Rushdy. They were all great examples of education, knowledge giving and true patriotism because the Coptic Schools became palaces of virtues, civilisation, education, patriotism and morals at the same time. In addition to being leaders of knowledge and civilisation, our fathers were leaders in refinement also. Pope Kyrelos IV (110th Pope) is the first to establish a high school for girls in the town of "Sakkayeen" and he was a leader in educating the women and giving her rights. He was the first to bring a printer to printer to Egypt (after the one that Napoleon Bonaparte brought) and this is proof of how Copts and their popes are infatuated with knowledge, education and civilisation.

+ Monasteries were the lighthouse of science, arts, technology and professions. Copts used to learn Chemistry especially that of colours and dyes and copying ink in the monasteries. In addition, they used

to learn transcription, carpentry, gold setting, coring and making glass and pottery, weaving and engineering. Traces of these manufacturing and their factories can still be found in some monasteries until today.

When one Copt excels in one of these professions in the monastery he goes out to teach it to the rest of the peoples of the Egyptian Society which is famous for its oneness in its historic patriotism. Therefore, it was common practice in Egypt for a while to call a Copt "The teacher" or "The master" like the ten Coptic masters that martyred during the rule of Hakem Bi Amr Allah in April of 1003 (Siniksar - 19 Bermouda) and like the teacher Ibrahim El-Gouhary, the head of the famous school during the days of Mohamed Ali, and his brother Girgis El-Gouhary, also the teacher of Malti, the Supreme Judge, and teacher of Mashkoor, and the teacher of Abu Mansour the engineers who designed the Citadel of Salah El-Din and the famous engineers that invented small-scale models of structures before building them and he was the one who built the mosque of Ahmed Ben Toulon, and the engineer who build the "Kanaer El-Khaireya" an entertainment facility in Egypt, and many others who have served their country with their knowledge, creativity, honesty and cleverness.

In an article by the title "A visit to the Depth of the Desert" in the "Khaleeg" newspaper in United Arab Emirates dated November 21, 1988, the journalist Mr. Ahmed El-Gamal said: "In Anba Bishoy Monastery, I met the fathers - the monks - and I cannot explain the spirituality of the place, nor hospitality, nor the overflowing encyclopedia of education, but it is enough

for me to concentrate on the fact that its big loss for each Arab to neglect the role of the Christian Monastic Movement in our history without that disturbing what is known about the position of the Islamic religion that there is no monasticism in Islam.” He also said that each monk is to work to provide for the needs of the Monastery, and whatever is in excess is to be given to the needy. In addition to crafty work that each monk is to perform, there is other work in the fields of science, for example, improving the art of cultivating the desert and discovering plants suitable for this environment as well as planting natural herbs.

3. On the national level:

Many Coptic monks went to Ireland in the 5th century when the Irish King’s son was terminally ill, and when he heard about the miracles of healing the sick from the lake that is next to the body of St. Mina was famous worldwide so he decided to come and visit it and he was cured. He also visited St. Mary’s Monastery (El-Moharaq) and he believed and was baptized. He took back with him many monks from both Monasteries to the island of Ireland where they preached Christianity and baptized many and they spread the Coptic civilisation among them. This is the reason that the historians in whole world (like the German Scientist, Peter Paulsen) acknowledge this definite fact that the spread of Christianity and civilisation in Ireland was done through the Coptic monks in the 5th century. From Ireland, it spread to Scotland, England, German, Spain, and Belgum. That is why the Celtic Cross looks a lot like the Coptic Cross as well as the influence of Coptic Civilisation on Irish

art, music, and icons to the point where the old Irish letters, Gaelic, were influenced by the Coptic letters. In the Bodleian Library in Oxford, there is two manuscripts, one Coptic, and one Irish, to show the influence of Coptic manuscripts and language on the Irish letters and writing. Even the colours of designs in Ireland a long time ago, and the Coptic Pharoaic colours which are yellow, red, and green. Also, the idea of picturing the letters of the alphabet and adding designs to them is taken from Copts, and the designs in the metal (iron, and bronze) and wood and fabric (weaving) that are used in the churches are taken from Coptic art. There is an area near South-Central Ireland called Clonmacnoise near the river Shannon that has several crosses made of stone that are originally Coptic and ancient Irish crosses that are similar and show the Celtic Cross and how it evolved and was influenced by the Coptic Cross. There is Coptic crosses also in an ancient area in Ireland called the seven Churches. To enforce the fact that Monasticism in Ireland started through Egypt, there is an area in Ireland called the city of St. Mina or "Belly Mina" and another area In the South called Dessert Ulidu in which the monks of "Maharaque" Monastery lived and that is why the names of seven monks from "Maharaque" Monastery are mentioned among the remembrance of the dead in the old Irish language before the 8th century. In the early 1940's the tombs of these Coptic Monks were discovered in Donegol an area in the North Western part of Ireland - near Belfast.

All this, is a small portion of a civilised history that lasted for a long time and is great. This civilisation extended from Egypt to Ireland and then Europe and that is why Europe was interested in studying this phenomenon and a lot of writers wrote about it, such as the famous German Scientist. Peter Paulsen in his book: "Koptische und Irlische Kiinst und ihre Ausstrahlungen auf olt germanische Kaltren" (Tribus Jahrbuch des Linden - Museums, Stuttgart 1952-53, p 149-187).

From Ireland, Coptic Monks or their Irish disciples headed to Switzerland and then to Germany where they established the ancient city of Munich and that is why it is called the City of Monks (from Monakhos). Its official flag has a monk with black attire. Then they went to belgum (Which still has a street named the street of the monks).

+ As a result of these civilisation channels between Egypt and Europe, some Christian traditions spread there such as the Easter egg which is originally pharoaic (symbolises the exit of life in spring from the dried up branches like the chick when it comes out of the egg) which was tied to the resurrection by the Copts(who Christianised this Coptic tradition) and it now symbolises the Resurrection of Jesus Christ who is alive inside the tomb but looks dead from the outside. Coptic names spread in Germany such as (Johannes) which is John in the Coptic (Upper Egyptian) pronunciation because such pronunciation is not found elsewhere in the world except for the Coptic Upper Egyptian pronunciation.

Also, the naming of pharmacy in Germany by the name Aputheke is taken from the Coptic language which means a storage place and there is a city in Assuit - Egypt called ApuTeeg because it was an ancient storage place during the reign of the Greek. (Coptic Dictionary by Ekladius Labib).

Copts also preached in Nubia and India (St. Bentinos in 190 AD) Since the 2nd century and in Ethiopia (St. Frumentius - the Egyptian in 330 AD) since the 4th Century. They spread Christianity, monasticism, and Egyptian civilisation in all these countries. Also St. Athanasius the apostolic who spread monasticism in Europe during his exile outside Egypt. When he was exiled from 335 - 338 AD in the city of Treve (Ties in french) which is located at the coast of the Muessel River in France, he wrote many books about the life of monasticism in Egypt and especially his great book about St. Anthony. Martin, St. Athanasius' disciple started a group of monks near Bouate around 362 AD, and another, near the city of Tour around 372 AD when he was ordained Bishop for this city. Four monasteries were established in Treve, France, of which only one is left until today - the monastery of St. Mattias the prophet which contains his holy relics and a portion of Jesus Christ's garment. Around this monastery are caverns that look a lot like the ones around St. Anthony's Monastery - Red Sea which proves that St. Athanasius, St. Anthony's disciple is the originator of Monasticism there.

When Pope Athanasius was exiled again in Rome between 340-349 AD taking with him two monk from Natroun Valley, one of them being the monk Amonius, and the second, Priest Esitherous who was

responsible for the guest house in Iskeet, they worked together to spread the monastic life and the monastic orders in Rome. The one who used to house them was a Christian widow called Marsella, who was influenced by their speeches about the ascetic life of widows and virgins in Egypt. Marsella planted the seed of monastic life for women and attracted many women and virgins of the upper class.

+ St. Emprosius (Bishop of Milano, Italy) was touched by the Coptic ascetic life that Pope Athanasius and the monks he took with him spread in Italy. St. Emprosius established an order of the serving monasticism, being influenced by priest Esitheros who combined monasticism and service - priesthood.

+ St. Augustine (when in Rome) was influenced by the spirit of the writings of Pope Athanasius especially his book about St. Anthony was a strong push for him to establish strong monasticism in North Africa especially Hippo when he was ordained it's Bishop in the year 396 AD

Coptic monasticism together with the Egyptian civilisation spread to Europe and Asia through many foreign travellers who came to Egypt and lived in its wilderness and monasteries and caverns, and talked with the greatest leaders of the Coptic monasticism and received from them the spirit and disciples of Coptic Monastic Life. They recorded their discussions and observations in accurate details and spread them in the East and West. Among those are:

1. *Palladius - the author of Historia Lausiaca and the Paradise of the Fathers in which he published the saying of the Coptic Monks and the manner of their life, their teachings and the orders of the Coptic Monastic life. He spread all this in the West in their Greek language which helped in their knowledge of the Coptic Monastic life and their awareness of our deeply rooted culture. In return, the establishment of the monastic life in the West was carried in the same manner that Palladius saw it, described it and lived it among the Coptic Monks in the late 4th century and early 5th century. Pope Athanasius was born in Galatia around 364 AD, he became a Bishop in Palestine and visited Alexandria where he met the one who was responsible for the guest house in the Patriarchate of Alexandria - Priest Esitheros, who Pope Athanasius took with him to Alexandria to benefit from his knowledge and spirituality in serving the ministry - Esitheros helped Palladius familiarize himself with the Coptic Monastic life. This made Palladius yearn for visiting the mount of Nitria in the year 391 AD and from there to Kilia (cells) where he lived 8 years enjoyed the company and advice of St. Macarius of Alexandria. Then he visited some monk congregations in Upper Egypt and then he visited Iskeet around 400 AD and finally returned to Palestine. Paradise of the Fathers which was written by Palladius is still being taught and read in all the Egyptian homes and monasteries that were influenced by the Copts in the whole world up until today*

2. *St. Basil the Great (329-379 AD) who patrolled the wilderness of Egypt and stopped at the spirituality of*

the Coptic fathers of the wilderness. He put the laws of monasticism that were named after him and he established and famous monasticism attributed to him in his country Cesearia Kabadok.

3. St. Augris of Bonta (Evagorise) who became a monk in Nitria in the year 383 AD and he practiced strict asceticism and killing of the self desires. He was many sayings and he was influenced by Origen and he transferred his thoughts to Nitria which caused him troubles among the monks of Nitria.

4. John Cassian (360 - 435 AD) who visited Egypt around 385 AD and he stayed there many years and moved to its congregations and monasteries and its mandrites. He mentioned that he saw the 4 Churches of Iskeet in the year 385 AD He wrote the summary of his observations and discussions with the Coptic monks and their lives and teachings and spirituality. He left many precious books among which are "Institutes" and "Conferences" which contains 24 chapters. The first ten are concerning his discoveries with the fathers of Iskeet by whom he was greatly influenced that he was titled "Of Iskeet".

When Cassian visited Constantinople, he was ordained deacon by St. John the Gold Mouth (Chrysostom) around 400 AD and then he was ordained priest in his country. John Cassian transferred Coptic Monasticism to the country of Province in the South of France then he established two monasteries near Marseille. Cassian led the Monastic life in France until the last days of his life. He is to favoured for bringing the Coptic heritage of

spirituality and monasticism - such as psalms, praises, prayers, asceticism from Egypt to the West and especially to St. Benedict.

5. Tyrannius Rufinus (345 - 410 AD) from aquila in the North of Italy who visited Egypt around 371 AD or 372 AD and lived for two years in Iskeet. He stayed with the Coptic monks and carried this spiritual heritage to the West. He was enthused by the writings of Origen and wrote a book "The Dessert Became a City", in which he describes how the desserts of Egypt were filled with worshippers and monks like the stars in the sky. He also wrote a book about the history of monasticism in Egypt "Historia Monachroum". During his tour in Iskeet and Nitria he received a letter from Jerome in the year 373 AD in which he says: I heard that you went in the hidden depths of Egypt and toured with the heavenly family which is on earth (The Monks).

Rufinus was a disciple for the 2 Makars and Bimwa and Esitheros and others and he said about them "those who taught me what they learned from God."

6. Jerome (Eronimos) 342 - 420 AD who was born in Coele, Syria near Syria. He was baptized and learned in Rome. He visited Palestine around 274 AD and lived a life of solitude for four or five years in the desserts of Syria. He visited Egypt and lived with its monks in the late 4th century. He translated the rules and orders of the life of communion by Pakhomios to Latin in the year 404 AD Therefore, he was considered a link between the civilisations of the East and West. He

lived several years in the Natroun Valley and he had a Roman Nun with him called Paula. Then both traveled to Palestine where they settled until Jerome established a monastery for men and Paula established one for nuns out of her personal money. All of these carried the Coptic Monastic civilisation to the West and Palestine also. St. Benedict was influenced by these rules and orders and the Coptic Monastic life. St. Benedict was born in 480 AD and died in 547 AD He started his life in solitude (being influenced by St. Anthony) in a cave in Subiaco, about 40 miles away from Rome. Around 520 AD he established the congregational life of monasticism as the order of St. Pakhoum which John Cassian carried to the West. This order is based on prayers and labour which is called "Ora et Labora" in Latin (unlike the order that is based on prayers only which is what the congregation in church does) as St. Pakhomios put together around 320 AD Rapidly, this order spread in all of Europe through St. Benedict (In French Benoit de Benursie). With it, Christianity spread even among the Barbaric tribes in the middle Ages. The Benedictian Monasteries became the center of Ministry, education, establishment of schools and hospitals and orphanages that worked to spread the civilisation to the West. That is why the West is indebted to it up until this day and this is all the work of the Egyptian civilisation and the monastic heritage.

+ In addition, to Jerome and others, the monk Helarion who is from Gaza (born in 291 AD) is considered among the first to establish monasticism in Palestine. He received his education in Alexandria

where he converted to Christianity and became a disciple of St. Antony's. Then he returned to Palestine (Gaza) and started the famous monk groups known as "Sons and daughters of the Resurrection".

Melania donated her money to build many monasteries and cells in Jerusalem according to the Coptic order after she was influenced by monasticism in the Natroun Valley which she visited and lived for a while. St. Melania is Spanish and was widowed at an early age. She left Rome where she left her only son with some friends and she set to visit the Egyptian wilderness with Rufinas in 373 AD She had discussions with the giants of early Monasticism and she established a monastery for monks.

Also, St. Paula of Rome left both her parents and came to the Egyptian wilderness in the year 385 AD with St. Jerome. Then she lived an ascetic life in Jerusalem where many followed her.

+ *Monasticism spread in Iraq through the monk Aukin the Egyptian in the Early 4th century who was a disciple of St. Anthony and St. Pakhoum. He established many monasteries according to the Coptic order in Iraq and North Arab Island, and Armenia and Farris (Iran).*

+ *The Coptic monk Ibrahim El- Koshkory who was a monk in the Natroun Valley in the mount of Ozla in Naseebeen - Iraq around 502 AD His monks followed the same orders and wrote the same garments as the monks of Natroun Valley. (Hakim Amin) - The History of Egyptian Monasticism 1963)*

+ *Also Mar Isiah of Iskeet who was among the great leaders of Iskeet. He was a contemporary of St. Macarius the great and he left with a great number of the monks of Shiheat to Syria followed the attacks of the Barbarians in Iskeet. He stayed there about forty years where he taught many.*

***FOUND IN St. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY (IN CALIFORNIA)
MAGAZINE CALLED "MY CHURCH" AUGUST 1994 EDITION***

THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT IN THE COPTIC CHURCH TODAY

When Coptic Orthodox young people have deep religious feelings, they are usually attracted to monastic life more than to preaching, and this is due to our monastic education which has penetrated into all aspects of Church life, even in its worship. Our Church has an ascetic attitude, not only within the boundaries of the monasteries and convents, but throughout its whole life. In fact, we cannot separate Orthodox Church life into monastic and preaching aspects, for we reject dualism, believing that monasticism and preaching are together one integral biblical life. True monastic life witnesses to evangelic life, and widens the hearts of men, driving them to preach, even through their worship, love, and behavior. On the other hand, the true preaching life attracts the preacher and those whom he serves to practice, by the grace of God, and to an ascetic life, according to their own measure.

One of the remarkable aspects of the Coptic Orthodox Church today is the continuous increase of those who are eager to join the monastic life, as well as the increase in the number of married priests and

consecrated celibates. As a result of this revitalization, monasteries and convents are absorbed in construction and development. It is very likely that many true monastic leaders may be created, through God's Grace, and that our monasteries will flourish as they did in fourth and fifth centuries.

At present, however, there are in Egypt ten monasteries and six convents which are officially recognized by the Holy Synod. The monasteries are scattered in desert regions, while all but one of the convents are within the cities.

***FOUND IN St. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY (IN CALIFORNIA)
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TOUR OF SOME COPTIC MONASTERIES

THE SYRIAN MONASTERY



In the 6C due to the Giainite dispute which threw doubt on the Incarnation, the orthodox left the monastery of Anba Bishay and founded this monastery. With the demise of this dispute the monastery was abandoned and bought by some Syrian merchants for Syrian monks, hence its present name Monastery of the Syrians. The principal church in the monastery called the Church of St. Mary was built c980 and one of the cells is ascribed to St. Bishoy. In the northeast section of the monastery lies the Church of Lady Mary also called the Cave Church. The church contains the relics of St. John Kame (the Black, died 675) abbot of Abu Maqar's Monastery. To the north lies the Church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste where Christodolous Abuna of Ethiopia is buried. To the west is the Church of St. Hinnis and St. Marutha dating to 15C. The three story keep has the Church of St. Michael on its second story. There are a

library and a museum within this monastery and also a printing press.

WADI EL NATRYN (VALLEY OF NATRON)

The valley lies 75km northwest of the modern capital Cairo. It has been a sacred area ever since Pharaonic times, and a Christian area for the past 1700 years. Christianity reached the area with St. Macarius the Great who retreated there in c.330. Other religious men were drawn to the area and a sort of loose community was formed. The community grew in number and became more organised. Thus, a flourishing monastic system was created. The population of the Wadi was decimated by the two waves of plague that swept through the Middle East and Europe in the 14c. It has never recovered. There are four remaining monasteries today with buildings of Late Antique and unique character. The monasteries have a similar design, they were all surrounded by a high fortified wall, (to be defensible against the attacks of the Bedouins and the Berbers), that encloses several churches, living quarters and a keep which had on its upper story the church.

THE MONASTERY OF ABU MACCAR (ST. MACARIUS)



This monastery was founded by St. Macarius the Great (300-390), it is the southernmost of the four monasteries and has always been

the most important Christian foundation in the Wadi. It has supplied many patriarchs for the Coptic church. The monastery was attacked several times by the Berbers and the church was destroyed and rebuilt three times. Most of the present buildings were rebuilt by patriarch Shanudah (859-81) after a sacking that occurred in 866. The keep of this monastery is a three story building accessed by a drawbridge at its first story level.



On the ground floor are the mills, storerooms and a well. On the first floor is the Chapel of the Virgin with three alters probably dating to 13c. The second floor contains three churches. To the north is the Church of The Angel Michael. The Church of St. Anthony, St. Paul and St. Pakhomios follows and at the southernmost is the Church of the anchorites (al Sawwah). Little remains of the Church

of St. Macarius, much of it was restored in 1930. There are two Alters which date to c830 and several patriarchs and saints are buried there among whom are St. Macarius and St. John the Short. There is also the small church of St. Ishkhirun of Killin, with three alters and two altars only, it is used as a storage area. The Church of the Forty - Nine Martyrs is now only used during fasts and the Feast of Nativity. Two monasteries lie in the center close to each other.

THE MONASTERY OF ANBA BISHOY (ST. BISHOY A DISCIPLE OF ST. MACARIUS)



Dier Al Anba Bishoy (Monastery of St. Bishoy a disciple of St. Macarius) It is the easternmost.

The main church among the five ones of this monastery is that of St. Bishoy. There are three Alters but the church now is only used in the summer. To the south is the Church of St. Ishkhirun and to the south-east is the Church of the Virgin that is used in the winter. There is also the Church of St. George that is not used. The keep of the monastery is also accessed by a drawbridge at its first story level and has the Church of the Angel Michael

(with 18c icons of the twelve apostles) on the second level.

THE MONASTERY OF EL BARAMUS (MONASTERY OF THE ROMANS)

This monastery is the northernmost of the four monasteries in the Valley, and is probably the earliest.

According to tradition it was

founded after two Roman princes retreated to the area in the late 4C. The monastery has five churches, the oldest of which is the Church of The Virgin. The church possesses three Alters of various architectural periods, the earliest perhaps dating to 9C, and in the feretory are the relics of St.

Moses the Black and St. Theodosius. A second Church lies to the west and is called the Church of Anba Tadrus (Theodore the Commander) and is no longer used. Also to the west is the Chapel of Mari Girgis (St. George) and the

Church of St. John the Baptist (19C) is to the north



east. The three story keep, parts of which may date as early as 7C, has the Church of the Angel Michael on its second story.

PLACES OF THE SAINTS

What is your feeling when you visit the places of the saints; for example, when you visit a monastery for the feast of a saint?



- 1. The trip to the monastery is not a visit to look at or to promenade but to seek the blessing and the spiritual benefit.*
- 2. Therefore, the singular visits are more deeper and beneficial than the excursions where many crowd together.*
- 3. In your visit to the monastery, bear in mind all the spiritual memories and thoughts relating to this sacred place.*
- 4. Remember that you are in a place full of reverence and silence, not noise and loud voices which occur in the cities. The saints used to keep silent and devote themselves to contemplation and praying. You too, keep silent and enter into the depth of your soul so that you can go into the depth of God.*
- 5. Do not waste the time of the excursion in laughs and fun with your companions, in your way to and from the monastery, in order not to lose the spiritual benefit.*

6. *Do not make comments on all what you see or hear. Do not judge this or that lest you receive condemnation instead of blessing.*
7. *Remember the names of the saints who lived at that place and the virtues of each of them, meditate on their lives and their deep relation with God and what you can do to follow their footsteps.*
8. *Take with you a prayers book and a notebook to write your contemplation's. Contact those from whom you can benefit spiritually.*
9. *Remember that every span of the ground was watered by the tears of the saints and that your are moving on holy land.*
10. *Seek the intercession of the saints of the monastery and utilize your visit by pouring out your prayers before God, asking for their prayers to support you.*
11. *Benefit from the quiet nature and calm atmosphere and sit and examine yourself in depth.*
12. *Ask yourself openly what did you benefit from the trip*

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